

## Appendix 3. Issues and Priorities from Community Meetings

The format for each planning meeting followed an open exploratory conversation or dialogue process. Community participants were asked to identify their community's key strengths, assets, successes, challenges, opportunities, and then decide on their key priorities, first steps and key performance measures that indicate their progress. These conversations and ideas were then mapped into a SEED Plan (social, economic, environmental) Community Development Plan [refer separate RDANI document]. Purpose and aims of the RDANI community consultation process are outlined above. Many issues raised at the 21 regional community meetings are referenced in Our Region [part 2] and the analysis of key documents as summarised in part 3. Key messages from community meetings add to the building momentum around key priorities for all of Northern Inland NSW, and signposts for programs and projects to be progressed by RDANI [part 4].

### Regional Themes from the 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 revitalize their towns and local economies, are welcoming to newcomers and support value-adding business enterprises. They are looking for support through partnerships with their LGAs and State and Federal agencies.

### Shared Regional Community Issues

The key shared regional community issues were identified as:

**Health and Aged Care Services** – access to GP's consultations especially in the smaller communities and expansion of Aged Care facilities to cope with their ageing population demographic. Some communities have state of the art MPS (Multi-Purpose Services) and adequately GP staffed Medical Centres and Aged care facilities. However, most communities do not have access to and are unaware of planning around regional community health care services.

**Youth Inclusion and Employment** – communities are struggling to keep their youth, and to provide jobs and skill development programs for their youth. The existing skill development system forces many young ones to travel away to regional centres and local apprenticeships are complex and costly. Communities are exploring how to support their 'youth with something to do'.

**Over-Reliance on Volunteerism and Ageing Community Leaders** - the clear majority of communities spoke of how their volunteering efforts while incredibly meaningful and being the life-blood of their communities are tiring. Community leaders and champions need support and succession planning is needed. Some innovative ideas have emerged: co-mentoring and providing a space for the young to engage in meaningful work projects and community building.

**Infrastructure Spending** to cover shortfalls on rural roads and transport in particular. LGAs are seen as 'picking up the tab' as both State and Federal Government shift costs with the removal of their community service obligations. Broadband is seen by a majority of communities as an opportunity to attract and value-add to existing enterprises. The existing policy mix is seen as centralising infrastructure and providing key services to a few regional centres rather than supporting and helping to regenerate regional communities.

### Key Shared Regional Community Priorities

Again a number of shared priorities emerged across the regional community planning dialogues. These priorities could be grouped under a broad strategic framework of regenerating regional communities through strategic partnerships across Communities, LGAs and Government Agencies.

**Integrated Health Aged Care and Allied Services Strategy** especially for the ageing population demographic including GP-RN consultations and to partner health Agencies and Community service and investment partnerships.

**Supporting Relocation by Raising the Profile of Regional Communities** – communities are keen to support and build on the strengths of local business enterprises and tourism for local events – festivals but also support 'relocation' to 'regenerate and achieve critical mass' whether tree changers, young families and retirees. However many communities feel at present they have a low profile and their visibility - marketing initiatives are fragmented and competitive. A small but significant number of communities realize the value of regional tourism corridors and co-ordinated event calendars to attract, enable additional stays and retain visitors with the region for longer periods. This is seen as a strategy to build local connections, as invitations to re-locate.

**Skill Development Employment – Opportunities for Youth** – All communities were mindful of the need to support and retain their youth, to provide ‘spaces’ whether recreational or educational, and the need for youth to be skilled and included in the regional enterprises and economy. Expanding schools into community skill development centres providing local training, job ready, traineeships, hosting apprenticeship training and meaningful work partnerships with local business networks was a prominent priority. New Initiatives around this are widely regarded across the communities where they are being introduced or are seen as important to have in their community and local economy.

**Enterprise Development, Service Hubs and Employment Strategies** - Communities realize they need to and want to diversify existing industry enterprises and attract investment into value-adding processing or new niche enterprises. The high number of small, niche export enterprises, opportunity thinking and ambition to build new high value adding enterprise clusters across smaller communities is evident across the region. Examples here include:

- Communities like **Moree** recognize the potential of working collaboratively with their neighbouring communities building centres of excellence in mechanical or agricultural skill development, research and rural sophistication.
- Other regional communities like **Inverell** have sophisticated strategies to become regional service centres with integrated community, health and aged care one-stop shops.
- **Glen Innes** has attracted 2 major high-tech companies with international supply chain logistics employing up to 600 part-time young Gen Y employees, requiring additional Australia Post freight infrastructure. These businesses are attracted by the Broadband services and the local can-do attitude of their LGA and local builders partnering their expansion.
- **Manilla** is already hosting international air competitions and nationally significant endurance horse events. A smaller community **Bundarra** has plans for high value adding with a gastronomic snail heliculture venture adding onto their aquaculture enterprises and **Uralla** sees partnerships with Sydney communities in developing a local ‘go slow’ food web. Meanwhile:
- **Ashford** is piloting the Australian hemp industry and is planning for value adding flow-on enterprises. Similarly **Quirindi** is building onto national opportunities from the local coal industry and arts events and **Tingha** is pioneering Feijoa horticulture.
- **Tenterfield** community dialogue participants decided that they needed to bring together the key stakeholders, partners, drives and investors to maintain momentum around their re-branding strategy and overcome the fragmentation of the past. This is to build on the state of the art, national heritage centre around Australian Federation and theatre-café complex.
- **Warialda** and **Bingara** communities have initiated the Gwydir Learning Region propose innovative co-mentoring real life working traineeships that have changed their local youth attitude to work.

These communities are devising innovative local solutions, enterprise development and tourism strategies – ‘**Planning for the Future**’ despite the ravages of a 10 year drought.

**Strategic Infrastructure Investment** – While regional communities house high social capital, they feel constrained by a lack of strategic social infrastructure investment particularly in rural roads, telecommunications and airline transport services. There is a need for road transport depots, by-pass and highway and rail upgrades. Note particular communities need focused infrastructure grants eg Barraba is suffering from water stress in their existing town water supplies and Werris Creek waits for a grant to expand their nationally significant Rail Heritage Storytelling centre.

#### Community Specific Issues and Priorities (by population cluster and town)

##### Small Regional Cities (CLUSTER E) - Armidale

- Regional Regeneration – Landscape, engineered woodlands and existing enterprises, industry clusters
- Carbon biodiversity banking and local food supply – markets
- Building on Economic Strengths – professional knowledge research networks and export markets
- Renewable Energy Future – diversified solar, wind, community owned renewable power company, Hospital Trigen

## Large Regional Towns (CLUSTER D)

### Inverell

- Becoming a regional service centre with an integrated health aged care service strategy and one stop service hub
- Centre of Excellence Skill Development Centre in Building
- Transport Audit Study and broadband to facilitate the above

### Gunnedah

- Gunnedah Task Employment Skills Taskforce to bring it all together
- Integrated Health Aged Care Housing Service Strategy stakeholder group

### Moree

- Changing the Perception - Image of Moree (local and external) – publishing good news stories
- Skill Development Centre of Excellence – heavy machinery engineering and agricultural skills
- Working with Neighbouring Communities along the western corridor
- Solar Thermal Enterprises

### Narrabri (collated from the Narrabri Social Economic Plan 2009-14)

- Climate Change adaption – water energy efficiency savings, green enterprises
- Foster Culture – art, murals sculptures – supporting young Aboriginal cultural identity
- Riverside Development – walkways, playing grounds

## Medium Regional Towns (CLUSTER C)

### Glen Innes

- Staying up the Broadband Queue – an early adopter site to attract and keep innovative high tech businesses
- More Aboriginal People employed in Main St businesses – rethinking
- First steps around engaging partnerships with our Aboriginal community

### Quirindi

- Focusing on Opportunities for servicing partnering coal enterprises
- Building Quirindi's profile – Linking the community using social networking, highlighting assets, opportunities, Arts Cultural events tourism opportunities.

### Tenterfield

- Rebranding Tenterfield to feature beautiful natural topography of the Rock'
- Tenterfield stakeholder group of drivers, investors, key community stakeholders to work together on 3 agreed priorities – maintaining momentum and overcoming fragmentation.

### Small Regional Towns (CLUSTER B)

Note. Guyra and Walcha requested their community planning dialogues be deferred to undertake their LEP planning process.

### Uralla

- Local Employment Strategy – specialist health aged care units (brain), Slow Local Food network, Youth training in sustainability, environmental leadership
- Renewable Energy Efficiency Strategy –water energy building efficiency, innovative alternative energy
- Maintaining Identity - Autonomy

### Warialda

- Putting it all Together – Selling Promoting regional tourism corridor -a whole regional package
- Involving Kids in real educational learning - skilling partnerships
- Farm and Business Start-Up partnership support finance packages

### Bingara

- Regeneration thru repopulating with people, enterprises, reaching a critical mass of enterprises, population including targeting migrants with skills

### Barraba

- Water Infrastructure to alleviate water stress of town supplies
- Regeneration thru relocation
- Boutique Abattoir to enable local beef brand and value add.

### Werris Creek

- Expansion of Rail Storytelling Museum and Hidden Heritage Gems
- Accommodation Strategy for tourism, coal subcontractors

**Manilla**

- Promote Manilla as a significant air sports, equine event and recreational water centre

**Wee Waa**

- Developing an innovative local Event Festival strategy
- Business skills training and entrepreneurial culture
- Improving town assets, recreational sporting areas

**Boggabri**

- Upgrade Riverbanks into Parks, travellers rest
- Unique Festival strategy – jazz, comedy, mardi gras street party
- Business skills training and entrepreneurial culture

**Small Rural Towns (CLUSTER A)**

**Bundarra**

- Creating a solar identity thru featuring solar panels in the main street.
- School community eco-reserve camping site for regent honeyeaters

**Deepwater**

- Youth Needs Dialogue and Community Bus
- Lifestyle blocks to attract ‘Relocators’

**Ashford**

- Hemp value adding enterprises and local organic food aquaculture web
- Potential Eco-Cultural Tourism Track partnership with Lands Council

**Tingha**

- Fejoa horticulture enterprise
- Community - Lands Council partnership – Tingha Think Tank to revitalize the community, grants, health initiatives

**Gwabegar-Pillaga**

- Lifestyle – sport, entertainment, community outings
- Valuing Cultural identity
- Local eco-tourism.