

Regional Development Australia Northern Inland NSW (RDANI)

Regional Plan – 2011 - 2015



Version 1.5 (Updated 06/12/2011)



An Australian Government Initiative



A NSW Government Initiative

Foreword

The Northern Inland region of NSW is a unique part of Australia covering a land area of 98,606 square kilometres (12% of NSW) where over 184,000 people have chosen to make their home. The region enjoys a multitude of environmental, social and economic assets that require dynamic management to ensure communities can maintain good health, happiness and provide sustainable lifestyles for generations to come.

The RDANI Mission is to ensure long-term sustainable growth and development of the region by driving and contributing to initiatives that will support economic and community development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. This RDA Northern Inland regional plan will help focus governments and communities on strengths, issues, and a work plan to achieve those priority regional development goals.

In developing the plan, RDANI chose five consultation methods to ensure an accurate picture was painted of the region. These were a series of community meetings throughout the region to learn of the aspirations of residents, a detailed physical audit of each town in the region, an analysis of existing RDANI plans and projects, demographic research, and review of all Local, State and Federal plans, Catchment Management Authority Plans, various government department and agency plans.

Based on these consultations and reviews, RDANI has an active vision for Northern Inland NSW in 2015 with six RDANI work priorities towards achieving the vision goals. These Priorities will drive our organisation over the coming two years. Part 4 of this Plan includes a table for each Priority setting out planned RDANI initiatives in short term (immediate to 12 months) and longer term (24 months and ongoing) timeframes. The initiatives are grouped as either networks or interactions, in which RDANI will take a role, often as lead, in facilitating co-ordinating, advocating, or as specific RDANI Projects. Targets are included for key RDANI Projects.

Overall, RDANI is confident of improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the more than 40 towns and surrounding districts of our region. We do not underestimate the challenges ahead, however, we feel confident that with community support, Government commitment and hard work and dedication, RDANI can contribute strongly to real changes to advance the economies and communities of Northern Inland NSW.



Mal Peters

Chair

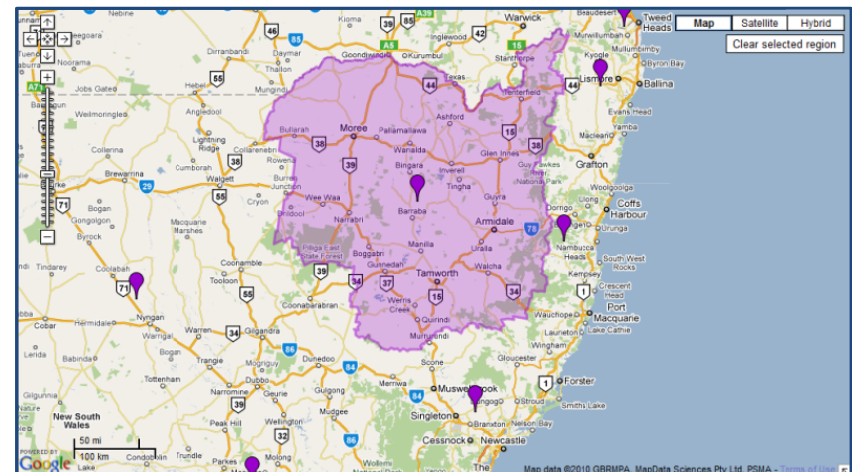
Regional Development Australia – Northern Inland NSW

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Highlights - summary Region strengths

- Central location with rail, air and road networks connecting the region internally and with other parts of Australia, east to west, north to south.
- Industry base including agriculture, mining, forestry, viticulture, food processing including abattoirs, dairy and grain products, permaculture.
- Nature based tourism – national parks, hot artesian springs, rural landscapes.
- Aviation industries, including training, airline maintenance and aerial agricultural services, plus a range of manufacturers servicing the region.
- Established education facilities, including Australia’s oldest regional university; emerging technology based clusters, leading research and development facilities including in animal genetics and breeding centres.
- Strong sense of community in localities and co-operation across the region.
- Competitive telecommunications infrastructure including an NBN first release site in Armidale.

Key Issues

- Fragmented and uncoordinated approaches to attracting new residents, businesses and tourists.
- High numbers and sustained out-migration of young people 20-30 years.
- Skilled workforce shortages and centralising of tertiary education.
- Erosion of transport services, and lack of infrastructure spending.
- Access to integrated health and aged care services.
- Large and growing Indigenous population requiring particular education, employment and community services.
- Youth inclusion, education and skills pathways, employment opportunities.
- Over-reliance on volunteerism and ageing community leaders.

RDANI Vision for Northern Inland NSW

By 2015, RDANI anticipates the Northern Inland region will –

- be experiencing a period of sustained population growth in at least 75% of the population clusters, with a mix of demographics, plus advances in all public services to match population growth;
- host at least five new identifiable enterprises providing tangible employment outcomes;
- have health and aged care services equivalent to the average in major cities, reaching as closely as possible to where people live in the region;
- have enhanced road, air, communications, education and social infrastructure such that 80% of regional residents recognise improvements;
- show advances in engagement and welfare of local Aboriginal communities and citizens against all benchmarks set by national and state agencies;
- Be recognised among the top 40% of regions in environmental and sustainable resource utilisation terms.

RDANI will be known as an active, facilitative, results-oriented organisation contributing purposefully to achieving regional development aspirations.

Priorities

Through its consultative review, RDANI has identified six action Priorities for RDANI work, plus associated short and longer term Initiatives [Part 4].

- A. Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth
- B. Industry diversification and job creation
- C. Integrated and improved health care
- D. Investment in regional infrastructure and education
- E. Social inclusion and engaging aboriginal communities
- F. Environmental achievement.

Priority A is the key message from regional community meetings. The need to grow population sustainably while regenerating regional communities by building on strengths, encouraging local businesses, attracting tourists, and devising strategies to facilitate relocation of new residents together with increased investment.

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Appendices as separate documents (www.rdani.org.au)

1. Agricultural statistics
2. Analysis of regional planning documents
3. Issues and Priorities from Community Meetings
4. Community Meetings - SEED (social, economic, environmental) diagrams
5. Audits of physical facilities, 35 Northern Inland NSW towns

Part 1. Introduction and Background

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a partnership among Australian, state, territory and local governments to develop and strengthen regional communities of Australia with a pivotal role in ensuring long-term sustainability of regions.

Regional Development Australia works with all sectors of the community to identify potential needs. A key focus of RDA is economic, social and environmental issues affecting communities. RDA is an important contributor to and driver of:

- Regional growth plans and strategies, to support economic development, creation of new jobs, skills development, business investment and important infrastructure projects;
- Environmental solutions, to support sustainability and the management of climate change (including impact of drought, flood or bushfires); and
- Social inclusion strategies, which will bring together and support all members of the community.

RDA, in consultation with the community, business, non-profit organisations and all levels of government, will articulate local priorities; identify and align resources, engage stakeholders and promote solutions. In doing this, RDA will support growth and development of regional communities across the country. The Australian government is committed to strengthening RDA so committees can help identify priorities for infrastructure, services and development, and be linked to regional employment and skills initiatives.

RDA will support, promote and disseminate information on government policy initiatives for the benefit of local communities. To this end, RDA committees and Chairs need to understand federal, state and local government policies and initiatives, and ways in which local communities can engage with them. RDA will take a leadership role in bringing together organisations to take advantage of government programs, policies and initiatives, and will be an effective conduit between governments and regional communities. It will enable communities to provide input on the strengths and weaknesses of regional Australia.

What is the Regional Plan?

This Regional Plan is a key document for Regional Development Australia Northern Inland (RDANI), and is a comprehensive and living document. As a published plan, available to the community, it aims to identify Northern Inland priorities, support investment attraction and encourage business growth in the region.

Five key streams of information underlie this RDANI Regional Plan: community consultations, demographic research, comprehensive town audits, existing Federal, State, Local Government and key stakeholder plans and a review of existing RDANI plans and projects. These have enabled development of the strategic framework in this RDANI Regional Plan.

This Plan presents a snapshot of Northern Inland NSW. It describes the region, its attributes, industry and employment base and key advantages. It proposes an economic, environmental and social vision for the region; identifies strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, as well as priorities and strategies for action.

Strong Regional Plans focus on outcomes that can be delivered for and by regional communities, as well as strategies to ensure this. Successful planning depends on working with stakeholders to identify economic, environmental and social factors that define the region, and to this end, RDANI welcomes feedback at any time.

Why have a Regional Plan?

The Regional Plan will articulate the RDANI Committee economic, environmental and social vision for the region, based on five streams of information. It presents an opportunity for the RDANI Committee to establish its direction over one, two and five years and confirm its priorities with stakeholders. RDANI aims to be a highly results-orientated organisation. This Plan will underpin the work, priorities and accountabilities of the committee and staff. The Regional Plan will demonstrate to governments and community that the RDANI Committee recognises government priorities for its region and understands the issues and aspirations of its local communities. This Regional Plan will be a promotional tool for the Committee and the Region. It demonstrates a structured and analytical approach to regional development.

Part 2. Our Region

The Northern Inland Region is defined by the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of:

- Armidale Dumaresq
- Glen Innes Severn
- Gunnedah
- Gwydir
- Guyra
- Inverell
- Liverpool Plains
- Moree
- Narrabri
- Tamworth Regional
- Tenterfield
- Uralla
- Walcha



Original region artwork kindly provided by Regional Arts NSW.

The region contains three distinct geographic areas, the Northern Tablelands, the North West Slopes and the North West Plains.

The Northern Tablelands

These are the largest highland area in Australia covering 34,500 square kilometres. The eastern escarpment has spectacular gorges, rainforests and waterfalls, protected in 25 National Parks, three listed as World Heritage Areas by UNESCO and part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia.

The Northern Tablelands is a high summer rainfall region with averages from 650 mm on the western slopes to over 1,200 mm on the east of the range. Major towns include Armidale, Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Walcha, Uralla and Guyra.

The North West Slopes

Situated on tributaries to the Darling River that rise in the Great Dividing Range including the Barwon, Gwydir, and Namoi Rivers, the NW Slopes covers 29,500 sq. km.

The NW Slopes are traversed by the New England, Newell, Kamilaroi, Oxley and Gwydir Highways and by railways linking to Sydney with connections to the port of Newcastle. The largest regional centre is Tamworth. Other urban centres include Quirindi, Gunnedah, Manilla, Barraba, Bingara, Wyallda and Inverell.

The North West Plains

An extensive pastoral area covering over 32,000 sq. km west of the NW Slopes, featuring prime agricultural land drained by the Namoi River and its tributaries, the Mooki River and the Peel River. Major Towns include Moree and Narrabri.

For the purposes of the RDANI Regional Plan analysis of themes, issues and priorities, regional towns of 500 or more residents have been grouped as follows:

Figure 1. Northern Inland NSW population clusters (RDANI 2010)

Population Cluster Description	Size	Towns & Cities
Small Rural Towns (CLUSTER A)	500-1000	TINGHA, CURLEWIS, WALLABADAH, BOGGABILLA, ASHFORD, MUNGINGI, DELUNGRA, EMMAVILLE, BELLATA, BELLATA, DEEPWATER, WOOLOMIN, BUNDARRA, CARROLL, SPRING RIDGE.
Small Regional Towns (CLUSTER B)	1000-3000	URALLA, MANILLA, GUYRA, WALCHA, WEE WAA, WERRIS CREEK, KOOTINGAL, WARIALDA, BARRABA, BINGARA, BOGGABRI
Medium Regional Towns (CLUSTER C)	3000-7000	GLEN INNES, TENTERFIELD, QUIRINDI
Large Regional Towns (CLUSTER D)	7000-10000	INVERELL, MOREE, GUNNEDAH, NARRABRI
Small Regional Cities (CLUSTER E)	10000-20000	ARMIDALE
Large Regional Cities (CLUSTER F)	>40000	TAMWORTH

Major Industry Sectors

The Northern Inland region hosts a range of industries including agriculture, agribusiness, aviation, manufacturing and processing, natural resources development, tourism, transport and distribution, education and training, engineering and construction, information technology, and research and development.

Cattle and sheep are the main livestock. The Tablelands have a long history of fine wool and beef output. The Slopes are major areas for cotton and wheat. Other primary production outputs include grains, lamb, dairy products, pork, fruit, potatoes, poultry, eggs, timber, viticulture and aquaculture.

Mineral deposits range from large coal and coal seam gas deposits in the Werris Creek to Narrabri/Moree area to metals and gemstones on the Tablelands. Antimony, coal, gold, tin and sapphires have been the more important commodities mined in the region.

Numerous other business activities across the region, from small enterprises to large multi-national corporations, produce goods for domestic and international markets. Figure 2 outlines the number of businesses by industry across the 13 LGAs that make up the Northern Inland region.

Agriculture

A variety of climate and soils translates into a rich diversity of Northern Inland agricultural enterprises. The Tablelands are predominantly grazing enterprises of fine wool production, fat prime lambs and cattle. The Slopes feature a mix of grazing and cropping with the plains generally focussing on crops on black soil areas regarded as some of the best agricultural land in Australia. The Tamworth area also has a strong poultry focus.

The importance of agriculture in the area means over 30% of businesses in the Northern Inland are involved in agriculture or agribusiness and these businesses employ over 16% of the workforce, or 12,000 people. Over \$1.7 billion per annum of agricultural produce comes from Northern Inland. (Source: ABS Census 2006)

The region has progressive agricultural farmers backed up by key research facilities based around the centres of Armidale, Tamworth and Narrabri providing research and advice on world’s best practice. The region is visited by scientists from around the world to observe developments in agriculture.

Appendix 1 includes two tables demonstrating the considerable size, scale and value of agricultural commodities in the Northern Inland region of NSW.

Figure 2. Number of businesses by Industry Sector (Source: ABS 2006)

LGA	Agriculture, forestry and fishing (no)	Mining (no)	Manufacturing (no)	Electricity, gas and water supply (no)	Construction (no)	Wholesale trade (no)	Retail trade (no)	Accommodation, cafes and restaurants (no)	Transport and storage (no)	Communication services (no)	Finance and insurance (no)	Property and business services (no)	Education (no)	Health and community services (no)	Cultural and recreational services (no)	Personal and other services (no)
Armidale Dumaresq (A)	498	9	96	-	264	69	258	63	111	6	108	483	24	147	45	75
Glen Innes Severn (A)	564	6	24	-	99	12	84	54	51	18	27	93	3	30	18	33
Gunnedah (A)	612	6	66	-	99	42	108	21	63	9	36	180	3	48	12	36
Guyra (A)	399	-	3	-	39	21	33	15	24	6	3	54	-	3	3	3
Gwydir (A)	408	3	18	-	36	9	48	21	36	6	6	51	6	9	6	3
Inverell (A)	687	9	57	3	213	45	177	48	81	12	30	201	6	57	24	36
Liverpool Plains (A)	513	-	36	-	78	21	72	27	42	-	30	96	3	21	18	3
Moree Plains (A)	963	-	51	-	180	72	162	51	138	18	63	285	3	30	30	39
Narrabri (A)	924	12	51	6	159	39	138	54	120	12	27	237	6	30	12	30
Tamworth Regional (A)	1452	6	186	3	786	165	567	162	339	30	285	849	36	243	105	132
Tenterfield (A)	441	-	27	3	87	27	120	36	27	15	21	66	3	15	18	12
Uralla (A)	354	-	33	-	90	21	63	12	36	6	3	81	-	30	3	3
Walcha (A)	450	-	3	-	30	18	45	9	12	9	12	57	-	15	6	9

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Agribusiness

Over 30% of businesses in the Northern Inland are involved in agriculture or agribusiness and the economic wellbeing of the region is closely tied to the success of these sectors. Northern Inland agribusinesses include modern abattoirs, cotton gins, local food and dairy processors, millers, grain handling terminals, farms, intensive producers, vineyards and cellar doors. Agribusiness services include equipment and machinery supply, agricultural advisory, chemical and fertiliser supply, soil testing, forestry support, scientific research, aerial agricultural, precision farming equipment, engineering services, permaculture, fencing, irrigation and reticulation systems, earth moving, veterinary and livestock care.

There is opportunity for industry and job growth in the agri-food sector through initiatives to encourage value-added products and services. An increase in jobs and investment in agri-food will lead to a more sustainable regional industry base.

Aviation

Major facilities include aircraft maintenance, flying schools and charter services. Tamworth airport features QANTASlink maintenance facilities for Dash 8 aircraft, companies maintaining general aircraft, the BAE flying school, Australian Defence Force facilities, and general aviation pilot training facilities. Armidale airport is the base for Fleet Helicopters, Edwards Corporate Jet Services and the SuperAir Company which specialises in aerial topdressing activities as well as general aviation maintenance facilities. The Aircrew Check and training company office in Armidale supplies worldwide aviation services. General aviation service companies are also located at Inverell, Moree and Narrabri airports. However, a number of Northern Inland centres that have had commercial aviation services for five decades are now without a service.

Manufacturing and Processing

The region has a sizeable manufacturing and processing (M&P) sector, centred on value adding to agricultural products, primarily meat and cotton but also including a number of grain and oilseed processors. Tamworth M&P includes two meat processing firms, food processing companies and numerous smaller related organisations. Recently, the city was connected to the national gas grid which should provide additional manufacturing opportunities through a competitive energy source.

All large regional towns (cluster D) have M&P industries. Moree, Narrabri and Gunnedah firms process agricultural products, and have established precision and heavy engineering enterprises ready to take advantage of expanded mining. Inverell has a large meat processing plant, a fish food processing facility as well as fabrication and manufacturing operations. Other regional towns have smaller processing companies that all contribute to the wealth of this industry sector.

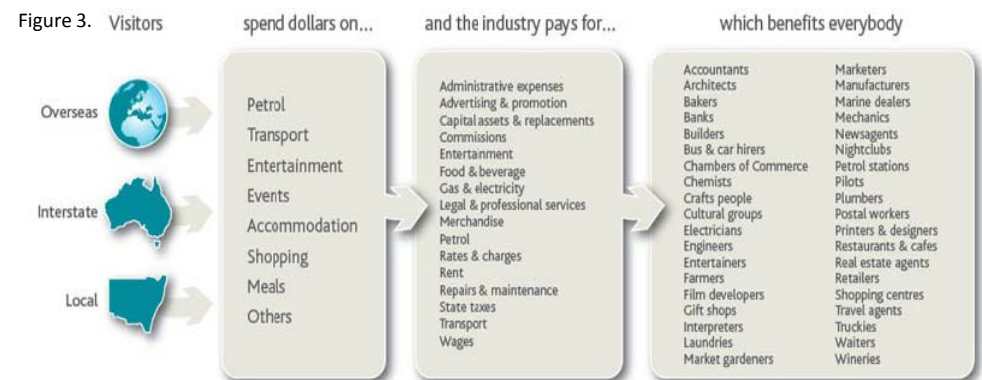
Growth opportunities include viticulture, glasshouse horticulture and value-added food processing. However, general manufacturing is under pressure from off-shore competition, access to finance, and for exporters, currency fluctuations.

Tourism

Northern Inland NSW is home to rugged bush gorges, the Tamworth Country Music Festival, Aboriginal cultures, festivals, events, heritage sites, farm stays, artesian springs, and the New England is now an official cool climate wine region.

The value of tourism to the Northern Inland NSW region is significant, with 3.1 million visitors in 2008-09 contributing over \$650m to the local economy. Tourism is also valuable for exposing potential tree-changers to advantages of living in this region. Tourism NSW has summarised the benefits of tourism to any region [Figure 3].

There is an exciting opportunity to develop a whole of region campaign to lure tourists from international or major city and coastal holiday destinations.



Natural Resources Development

There are numerous government and business activities linked to natural resources include mining, agriculture, forestry, solar and wind renewable energy generation and water uses.

Coal and coal seam gas (in Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains, Inverell, Moree and Narrabri Shires), sapphires (Inverell and Glen Innes Severn Shires), gold and antimony (Armidale Dumaresq) are valuable domestic and international exports. Gunnedah basin coal is experiencing major investment with rising demand for skilled workers and associated flow-on to the region. Narrabri basin seams produce enough gas to operate a small power station, and exploration for methane gas is underway to the south and west of Gunnedah.

The region has two Catchment Management Authorities (Namoi and Border Rivers Gwydir) with action plans to ensure effective management of land and water based natural resources. There is ongoing advance in the capability of land managers to continually improve their natural resource base.

Engineering and Construction

Major firms are located through the region accounting for over 10% of total businesses. Some have a traditional agriculture and agribusiness market while others specialise in more urban needs. Many firms compete within the region with national providers and there is an emerging market for firms located in the Gunnedah basin for coal mining and related industries. Many firms in the Northern Inland face skilled workforce shortages. The RDANI Committee is developing and assisting with programs to address these shortages.

Transport and Distribution

The Northern Inland is strategically located. Reliable highway transport corridors traverse the region linking Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, the mid and far north coasts of NSW and the port city of Newcastle. A regional road network connects major centres and reasonable local road networks provide for services in each local government area. However it is estimated that \$300 million is needed to bring roads in the Northern Inland up to a satisfactory standard.

Daily passenger rail services run from most Northern Inland centres to Sydney. Freight rail links Moree and Tamworth to Sydney and Newcastle ports and is utilised for the growing export trade. QANTASlink operate daily services to Sydney from Armidale, Moree, and Tamworth. Brindabella flies from Tamworth and Armidale to Brisbane and Aeropelican flies from Narrabri to Sydney. Charter air services also operate from the major airports.

Education and Training, IT, Research

The Northern Inland has educational facilities equal to any metropolitan city, from pre-schools to university. The region hosts the University of New England, 11 TAFE Campuses, 17 Public High Schools, 89 Public Primary Schools, 13 Private High Schools, 32 Private Primary Schools, and 70 early learning/childcare facilities. Some 10% of employment in Northern Inland NSW is in the education sector.

The New England Institute of TAFE has a wide regional presence using modern technologies to deliver courses and training to match employer needs. However, centralisation of courses in larger centres (Tamworth, Armidale) and associated pressures on employers and students is an issue in smaller towns.

The University Of New England (UNE) is the oldest regional university in Australia and has a reputation as a leader in higher learning and hosts a number of key research centres. UNE interacts with the region's industries and communities on its teaching and research. Courses are varied and cover many employment areas experiencing skills shortages. Major courses areas: Arts, Medicine and Health, Business, Information Technology, Education, Science, Agriculture and Law.

Research and IT based enterprises are a developing sector, based principally around Armidale. For instance, globally competitive companies associated with animal genetics, animal breed societies, and associated research professions operate around the world. Armidale is also a first release site for the National Broadband Network.

Educational software is also being produced by individuals and firms. The recently established information technology cluster in the town of Uralla provides related services to Australia and beyond.

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Agricultural industry research facilities are based across the region. Research based at the north western centre of Narrabri attracts overseas business travellers as well as generating knowledge utilised locally and worldwide.

Narrabri also is the location for the CSIRO Australian telescope.

Demographics

Population Change

Population is of vital concern to regional Australia. Most inland areas have been grappling with stagnant or declining population bases, including the 13 LGAs in Northern Inland NSW. The region has experienced a slow rate of decline since 1996 [Figure 4], although the rate of population loss has since decreased.

Size and rate of population change has varied across the region. Three Statistical Local Areas (SLA) have experienced growth since 1996, Tamworth Regional Pt. A (formerly Tamworth City), Tenterfield, and Inverell Pt. A (township). Some areas began to grow again from 2001 including Glen Innes Severn, Guyra, Inverell Pt. B, and Walcha. For most others, the rate of population decline has slowed. Moree Plains grew from 1996 to 2001 then declined from 2001.

Figure 4. Total population change, Northern Statistical Division 1996-2006 (ABS)

Statistical Local Area	1996 Total Population	2001 Total Population	% Change 1996-2001	2006 Total Population	% Change 2001-2006	% Change 1996-2006
Armidale Dumaresq - City	21330	20271	-4.96	20236	-0.17	-5.13%
Armidale Dumaresq - Bal	3836	3863	0.70	3861	-0.05	0.65%
Glen Innes Severn	9016	8374	-7.12	8766	4.68	-2.77%
Gunnedah	12819	11846	-7.59	11524	-2.72	-10.10%
Guyra	4262	4205	-1.34	4207	0.05	-1.29%
Gwydir	5938	5634	-5.12	5371	-4.67	-9.55%
Inverell - Pt A	10414	10647	2.24	11058	3.86	6.18%
Inverell - Pt B	4486	4394	-2.05	4532	3.14	1.03%
Liverpool Plains	7374	7353	-0.28	7311	-0.57	-0.85%
Moree Plains	15517	15737	1.42	14186	-9.86	-8.58%
Narrabri	14101	13817	-2.01	13052	-5.54	-7.44%
Tamworth Regional - Pt A	39065	40878	4.64	42791	4.68	9.54%
Tamworth Regional - Pt B	12082	11079	-8.30	10903	-1.59	-9.76%
Tenterfield	6529	6531	0.03	6574	0.66	0.69%
Uralla	5871	5739	-2.25	5673	-1.15	-3.37%
Walcha	3209	3115	-2.93	3211	3.08	0.06%
NORTHERN REGION	175849	173483	-1.35	173256	-0.13	-1.47%
NEW SOUTH WALES	6038696	6371745	5.52	6585732	3.36	9.06%

Within social catchment areas (local communities-of-interest e.g. for shopping, sporting team and service organizations based around a single substantial town), rural dwelling populations have declined at a faster rate than town populations including through reduction of workers employed in agriculture. Exceptions to this drift are mostly related to the expansion of rural residential developments.

Key points:

- Slow rate of population decline, varying markedly across Northern Inland NSW.
- Rural dwellers are declining in number at a faster rate than towns.
- Some towns and districts are projected to turn around population decline.
- Significant growth in proportion of persons aged over 65 years, particularly females, and a decline in the proportion of children aged under 15 years.
- Significant decline of both males and females aged between 20 and 30 years, a product of high and sustained youth out-migration.
- High and steadily increasing rates of care dependency across the region.
- Indigenous people comprise a greater proportion of region's population than the State average and is forecast to increase significantly over the next 20 years.
- Compared to all NSW, the Northern Inland has a high proportion of jobs in industry sectors that are declining and not enough in faster growing sectors.
- The region has low levels of University qualified residents, but high levels of trade qualified workers compared to the NSW average.
- The region has several of NSW's most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.

Many towns in the region saw growth in their populations between 2001 and 2006, with some higher rates of increase in smaller towns. Boggabri, Bundarra, Deepwater, Kootingal and Nundle grew by over 10%. By contrast, regional centre growth rates were more muted (< 5%) and Armidale declined to 2006.

This data is from the 2006 census, with the next due in 2011. To assist with planning exercises, the Australian Bureau of Statistics produces population

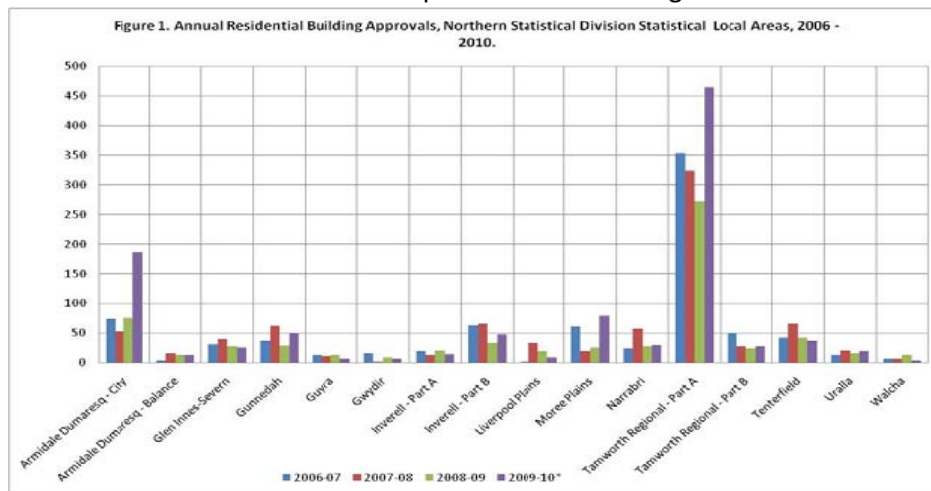
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estimates based on projections of past fertility, mortality and migration trends at a local level. Figure 5 shows the results of these estimates for Northern Inland NSW SLAs for the period 2006 to 2010. A number of SLAs were projected by the ABS to turn around population decline including Armidale, Gunnedah, Uralla, Liverpool Plains and Tamworth PtB. The overall Northern Inland region was expected to experience population growth.

Statistical Local Area	% change 2006-2009
Armidale Dumaresq (A) - City	4.1
Armidale Dumaresq (A) Bal	6.2
Glen Innes Severn (A)	1.1
Gunnedah (A)	1.3
Guyra (A)	2.4
Gwydir (A)	-2.7
Inverell (A) - Pt A	3.2
Inverell (A) - Pt B	3.6
Liverpool Plains (A)	1
Moree Plains (A)	-1.9
Narrabri (A)	-0.3
Tamworth Regional (A) - Pt A	5.1
Tamworth Regional (A) - Pt B	2.6
Tenterfield (A)	3.4
Uralla (A)	3.8
Walcha (A)	-1.1
NORTHERN INLAND REGION	2.6

Figure 5. Projected population growth rates, Statistical Local Areas, 2006-2010 (ABS)

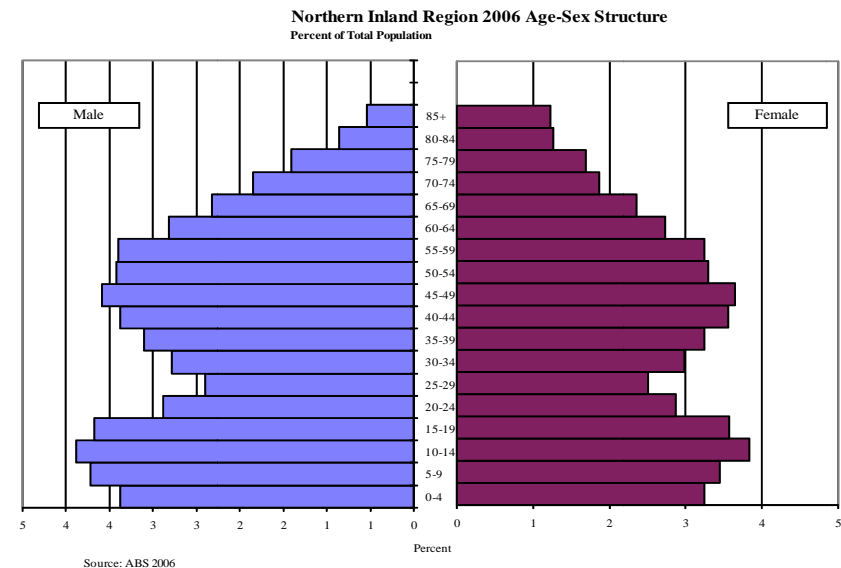
Figure 6 shows building approvals 2006-2010 supports these population projections. The regional centres of Armidale and Tamworth particularly stand out and Moree shows a recent expansion in its building stock.



Age-Sex Composition

The age and sex structure of the population needs to be considered in planning. This affects estimates of a region's workforce, domestic demand for goods and services including health, education, retail and aged care, as well as population futures. The age/sex make-up of Northern Inland NSW has changed markedly since 1996.

Figure 7. Northern Inland NSW population age-sex structure at 2006 (ABS)



An increasing proportion of the population is aged over 50 years (a trend consistent with the general ageing of the Australian population). There has been significant growth in proportion of persons over 65 years, particularly females, with a decline in proportion of children aged under 15 years (also a national trend).

Fertility in rural areas is generally higher than the societal mean. Even so, the number and proportion of infants in the Northern Inland population has fallen. Decline in numbers of both males and females aged between 20 and 30 years, in part from youth out-migration is another concerning trend for future population growth prospects of the region.

Dependency Ratios

Dependents are persons aged 15 years or under and aged 65 years or older. Generally, they need to be supported by those working, bringing in incomes and paying taxes. The Northern Statistical Division currently has a dependency ratio of 58.5 dependents to working-age persons. For every 100 people, less than 42 are of working age. This ratio has steadily increased over the decade due to the ageing population. Inverell, Gunnedah and Glen Innes have higher dependency ratios; Armidale the lowest. The ratio has fallen in Tamworth and Armidale urban SLAs yet increased significantly within less populated SLAs (e.g. Moree, Narrabri).

Migration

Northern Inland NSW is a region of relatively high natural population increase (more births than deaths) but the level of natural increase can be offset by out-migration as there was up to 2001. For instance, Tamworth city area experienced a net loss of 1,928 people from 1991 to 1996, then loss of 1,479 to 2001, and net growth of 1,077 to 2006. Narrabri lost 1,468 to 1996, then 919 to 2001, and a further 865 lost to 2006. For Inverell Pt A losses were 175, 187, and then a gain of 257 to 2006. During 2001-2006, the region overturned a decade of, in some cases, heavy net migration losses. Most SLAs recorded gains, highest in eastern centres.

Figure 8. In, Out and Net Migration in Northern NSW SLAs 1996-2006 (ABS 2006)

	In-migration 1991-1996	Out-migration 1991-1996	Net migration 1991-1996	In-migration 1996-2001	Out-migration 1996-2001	Net migration 1996-2001	In-migration 2001-2006	Out-migration 2001-2006	Net migration 2001-2006
Armidale (C)	5,924	7209	-1285	5618	6,521	-903	5190	4,987	203
Dumaresq (A)	1,102	525	577	1116	767	349	996	832	164
Glen Innes Severn (A)	1,732	2338	-606	1663	2,275	-612	1550	1,536	14
Gunnedah (A)	1,953	3018	-1065	1656	2,632	-976	1836	2,261	-425
Guyra (A)	713	1237	-524	718	1,054	-336	736	802	-66
Gwydir (A)	1,150	1659	-509	1065	1,469	-404	1087	1,083	4
Inverell (A) - Pt A	978	1153	-175	1079	1,266	-187	1331	1,074	257
Inverell (A) - Pt B	1,868	3003	-1135	1846	2,530	-684	2353	1,920	433
Liverpool Plains (A)	1,060	1703	-643	1084	1,549	-465	1282	1,666	-384
Moree Plains (A)	2,295	4658	-2363	2710	3,852	-1,142	1971	3,694	-1,723
Narrabri (A)	1,928	3396	-1468	2108	3,027	-919	1705	2,570	-865
Tamworth Regional (A) - Pt A	6,700	8628	-1928	7098	8,577	-1,479	7915	6,838	1,077
Tamworth Regional (A) - Pt B	4,145	4462	-317.5	4846	4,827	19	2741	2,489	252
Tenterfield (A)	1,195	1735	-540	1355	1,650	-295	1372	1,209	163
Uralla (A)	1,200	1479	-279	1105	1,436	-331	1327	1,277	50
Walcha (A)	446	957	-511	541	902	-361	541	548	-7

Indigenous Population

Indigenous people live in Northern Inland NSW in higher numbers than the State average and this proportion is increasing at a greater rate than for NSW as a whole, although again with variation across Northern Inland SLAs [Figure 9]. By 2006 only one SLA (Armidale Dumaresq – Rural) had a lower proportion than for the State as a whole. In most SLAs the Indigenous proportion of the population was well over double the NSW state average. In some areas increases have been substantial, in part reflecting growing numbers of people with Indigenous background identifying themselves as such, as well as higher fertility rates. Indigenous persons also appear less likely to migrate out of the region.

Figure 9. Trends in Indigenous population, Northern Statistical Division 1996-2006 (ABS)

Statistical Local Area	Indigenous Persons 1996	Indigenous Persons 2001	% Growth 1996 - 2001	Indigenous Persons 2006	% Growth 2001 - 2006	% Growth 1996 - 2006
Armidale Dumaresq (A) - City	1026	1064	3.70	1184	11.28	15.40
Armidale Dumaresq (A) Bal	53	175	230.19	54	-69.14	1.89
Glen Innes Severn (A)	280	361	28.93	474	31.30	69.29
Gunnedah (A)	999	1063	6.41	1181	11.10	18.22
Guyra (A)	338	410	21.30	432	5.37	27.81
Gwydir (A)	43	81	88.37	140	72.84	225.58
Inverell (A) - Pt A	145	175	20.69	168	-4.00	15.86
Inverell (A) - Pt B	417	558	33.81	672	20.43	61.15
Liverpool Plains (A)	479	737	53.86	699	-5.16	45.93
Moree Plains (A)	2615	2807	7.34	2637	-6.06	0.84
Narrabri (A)	1003	1084	8.08	1220	12.55	21.64
Tamworth Regional (A) - Pt A	1716	2389	39.22	3229	35.16	88.17
Tamworth Regional (A) - Pt B	385	389	1.04	511	31.36	32.73
Tenterfield (A)	315	423	34.29	478	13.00	51.75
Uralla (A)	264	293	10.98	328	11.95	24.24
Walcha (A)	161	176	9.32	187	6.25	16.15
NORTHERN INLAND REGION	10239	12185	19.01	13594	11.56	32.77

The population of Indigenous residents in this region is forecast to grow markedly over the next 20 years (NSW State Government 2010). The Indigenous population structure is generally younger than the non-Indigenous population. At the 2006 Census, over 50% the Northern Inland Indigenous population was under 19 years (28.6% for the full regional population) indicating ongoing high fertility and a shorter life expectancy than non-Indigenous residents.

Employment by Industry Sector

Figure 10 provides a time-series profile of employment by industry sector across the ABS Northern Statistical Division for the decade 1996-2006. Growth in the overall number of jobs is a broadly positive economic indicator; however the data does not distinguish growth or decline in full-time, part-time or casual positions.

A notable decline to 2006 is in primary industry employment. In Figure 10, agriculture continues as the largest employer in the region, with over 16% of all jobs. However, adding other categories shows trends to services. Key sectors in 2006 included retail trade (11.2%), health care (10.5%), education and training (9.6%), manufacturing (7.2%) and accommodation and food services (6.4%).

Employment in the mining sector is volatile but is expected to increase over the next decade at least, especially in and around the Gunnedah basin. Significant increases in construction, retail trade, real estate, professional and technical services all signify some diversification in the regional economy. The increase in manufacturing employment during 2001-2006 is another positive sign, after stagnation during 1996-2001. Growth in health and social services employment is also to be welcomed, given the ageing population.

Figure 10: Employment by Industry Sector Northern Inland Region NSW 1996 - 2006

Industry Sector	Persons Employed			2006	% Change 2001-2006	% Change 1996-2006
	1996	2001	% Change 1996-2001			
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	13396	13767	2.77	12078	-12.27	-9.84
Mining	471	290	-38.43	370	27.59	-21.44
Manufacturing	4766	4766	0.00	5118	7.38	7.39
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste	765	521	-31.89	654	25.53	-14.51
Construction	3113	3655	14.83	4547	24.40	46.06
Wholesale Trade	3241	3459	6.73	2306	-33.33	-28.85
Retail Trade	7031	7573	7.71	8145	7.55	15.84
Accomodation and Food Services	4337	4728	9.01	4661	-1.42	7.47
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	3048	3081	1.08	3219	4.48	5.61
Information Technology, Media and Telecommunicati	1288	878	-31.83	794	-9.57	-38.35
Financial & Insurance Services	1568	1349	-13.97	1436	6.45	-8.42
Rental, Housing and Real Estate Services	704	744	5.68	815	9.54	15.77
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2228	2772	24.42	2747	-0.90	23.29
Administration and Support Services	1138	1607	41.21	1531	-4.73	34.53
Public Administration and Safety	3821	3570	-6.57	4280	19.89	12.01
Education and Training	6694	6378	-4.72	6993	9.64	4.47
Health Care and Social Services	6469	6743	4.23	7663	13.64	18.46
Arts & Recreation Services	570	531	-6.84	626	17.89	9.82
Other Services	2867	2785	-2.86	2979	6.96	3.91
Inadequate Description	2214	1901	-14.13	1857	-2.31	-16.12
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	69729	71098	1.96	72819	2.42	4.43

Post-School Education

Post-school education qualifications are recognised to contribute to individual well-being and to the economic (and socio-cultural) development of any region. A workforce with diverse skills and knowledge is vital for continued economic development. Northern Inland qualifications levels in 2006 are in Figure 11 (ABS).

Table 8. HIGHEST LEVEL of POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION QUALIFICATION

Level of Qualification	1996	2006	% change 2001-2006	2006 % of Total, Northern Inland Region	2006 % of Total, New South Wales
Postgraduate Degree	1478	1999	19.92	3.18	5.70
Graduate Certificate and/or Diploma	1561	1410	-2.56	2.24	2.30
Bachelor Degree	6790	9767	16.79	15.55	22.20
Advanced Diploma	7348	7433	18.19	11.83	13.55
Certificate Not Further Defined	N.A.	2370	244.98	3.77	3.52
Certificate III or Certificate IV	12967	20059	18.92	31.93	25.12
Certificate I or Certificate II	4236	2261	-34.31	3.60	2.24
Certificate Total	17203	24690	17.59	39.30	30.88
Level of Education Inadequately Described	1506	2252	18.28	3.58	3.12
Level of Education Not Stated	14564	15271	16.04	24.31	22.25
Total Persons with Post-School Qualification(s)	50450	62822	16.71		

The Northern Inland was underperforming in 2006 relative to the State as a whole, in proportions of residents with postgraduate and bachelor degree qualifications but had higher proportions of non-university, trade-type qualifications.

Internet Usage

Since the mid-1990s the internet has become a major communication medium and a huge influence on social and economic change. The internet is a key feature of the present and future socioeconomic landscape and a critical tool for education and business development. The 2001 Census was the first to measure the number of individuals that used the internet at home, work or elsewhere. The 2006 Census then measured how many households had internet connections. During those 5 years household internet connections grew significantly across the Northern Inland, with significant differences between SLAs. On average, over 60% of homes in this region had access to the internet in 2006 (ABS, 2008).

Socio-economic disadvantage

There is increasing recognition that geographically isolated regional communities often suffer severe socioeconomic disadvantage. Vinson (2007) has developed a ‘disadvantage index’ for locations based on a diverse range of socioeconomic indicators. These include low family income, housing cost stress, lower life expectancy, domestic violence, long-term unemployment, low level of internet access, non-attendance at school and few post-schooling qualifications.

The most disadvantaged postcode locations within Northern Inland NSW (ABS Northern Statistical Division) based on this index are as follows, in descending order of severity (with ranking within NSW):

1. Tingha (5)
2. Deepwater (9)
3. Boggabilla (24)
4. Tenterfield (29)
5. Ashford (30)
6. Inverell (35)

Much of the region is ‘disadvantaged’ or has ‘a degree of disadvantage’. Most of Gunnedah, Glen Innes, Inverell and Tamworth PtB SLAs are areas of disadvantage. Substantial areas of Guyra, Liverpool Plains, Narrabri, Uralla and Walcha contain a ‘degree of disadvantage’.

Both Armidale SLAs are almost wholly ‘middle grade’, whereas Gwydir, Moree Plains, and Moree Plains encompass the spectrum from ‘disadvantage’ to a ‘degree of advantage’. No part of the Northern Inland is considered ‘advantaged’, which is typical of all regional areas of NSW except some locations near Sydney and Canberra.

Vinson T, 2007, *Dropping off the Edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia*.

Regional Snapshots and Issues

Health

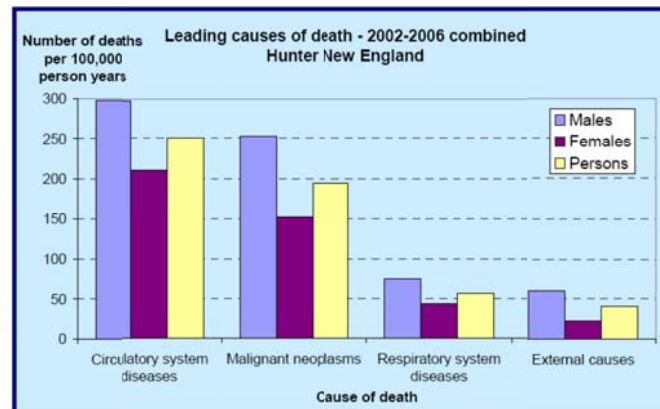
During the community consultations for development of this Plan [see part 3], health was the key issue for many local towns and communities. Stakeholders identified a lack of access to regular and basic health and community services as one of their greatest needs. The Northern Inland region is within the Hunter New England Local Health District area which covers the Tablelands, McIntyre, Peel and part of the Mehi and Upper Hunter clusters.

The Health District describes its services in six categories. Northern Inland does not have any Tertiary referral Hospitals or Mental health hospitals.



Both Armidale and Tamworth have Rural referral Hospitals.

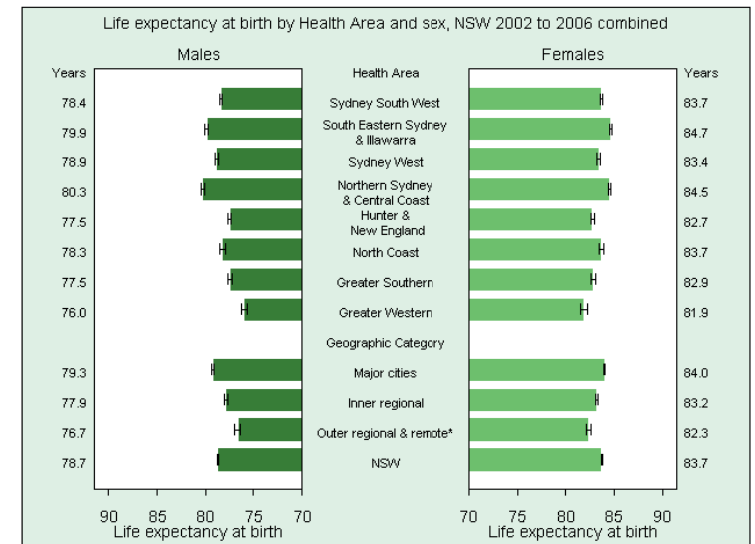
The region has six district health services, 29 community health services and 12 community hospitals as shown in this map.



NSW Health has identified Seven Strategic Directions that will guide the development and delivery of health services now and into the future:

1. Make prevention everybody's business.
2. Create better experiences for people using health services.
3. Strengthen primary health and continuing care in the community.
4. Build regional and other partnerships for health.
5. Make smart choices about the costs and benefits of health services.
6. Build a sustainable health workforce.
7. Be ready for new risks and opportunities.

In determining their strategic direction, the Hunter New England Local Health Area uses a broad range of health indicators for various dimensions of health. These include demographic features, social determinants, burden of disease within the population, health inequities and health priorities. While there has been great improvement in the health of Hunter New England residents in the last 100 years, these gains have not been equally shared among all population groups and Aboriginal life expectancy is still shorter than population averages. Selected health statistics follow:



Environmental

Water availability is critical to the economic and social sustainability of Northern Inland NSW. From interactions with the community, there is general consensus that planning for water supply, infrastructure development and improvement is urgently required with commitments to implement actions to ensure future water availability for social, economic and environmental purposes. The two key environmental issues in the region at present are the cumulative impacts of mining on the Liverpool Plains and the foreseeable impacts of the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Communities appear uncertain about Federal and State government intentions including interstate water sharing agreements. There were requests for the social impacts on regional communities and industries to be included in decisions about water availability both now and in the future under any changes proposed within the *National Plan for Water Security*. Communities are concerned governments are unaware of these potential impacts and requested full consultation and consideration of measures to minimise impacts.

Northern Inland NSW communities generally support managing vegetation and biodiversity to ensure the future security of the natural systems within a framework that provides certainty for rural industries and rural communities. There are views that rural land managers and communities are not adequately consulted on development and delivery of environmental policy, and that contribution by rural land managers to the protection of native flora and fauna are under-recognised. Residents would like to see more support from the NSW Government to achieve sustainable land and environmental management outcomes in their communities.

See. NSW Rural and Regional Taskforce Report 2008, Namoi and Border Rivers Gwydir CMA Plans.

Education

Northern Inland NSW has a range of education services. Challenges include attracting and retaining teaching staff in rural and remote communities. The continued provision of quality education through the early childhood, public, Catholic and independent systems remains a top priority across regional NSW.

There are also concerns about maintaining and upgrading the large proportion of rapidly ageing post-war school infrastructure found throughout the region.

A key issue for smaller communities, employers and students is centralisation of TAFE training courses to regional centres such as Tamworth and Armidale with distance delivery. This has major travel and financial implications on potential students.

Infrastructure

Transport

The expansive NSW regional road network forms a web across the State and underpins almost all economic and social activity in rural and regional NSW. It includes national, state, regional and local roads developed and managed by the three tiers of Government through a framework of collaborative arrangements.

Local government officers regularly raise the need to maintain or enhance NSW Government funding for timber bridge replacement. This is a major infrastructure challenge for a significant number of smaller rural councils given their limited rates and revenue base. Comments were made on rapidly increasing volume of road freight with impact on road infrastructure and implications of changing truck mass limits and harmonisation with interstate regulations. There are nearly 20,000km of local roads, both sealed and unsealed in Northern Inland NSW, which combined, require approx. \$300min investment to bring them to a 'satisfactory' standard based on Local Council reporting.

Figure 12.

Local Government Area	Estimated cost to bring sealed roads to a satisfactory standard	Estimated cost to bring unsealed roads to a satisfactory standard	Estimated cost to bring bridges to a satisfactory standard
Armidale Dumaresq (A)	\$10,531,000	\$5,414,000	\$2,873,000
Glen Innes Severn (A)	\$2,819,000	\$6,015,000	\$1,170,000
Gunnedah (A)	\$400,000	\$300,000	N/A
Guyra (A)	\$8,719,000	\$2,055,000	\$2,079,000
Gwydir (A)	\$12,180,000	\$14,222,000	\$550,000
Inverell (A)	\$7,030,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,000,000
Liverpool Plains (A)	\$6,914,000	N/A	N/A
Moree Plains (A)	\$53,100,000	\$16,900,000	\$2,600,000
Narrabri (A)	\$8,096,000	\$3,524,000	\$1,906,000
Tamworth Regional (A)	\$8,911,000	\$8,806,000	\$19,000,000
Tenterfield (A)	\$1,790,000	Combined figure	Combined figure
Uralla (A)	\$750,000	\$450,000	\$2,200,000
Walcha (A)	\$8,500,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,500,000
Total All roads & bridges	\$225,504,000		

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There is considerable support within communities west of the Great Dividing Range for the proposed Inland Rail link from Melbourne to Brisbane via western NSW. This would provide an important opportunity to improve freight transport and logistics in country NSW and attract investment in road-rail service hubs.

A decade has seen a major transformation of passenger air transport in Australia including opening of new low cost jet services to major regional tourism centres but also cessation of services to sizeable towns such as Inverell and Gunnedah. Air services are increasingly important for connections to the nation and the world. For many smaller communities access to professional services for individuals and businesses can only be reliably maintained through regular passenger air services.

There is concern about deterioration of air services to rural NSW, with limited competition, timetabling and service availability. Airlines and airport operators (usually local councils) also find it difficult to absorb costs of enhanced security measures when annual income through passenger movements is quite small. Many Northern Inland airports require substantial upgrades to both security and general facilities to handle increased passenger numbers. However most councils are unable to provide the funding necessary for such upgrades.

Public transport services within and among dispersed regional towns and cities has always proven to be challenging. In larger towns public transport is mainly comprised of private bus and taxi services. Private bus and NSW CountryLink rail/bus link some towns. Northern Inland communities seek improvements in public transport, particularly inter-town, given the need to access health services, training and employment opportunities in the larger centres. In small rural towns and villages public transport options are few. This is a particular burden for the young, elderly, disadvantaged and disabled. Community transport for health plays a vital role in the region and in general increases the mobility of people living in remoter towns and non-urban areas.

Telecommunications and Broadband

Poor broadband access and speeds (bandwidth) have serious implications for:

- Business competitiveness, and therefore the ability of regional NSW to attract and retain business investment

- Access to education and training and government and public information services plus social interactions (all increasingly requiring online facilities)
- Attraction and retention of those with professional skills and training to rural and regional areas where skill shortages are most acute.

Availability of broadband services is generally improving, particularly in regional cities and larger towns, but there is anxiety that widening of the gap between services in metropolitan versus non-metropolitan areas will have adverse effects. The Northern Inland is in a unique position as the home to not only a first release site of the National Broadband Network (NBN) in Armidale but also home to the first fixed wireless site of the NBN in Tamworth. These services will help close the gap between services available in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in many sectors but particularly with the introduction of tele-health and tele-education programs.

Water Supply and Wastewater Management

Drought has increased focus on potable water supply for many communities. Considerable effort has been made by the NSW Office of Water in conjunction with local water authorities (generally Councils) to address and ameliorate domestic water supply threats. Several communities remain on water restrictions, although recent widespread winter rainfall has eased conditions.

Social Infrastructure

Schools, hospitals, police stations, courts, recreation parks/centres and other public buildings, as well as sporting, cultural and community events, are critical to the viability of local communities. Two particular concerns were uncovered:

- Arts infrastructure (buildings, venues and events) and support to local arts groups (covering all genres including visual, dramatic, literary and musical) are important aspects of social capacity and relate to community quality of life.
- The public library system in NSW helps to build educated, connected and harmonious communities. However, there has been significant decline in NSW government funding for the library system. Adverse comparisons were also made with State funding in other jurisdictions. Public libraries meet

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needs across economic, social and environmental dimensions of society. Users of public libraries cross categories of age, gender, occupation, employment status, ethnicity and income. They offer community hubs to assist overcoming information and digital divides.

Part 3. Stakeholders, consultation, reviews

Key stakeholders for RDANI include local communities, Federal, State and Local Governments, business enterprises, government departments, quasi-government agencies or groups, educational, health and other institutions.

The Federal Government is strengthening the RDA network so committees can contribute actively to regional development planning and coordinated initiatives, alongside programs developed by each RDA for its region. RDA Plans are expected to be built on 'ground up consultation with local communities and stakeholders' and to incorporate community issues and priorities, as well as data and analysis 'to identify infrastructure and major project priorities and proposes future actions for each RDA to undertake in coordinating economic development for their region' [The Australian Labor Party and the Independent Members – Agreement, Sept 2010].

RDANI community consultation process

Consultative mechanisms include consideration and integration of many existing stakeholder plans, community dialogues, and meetings with government officers. RDANI intends to continue close consultation and feedback initiatives.

For this 2010 plan, RDANI conducted 21 community meetings across the region, as exploratory conversations or dialogues. Participants were asked to identify their community's key strengths, assets, successes, challenges, opportunities, and then consider key priorities, first steps and key performance measures that would indicate progress. RDANI also conducted audits of physical facilities in 35 towns.

Communities can at times be sceptical that 'they are consulted on plans' but nothing much seems to come of them. This dialogue process aimed to achieve buy-in and to shift from consultation to genuine collaborations of stakeholders

including local councils, and to help shift communities from 'passive recipients of services' to active partners and collaborators in community development.

Community leaders were able to, in many cases, outline innovative local solutions to their problems. They generally understand what is needed in their communities, local economies, towns, and what will likely work on the ground with effort.

Key shared regional issues, priorities and local solutions emerging from these dialogues were grouped on a regional, sub-regional and community scale. This analysis informed the RDANI committee on key regional communities' issues.

The RDANI committee then considered gaps in existing policies and programs to identify strategic initiatives that could be best progressed by RDANI [part 4].

Contribution to Plan

In summary stakeholders, including local and regional level government agencies, have been involved with and contributed to this RDANI Regional Plan through:

- Providing existing local community plans for consideration
- Identification of issues and priorities in community and other meetings
- Contributing data to town physical audits for use in vision benchmarking
- Continuing RDANI strategic initiatives and sub-region initiatives
- Ongoing consultation and feedback

Key Learnings from Regional Planning Documents (also Appendix 2)

Twenty-four regional planning documents were analysed to itemise and understand priorities, determine current actions, and consider complementarities and alignments among these, and with insights from community planning dialogues.

Documents analysed included: Federal and NSW State plans, local government strategic plans and economic development plans, community strategic plans, the Hunter New England Area Health strategic plan, New England Division of General Practice needs assessments, Catchment Management plans, Shire visions, Land

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Council economic development plans, UNE strategic plan, and the Rural and Regional Taskforce plan with priorities for this state.

Of note, is the deal of consistency across the region in terms of priorities and alignments in issues and development themes that together can be viewed as an interlinked and self-reinforcing system where the priorities and needs compound. Seven themes, all important, are summarised below and expanded in Appendix 2.

i. Education and skills training – capacity building and pathways to employment

Education, training and employment options are one part of a larger system for tackling youth unemployment, youth retention, and enhancing capacity of all across the region including to shift away from old industries and old agriculture.

These changes depend on the reconfiguration and regeneration of new, and community-aligned, education, cross skilling and training options and facilities, in order to enable a more flexible workforce. A whole-of-region approach is needed for education, skills training and job pathways with collaboration around education, trade training and job pathways.

Localities are aware of their training needs and their training capacities, particularly core areas of expertise. In many cases, adequate and more than adequate facilities exist to house trade and training centres but these are under-utilised or resources are duplicated. There appears to be need for an audit of existing training and education options and a reconfiguration and decentralisation of the existing options so that smaller communities can service their youth and those from other communities in their core areas of education and training expertise. The Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) is a strong example of how particular models of training and education can be owned and marketed by a region.

There appear to be opportunities for sound regional development through building a strong nexus between education and vocational training; identification of skill needs of local businesses; the provision of clear pathway for individual careers and success; and cooperation between local stakeholders. *Rural & Regional Taskforce report to Premier 2008, 73*

ii. Transitions for Regeneration

Erosion of existent industry, recentralisation of industry and difficulties attracting new industry to smaller population centres is a key theme. Many communities

see the need to attract new forms of industry and agriculture but also recognise their options for doing so are limited due to lack of adequate transport and health systems to service new workers. There is urgent need to access new technologies, particularly broadband, and this is a key theme in every population cluster.

There is potential for the region to become a model for renewable energy – there are already systems in place and the cultural shift is underway.

Opportunities for industry development in the region, according to the NSW Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services include:

- Advanced manufacturing (water technology innovation, fabrication)
- Food processing, value added agriculture and animal genetics
- Energy (bio-fuels, alternative energy including wind farms, natural gas)
- Transport and logistics
- Continued growth in tourism and events
- Niche food and wine value adding
- Government collaboration on agribusiness R&D with UNE
- Aviation industry
- Aged care services
- Environmental services (waste, design, sustainability)

iii. Aboriginal employment, education and industry

All population clusters recognise the rich heritage of Aboriginal communities, but are at a loss to know how best to service their Indigenous populations in terms of access to training, employment and educational opportunities. There has been a shift from seeing aboriginal underemployment and social exclusion as a burden to recognising Aboriginal communities as an asset.

iv. Integrated approach to relocation and tourism

Community planning meetings and several planning documents identified the need to strategise and support relocation to the region by raising the profile and visibility of the region its communities. Many smaller population centres have tourism potential but lack the facilities and transport options to be able to service that potential. For example, Werris Creek lacks accommodation options; Tingha

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has an inspirational museum but it is solely staffed by volunteers. There is potential for a regional approach to a tourism corridor with synchronised events.

v. Health

Northern Inland population clusters, particularly smaller localities, identify lack of access to regular and basic health and community services as one of their great needs. Lack of GPs willing to relocate to small centres plus lack of viable and regular transport options means these populations are not serviced adequately.

There is need for an audit of existing health and community services across the region, to calculate their reach and presence in the smallest population clusters. There also appears to be potential for one stop access points in mid-size clusters so communities can have one point of information access and referral for health and community services. Even if services exist many people do not know because the system is not integrated or visible.

The 2010 *'A New Direction for Health Services in Rural and Regional NSW'* policy document recommends co-ordinated partnerships involving governments, individuals, communities and government agencies and the corporate sector through a Regional Health Authority. To effectively address rural and regional health issues, a Regional Health Authority would adopt six operating principles:

- Empowering people to make healthy choices;
- Working together to create better health care experiences and outcomes;
- Integrating regional planning, funding and services;
- Improving value, economy and sustainability in health care;
- Ensuring the availability of a flexible, skilled health workforce;
- Staying at the forefront.

vi. Transport infrastructure

Transport needs are identified in many key documents. The recentralisation of train and airline services, lack of choice in providers and timing, and lack of

frequent access to regional hubs and metropolitan areas from smaller population centres are all issues in the Northern Inland.

Communities have seen erosion of train, air and bus access to large centres or cities. Even large centres have experienced a shrinking of transport options, such as, loss of planes to Inverell and Gunnedah and infrequent bus services to Brisbane and Sydney from key Northern Inland centres. A number of towns in the region do not have taxi services.

The erosion or non-existence of transport infrastructure has spin-off effects on many other areas of community life: the lack of and/or limited transport options have severe ramifications for the servicing of education, employment and healthcare, and contributes to out-migration of young people relocating for education.

vii. Partnerships and Champions

As planning documents identify, addressing these priorities requires innovative and collaborative approaches. Community dialogue sessions extended the idea of strategic, integrated, regional and sub-regional partnerships between localities, sectors and councils. Partnership approaches are recommended in the Rural and Regional Taskforce and NSW Aboriginal Land Council Northern Region reports.

The formation of strategic partnerships, whether at regional or community level, should reduce duplication and increase visibility in health and community services, align and extend education and transport priorities and allow whole-of-region and sub-region approach to addressing issues.

RDANI could provide a partnership brokering service (it does to an extent now) that links communities along regional and sub-regional corridors, and industry sectors. This could be done face to face or through an e-portal. Furthermore, many communities recognise they have local champions who are leaders in their field or have innovative approaches to industry, training, community services etc. There is great potential to support these local champions or local solutions and to create mechanisms for cross fertilisation of ideas and approaches across the region to help communities replicate solutions that may be useful in their context.

Learnings from Community Meetings (also Appendix 3)

The aims of the RDANI community consultation process are outlined above. The conversations and ideas at each meeting were mapped into a SEED (social, economic, environmental) diagram [Appendix 4, Seed diagrams; Appendix 5, Town Audits].

Many issues raised at the 21 regional community meetings are referenced in Our Region [Part 2] and in the analysis of key documents [Part 3] of this plan. Key messages are further outlined below and add to building understanding of key priorities for Northern Inland NSW, pointing to projects that can be progressed by RDANI [Part 4 of the plan].

Regional themes from community planning meetings

The key theme emerging across each of the regional community meetings was the importance of **regenerating regional communities** by building on existing strengths, local businesses, attracting tourists and devising strategies to enable the relocation of new people, especially families, and new enterprises. Northern Inland communities are keen to revitalise their towns and local economies, are welcoming to newcomers and support value-adding business enterprises. They are looking for support through **strategic partnerships** with their LGAs and State and Federal agencies and associated development funding.

Key shared regional community priorities

- Health and Aged Care Services – better access to GP consultations especially in the smaller communities and expansion of Aged Care facilities to cope with aging populations. An **integrated Health, Aged Care and Allied Services strategy** especially for the ageing population with a focus on GP consultations, health agencies, community service and investment partnerships.
- Skills Development and Employment; Opportunities for Youth - Communities want to support and retain their youth, provide recreational and educational spaces, build skills, and include youth in regional enterprises and economies. Expanding schools into **community skill development centres** providing local training, job readiness programs, traineeships, apprenticeships and meaningful work partnerships with local business networks are prominent

priorities. New initiatives around this are widely regarded across the communities.

- Over-Reliance on Volunteers and Ageing Community Leaders – a majority of communities spoke of how volunteering efforts, the life-blood of their communities, are tiring. **Support and succession planning for volunteers** is needed. Innovative ideas include co-mentoring and providing a space for young people to engage in meaningful work projects and community building.
- Supporting Relocation by Raising the Profile of Regional Communities – communities are keen to build on the strengths of local business enterprises and tourism for local events and concurrently encourage ‘relocation’ of tree changers, young families and retirees to ‘regenerate and achieve critical mass’. A small but significant number of communities see value in **regional tourism corridors** to attract and retain visitors for longer periods and as a strategy to build local connections and invitations to re-locate.
- Enterprise Development, Service Hubs and Employment – Communities need and want to diversify industries and **attract investment into value-adding processing or new niche enterprises**. Communities want to build on signs of this direction across the region, for instance, at Moree, Inverell, Glen Innes, Manilla, Ashford, Tenterfield, Wyallda and Bingara [see Appendix 3].
- Strategic Infrastructure Investment – Regional communities feel constrained by lack of infrastructure investment particularly in roads, telecommunications and air transport. Current policies are seen to centralise infrastructure and key services to a few regional centres rather than supporting and regenerating regional communities. Particular communities need focused grants (e.g. Barraba for town water supplies and Werris Creek waits for a grant to expand their Rail Heritage Storytelling centre). Broadband is seen by a majority as an opportunity to attract and value-add to existing enterprises.

Appendix 3 provides detail of inputs at Northern Inland community meetings, including a listing of community specific issues by population cluster and town. Figure 14 below, summarises Northern Inland community priorities based on population clusters to feed into development of RDANI priorities and initiatives.

Figure 14.

Population Cluster	Towns and Cities	Community ISSUES/priorities/key initiatives
Small Rural Towns (CLUSTER A) 500-1000 residents	TINGHA, CURLEWIS, WALLABADAH, BOGGABILLA, ASHFORD, MUNGINDI, DELUNGRA, EMMAVILLE, BELLATA, BELLATA, DEEPWATER, WOOLOMIN, BUNDARRA, CARROLL, SPRING RIDGE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health – GP/Dental services for wider community Integrate GP service with Aboriginal Medical Service. Industry generation for employment and enterprise. Regenerate social infrastructure. Create land for housing/’Lifestyle’ blocks Youth social inclusion strategies Health Aged Care precincts Business Enterprise Employment Strategy Casual work and crisis programs for youth. Improvement of access to health services. Rural and urban road upgrades/repairs. Local business enterprise development/retain and attract Main Street regeneration Promote tourism.
Small Regional Towns (CLUSTER B) 1000-3000 residents	URALLA, MANILLA, GUYRA, WALCHA, WEE WAA, WERRIS CREEK, KOOTINGAL, WARIALDA, BARRABA, BINGARA, BOGGABRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and tourism – expansion of attractions Business development. Youth education, unemployment and social inclusion strategy. Accommodation strategy Revitalisation of main street Promoting a 'Whole of Region Package'. Attract new families and businesses-critical mass Educational partnering opportunities for youth. Farm and Business start-ups Water infrastructure Marketing strategy for relocation and repopulation Develop social capital traineeships. Secure LGA funding Community projects Festivals and events.
Medium Regional Towns (CLUSTER C) 3000-7000 residents	GLEN INNES, TENTERFIELD, QUIRINDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting travellers to stop in town Focus on expansion of broadband. Water, health, roads and community infrastructure. More aboriginal employment within main street businesses Effective branding strategy for tourism Integrated health, youth and community services. Growth of local economy through new and existing businesses.

Population Cluster	Towns and Cities	Community ISSUES/priorities/key initiatives
Large Regional Towns (CLUSTER D) 7000-10000 residents	INVERELL, MOREE, GUNNEDAH, NARRABRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated Health Service and facilities, including aged care Transport Audit Access hub for high-quality community services Attract building and construction enterprises Attract high-speed broadband Change public perception of towns Education initiatives/Effective skills development Develop a tourism 'corridor' with neighbouring towns/LGAs. Solar thermal energy enterprises Training and employment strategy Decentralisation - attract people and businesses to relocate.
Small Regional Cities (CLUSTER E) 10000-20000 residents	ARMIDALE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong resilient economy Build on strengths Environmental Services and renewable energy Social Services Creative initiatives Regional regeneration
Large Regional Cities (CLUSTER F) Over 40,000 residents	TAMWORTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Enterprise Development Education, Skills and Training. Transport Industry Cluster Food Processing industry

Part 4. Northern Inland NSW – Strategic Framework

By harnessing information and insights from five streams of review and consultation, the RDANI Committee has shaped a Strategic Framework for its interactions and project work. This is based on a comprehensive understanding of the Northern Inland region including community aspirations gained from community meetings, statistics and research, Local, State and Commonwealth government plans, audits of services in towns of the region, and experience in current RDANI work.

The Strategic Framework includes a Northern Inland Development Vision, six identified priorities for developmental change and action, plus Strategies or Initiatives (how RDANI will work to address priorities towards the vision).

RDANI Vision for Northern Inland NSW

By 2015, RDANI anticipates the Northern Inland region will –

- Be experiencing a period of sustained population growth in at least 75% of population clusters, with a mix of demographics, plus advance of all public services to match population growth;
- Host at least five new identifiable enterprises providing tangible employment outcomes;
- Have health and aged care services equivalent to the average in major cities, reaching as closely as possible to where people live in the region;
- Have enhanced road, air, communications, education and social infrastructure such that 80% of regional residents recognise improvements;
- Show advances in engagement and welfare of local Aboriginal communities and citizens against all benchmarks set by national and state agencies;
- Be recognised among the top 40% of regions in environmental and sustainable resource utilisation terms.

RDANI will be known as an active, facilitative, results-oriented organisation contributing purposefully to achieving regional development aspirations.

Six priorities for change for robust regional communities

Through its consultative review processes, RDANI has identified six priorities for the Northern Inland, plus a series of strategies (or initiatives) for RDANI to focus on over the next 12-24 months and into the future. The six priorities are:

- A. Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth
- B. Industry diversification and job creation
- C. Integrated and improved health care
- D. Investment in regional infrastructure and education
- E. Social inclusion and engaging aboriginal communities
- F. Environmental achievement.

Priority A is the key message from regional community meetings. The need is to regenerate regional communities by building on strengths, encouraging local businesses, attracting tourists, and devising strategies to enable the relocation of new people, especially families, workers, and new enterprises. Communities are looking to RDA to facilitate strategic partnerships to achieve these outcomes.

What Role for RDANI?

Regional Development Australia committees were established under a partnership of Federal and State governments as forums for ongoing engagement with rural and regional Australia. The RDAs are positioned amid a range of Ministerial portfolios, major and smaller agencies already planning and implementing developments across regions by working with communities and business [see Appendix 2].

RDA Committees are to consider gaps in existing policies and programs to identify strategic initiatives the RDA could usefully progress, by building not duplicating. Each RDA role and focus will vary according to community priorities.

RDA committees are expected to contribute by bringing together and promoting information on regional needs to Ministers, agencies and councils. This is achieved by facilitating interactions across the region by assisting communities in

their development including co-ordination across localities, agencies and other groups, and by progressing particular projects to achieve regional level results.

Based on Northern Inland NSW consultation, and recognising the wide range of regional and local agencies and groups, expected RDANI activity can be usefully described as two types 'Networks & Interactions' or 'Projects'. In outline:

- **Networks & Interactions** – facilitating strategic partnerships, co-ordinating among groups and agencies, raising the profile of issues and priorities, improving regional planning, input to Ministers, agencies and councils and advocacy on priorities;
- **Projects** – specific RDA led activities with targets and performance measures.

Networking and interactions are, and will continue to be, a vital platform for RDANI work. Indicators such as frequency, width and depth of consultations, meetings with current and potential stakeholders, inputs to plans and policies, and ideas taken up will be reported annually [see: Regional Development Australia – What is it? Roles and responsibilities, Sept 2009].

Projects will be the active frontline of RDANI work. Projects need to be well-designed and effectively progressed. A set of targets or performance measures will be developed during the shaping of each project including contribution to the region or communities and to outcomes expected of RDAs. RDANI should be held to account against these, as a useful, results-oriented organisation.

Review Process

Overall, RDANI is confident of improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the more than 40 towns and surrounding districts of our region. This RDANI Regional Plan provides a strong strategic framework. It will be a living document, evolving with updates of base data, annual review and recalibration of priorities and initiatives.

Structured review is important to ensure useful results are being achieved and these align with community priorities, and build on and add value to remits, energies and activities of agencies, groups and enterprises across the region.

RDANI will set in place, in consultation with overarching agencies, a systematic and arms-length review process to be conducted annually in advance of updating the Plan. This annual review will evaluate progress, achievements and otherwise, effectiveness of RDANI involvement, identifies issues, and proposes changes. The next review round should commence in May 2012.

It is envisaged key stakeholders will form part of the review process and RDANI will also be looking at ways of obtaining structured feedback on both Interaction and Project activity during the course of each year.

Review of the RDANI Regional Plan and performance against KPIs will also meet requirements of Government stakeholders as per the Annual Business Plan.

RDANI priorities, goals, initiatives, timeframes

For each priority and overall goal, planned RDANI initiatives in short term (immediate to 12 months) and longer term (24 months and ongoing) time-frames, are set out in the following six tables.

The RDANI initiatives are grouped as Networks & Interactions, or as RDANI Projects. Targets are included for key Projects.

Priority A. Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth

Goal: Over the period to 2015, and beyond, Northern Inland NSW will experience a period of sustained population growth in at least 75% of the centres/areas, with a mix of demographics, plus advances of all public services to match population growth.

In addition to retaining families, young people, businesses and employment opportunities, most Northern Inland centres and areas want and need to attract industry, workers, families, visitors, tree changers and retirees. With population growth should come health, education and infrastructure services. RDANI and communities need to ensure this occurs.

Current RDANI activities include: *Physical audits of 35 towns to identify gaps and develop benchmarks, collaboration with the Evocities project, RDANI Skilled Migration program, collaboration with Foundation for Regional Development, Northern Inland Innovation Awards, support for the local food and wine industry, and regional branding and tourism initiatives.*

Networks & Interactions	Projects	Project targets
2011-2012 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commence forums for LGA representatives to facilitate exchange of ideas and collaboration across the region. ▪ Promote available grants and programs for communities via emails/ newsletters/PR. ▪ Harness know-how and enthusiasm of local youth to develop websites/social media portals as required for RDANI initiatives. 	2010-2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Source regeneration benchmarks and/or develop new measures, compare against RDANI town audits to identify gaps in facilities and services. ▪ Start a RDANI Chair's forum to bring together lateral thinking around 'wicked' problems. ▪ Redevelop RDANI website to be a regional one-stop portal also hosting project pages. ▪ Consolidate and review research on barriers to inward migration including tree-changers. Analyse with reference to NI NSW features. ▪ Develop and promote town success stories to other towns in region on RDANI website, and as material for seminars. ▪ Undertake research on skills shortages (e.g. medical, hospitality, agriculture) and actively target skilled migrants based on eligible vacancies and employer demand. 	EDC Strategy - immediate start, final agreed May 2011 Report May 2011 First meeting mid 2011 Ready March 2010 Report by June 2010 10 stories over 2011-2012 200 applications processed 2011-2012
2011-2012 and ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with NSW Department of Trade & Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services on processes for identification of potential for new innovative businesses through the region. 	2010-2012 and ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and provide local administration and advice for the \$1 billion RDA Fund to ensure worthwhile projects are submitted by LGAs and Incorporated not-for-profit organisations ▪ Develop a regional 'Come on Inland' program in conjunction with NSW Department of Trade & Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services, Federal Government, LGAs, communities, and other active stakeholders. Northern Inland brand and 'prospectus' to be sent to target markets (families/businesses) ▪ Champion programs to increase general skills and capacities of all types of workers across the region, including those in public roles, businesses and older citizens. 	Endorse a minimum of 15 projects for each round of funding 20 new relocated businesses by 2017 Strategy by end 2012

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrated Tourism strategy developed and implemented through collaboration with agencies, RTOs and Councils. ▪ Review positioning of Northern Inland NSW as an affordable over-55s retirement destination. ▪ Continuation of the annual Regional Development Australia Northern Inland Innovation Awards 	<p>Strategy by mid-2012</p> <p>Report November 2012.</p>
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Priority B. Industry diversification and job creation

Goal: Over the period to 2015, Northern Inland NSW will attract at least five new enterprises providing tangible employment outcomes.

Communities are looking to foster value-adding in all sectors from agriculture and food processing to advanced technologies. The Northern Inland region has a negative structural component – there are too many jobs situated in industries that are valuable and productive but declining employment wise. Communities know they need high value-adding, worker intensive enterprises to support inward migration of workers and families. High level support is needed to establish regional value-adding enterprises clusters including, through education, to ‘navigate transitions’ into more diversified, resilient and robust economic ecologies.

Current RDANI activities include: *A regional branding and relocation initiative, and promotion of the food & wine industry with a view to increasing employment opportunities.*

Networks & Interactions	Projects	Project targets
<p>2010-2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negotiate new regional funding to support feasibility studies and pilot projects around establishing value-adding clusters. ▪ Promote available grants for industry via emails/newsletters/PR. ▪ Collaborate with Department of Trade & Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services to identify potential recipients of support. 	<p>2010-2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review research and reports on business/enterprise clusters and identify key factors to be addressed at policy and regional levels. ▪ Robust economic research to identify Northern Inland products (and by-products) for value adding and how for new & existing businesses, markets, issues (Agriculture & Manufacturing). ▪ Identify opportunities to leverage NBN capability to facilitate value-adding clusters. ▪ Identify opportunities for local business/enterprise clusters to tender for defence contracts. ▪ Conduct scenario planning to identify opportunities to diversify industry in the face of water reductions in the Murray-Darling Basin. 	<p>Report April 2012</p> <p>Report April 2012</p> <p>Report & strategy June 2012</p>
<p>2011-2012 and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocate for government funding to establish innovative new enterprise clusters. 	<p>2010-2012 and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and provide local administration and advice for the \$1 billion RDA Fund to ensure worthwhile projects are submitted by LGAs and Incorporated not-for-profit organisations. ▪ Utilise RDANI website portal to promote virtual and local clusters. E.g. Farm stays, food & wine. ▪ Program of community workshops focusing on value-adding niche enterprises and attracting and retaining employees in our region. 	<p>Endorse a minimum of 15 projects for each round of funding</p> <p>10 items by mid-2012</p> <p>Eight during 2012</p> <p>Report end 2012.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot project to identify industry inputs that are sourced from outside the region with a view to attracting businesses to the region for local production opportunities. ▪ Investigate the opportunity to provide cheaper and more reliable energy sources to towns throughout the region as an incentive for energy intensive manufacturing industries to re-locate. ▪ Business Mentoring Program to grow local SMEs and increase local employment ▪ Continuation of the annual Regional Development Australia Northern Inland Innovation Awards. 	<p>By March 2012</p> <p>Report by Sep 2012</p> <p>Commenced by June 2012</p>
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Priority C. Integrated and improved health care

Goal: By 2015, health and aged care services equivalent to the average in major cities, reaching as closely as possible to where people live in the region.
 This goal will need to be achieved by interaction with the major public agencies responsible for healthcare, and with private health providers.

Networks & Interactions	Projects	Project targets
<p>2010-2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote a partnership approach to the provision of an integrated health, aged care, and home and community care services strategy. ▪ Promote National and State health and well-being programs. 	<p>2010-2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Source healthcare benchmarks and/or develop new measures, compare against RDANI town audits to identify gaps in facilities and services. ▪ As follow-on, achieve or conduct a regional health audit and utilise findings in reports to Ministers, and input to planning at all levels. ▪ With HNEAHS and other key stakeholders, facilitate a series of e-health pilots to leverage advancements in broadband infrastructure. 	<p>Report by May 2011</p> <p>10 page analysis Dec 2011</p> <p>Pilots complete mid 2012</p>
<p>2010-2012 and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote awareness of existing health services to overcome barriers. ▪ Consolidate information on local hospital efficiency and with stakeholders consider application of benchmarks in NI region. ▪ Promote awareness of new 'Medicare Local' model and encourage wider roll-out. 	<p>2010-2012 and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidate research into Doctor and Specialist shortages and analyse with regard to Northern Inland town and health audits. ▪ Development of packages to recruit health professionals to the region. ▪ Promote and provide local administration and advice for the \$1 billion RDA Fund to ensure worthwhile projects are submitted by LGAs and Incorporated not-for-profit organisations ▪ Develop an integrated 'Health Transport' plan to address the fragmented nature of community transport for health care; both road and air. ▪ Work in conjunction with other key stakeholders in getting a federally funded Headspace Youth Mental Health Centre in the region in the next 12 months 	<p>Analysis by mid-2012.</p> <p>Packages compiled my mid 2012</p> <p>Endorse a minimum of 15 projects for each round of funding</p> <p>Completed by Dec 2012</p>

Priority D. Investment in regional infrastructure and education

Goal: By 2015, Northern Inland NSW will have enhanced road, air, communications, education and social infrastructure such that 80% of regional residents recognise improvements in their individual activities and in business operations. All communities identified this as a priority however the focus varied – rural roads and air services dominate concerns, plus the need for better telecommunication services.

The recent boom in the mining industry has also put considerable strain on our existing transport networks and a solution to the constant backlog on our roads and rail lines must be found. To this end, RDANI proposes that a feasibility study be undertaken into the construction of a rail line from Moree to Illuka, as well as a deep water port on the north coast that is capable of handling coal export facilities. This project will not only create a significant jobs but will also ease the strain on our existing transport networks so that they can be better utilised for passenger and other traffic.

Higher level integrated support is needed also to enable schools in smaller communities to evolve into multi-purpose training centres, providing job skills, traineeships and life-long learning opportunities, including partnering with local enterprises and industry to facilitate career pathways. This reflects emergent thinking in NSW Education that schools should be community assets available all year. The Gwydir Learning Region (Warialda and Bingara communities) provides a strong model.

Current RDANI activities include: *Town-by-town social and physical infrastructure audit to identify gaps and needs and as a basis for benchmarking, and an ‘NBN ready’ package for Local Councils.*

Networks & Interactions	Projects	Project targets
<p>2010-2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing input to agencies on local road infrastructure needs. ▪ Work with the Federal member and all LGAs to develop a Northern Inland Broad-band Strategy in preparation for roll-out. ▪ Encourage the wider region to implement a holistic approach to learning pathways by rolling out Gwydir Learning Region model. ▪ Facilitate, encourage and promote ‘work-experience’ programs with interested local businesses and organisations. 	<p>2010-2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidate research on regional infrastructure. Source transport and education benchmarks and/or develop new measures, compare against RDANI town audits to identify gaps. ▪ Conduct a region-wide transport & freight audit. ▪ Create a region-wide Transport Guide. ▪ Hold a series of youth forums (social media) to hear about the facilities needs of local youth. ▪ Establish a link with the UNE to focus research on relevant NI regional development issues. ▪ Establish an NBN Project Coordinator in the region to promote and progress local roll-out and various projects in relation to the NBN across health, education, agriculture, business efficiency and in-home applications. 	<p>Report May 2011</p> <p>Complete mid 2012</p> <p>Analysis by Dec 2011</p> <p>By Dec 2011</p> <p>By Dec 2011</p>
<p>2010-2012 and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build linkages between businesses, training centres and schools. ▪ Achieve agreements to open schools for longer periods so wider community can utilise school infrastructure. 	<p>2010-2012 and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As useful, extend the NSW T&I/RDANI program for developing/providing an entry level training program with skills for agriculture, mining and construction (Gunnedah Basin, Narrabri model). ▪ Develop a strategic regional transport plan (road, rail, air, freight, passenger, health). ▪ Promote and provide local administration and advice for the \$1 billion RDA Fund to ensure worthwhile projects are submitted by LGAs and Incorporated not-for-profit organisations. 	<p>Completed by Dec 2011</p>

Priority E. Social inclusion and engaging aboriginal communities

Goal: Over the next decade, Northern Inland NSW will achieve progressive advances in engagement and welfare of local Aboriginal communities and citizens against all benchmarks set by national and state agencies.

Communities want to explore partnered enterprises and re-think how to engage with their Aboriginal communities around ways to increase engagement and employment. Ongoing dialogue is needed around how to best support partnered enterprises such as eco-cultural tourism ventures. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy in Moree is a tested model. Interactions to develop partnerships and design culturally appropriate learning pilots that fit community contexts are needed.

Networks & Interactions	Projects	Project targets
2010-2012 and ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Closer collaboration with local Aboriginal Land Councils to assist in their plans and actions, see: Northern & North Western ALCS <i>Regional Economic Development Strategy and Implementation Plans</i>. ▪ Develop and implement a MOU between RDANI and regional LALCs. 	2010-2012 and ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research successful projects including businesses from across the country to replicate in the Northern Inland. ▪ Develop and submit projects to DEEWR under the Indigenous Employment Program (RDANI are a panel member) that will result in tangible employment outcomes for Aboriginals. ▪ Promote and provide local administration and advice for the \$1 billion RDA Fund to ensure worthwhile projects are submitted by LGAs and Incorporated not-for-profit organisations. 	Ongoing. 2 projects submitted by Dec 2011 Endorse a minimum of 15 projects for each round of funding

Priority F. Environmental achievement

Goal: By 2015, Northern Inland NSW will be recognised among the top 40% of regions in environmental management and sustainable resource utilisation terms.

This goal will need to be achieved mainly by interaction with the major public agencies responsible for the environment and climate change, as well as the many public groups involved in catchments; industry and producer associations and enterprises, calling on and applying considerable research and experience. . The emerging renewables sector is also a focus of RDANI. Currently there are many projects being undertaken in the Northern Inland including the Ben Lomond Wind Farm, the Glen Innes Wind Farm, The Sapphire Wind Farm, the White Rock Wind Farm and the Moree Solar Farm. These projects, and many others have the potential to not only lessen the region’s over reliance on fossil fuels but to also develop the local economy by creating in excess of 1,500 jobs.

Current RDANI activities include developing a local response to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and scenario planning for communities to diversify industry in an environment with less water.

Initiatives: Interactions	Projects	Project targets
2010-2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular interactions with stakeholders and enterprises to understand opportunities 	2010-2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop understanding of potential economic and social impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin 	Actions plan by Dec 2010 Report by May 2011.

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<p>and issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote participation in the Keep Australia Beautiful Tidy Towns Sustainable Communities program. 	<p>Plan in Northern Inland NSW. Identify the opportunity for investment in alternate industries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Source benchmarks and/or develop new measures, compare against RDANI town audits to identify gaps. ▪ Explore and promote options for Northern Inland communities and incoming businesses to engage in developments in the emerging renewable energy sector. ▪ In conjunction with key stakeholders, develop a local model to provide a response to the reduction of water in the Murray-Darling Basin. ▪ Investigate projects to promote the use of on-farm water saving technologies. 	<p>Strategy by September 2011</p> <p>By October 2011</p> <p>By December 2011</p>
<p>2010-2012 and ongoing</p>	<p>2010-2012 and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and provide local administration and advice for the \$1 billion RDA Fund to ensure worthwhile projects are submitted by LGAs and Incorporated not-for-profit organisations. ▪ Review research into co-existence of mining and agriculture; identify pointers for NI businesses (all types) and communities. 	<p>Report by June 2012.</p>

Appendices – posted on the RDANI website as separate documents (www.rdani.org.au)

1. Agricultural statistics
2. Analysis of regional planning documents
3. Issues and Priorities from Community Meetings
4. Community Meetings - SEED (social, economic, environmental) diagrams
5. Audits of physical facilities, 35 Northern Inland NSW towns.