



# Regional Plan 2013 - 2016

Version 3.1 (October 2013)



An Australian Government Initiative



A NSW Government Initiative



Regional  
Development  
*Australia*

NORTHERN INLAND NSW

# Message from the RDANI Chair

The Northern Inland region of NSW is a unique part of Australia covering a land area of just under 100,000 square kilometres (12% of NSW) where over 180,000 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 four 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, 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 2016 with six RDANI work priorities directed towards achieving the vision goals. These priorities will drive our organisation over the coming two years. Part 6 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 or advocating, or manage 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 in 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

This Regional Plan has been developed by  
RDA Northern Inland.

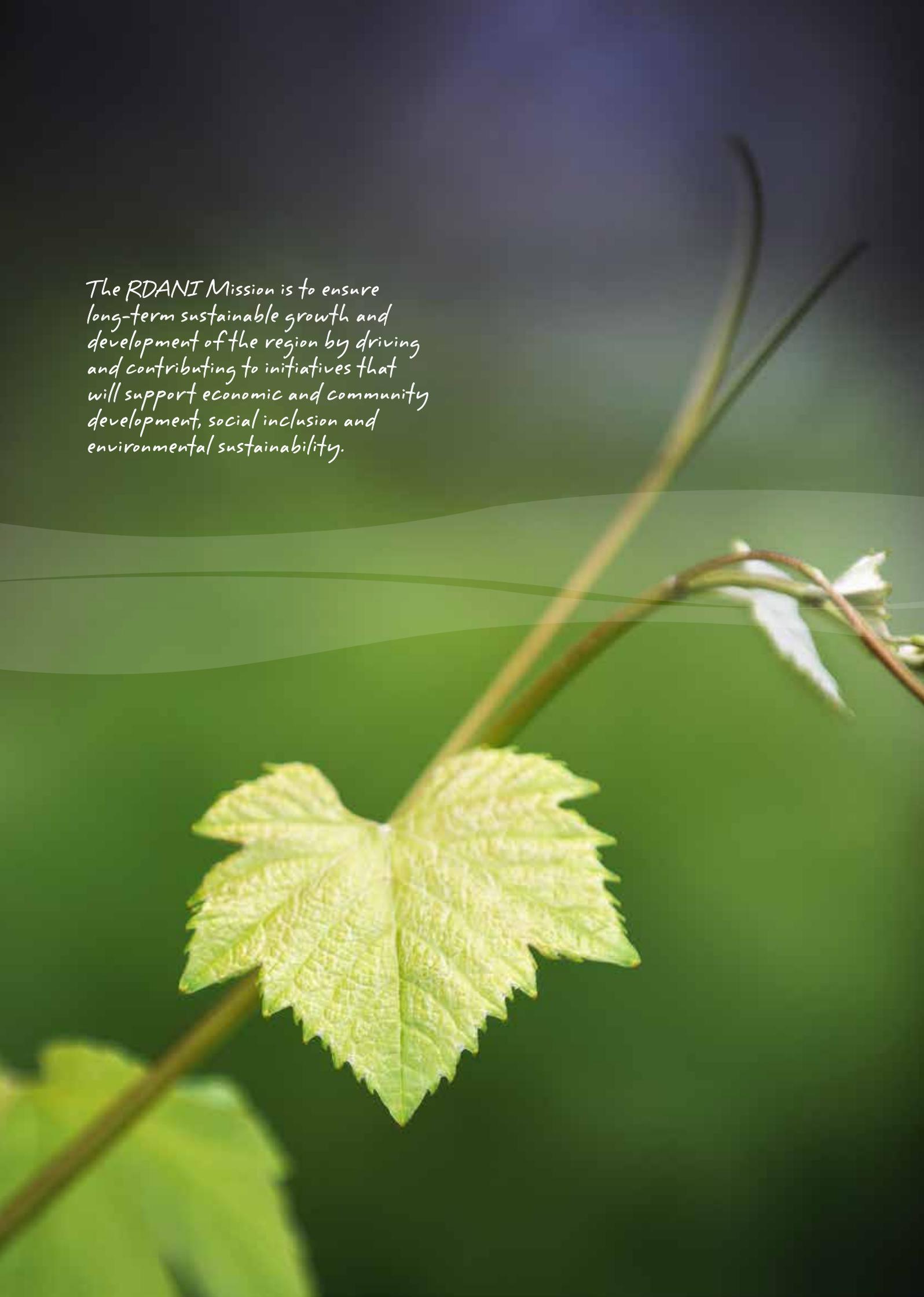
Enquiries about the document or its  
content should be directed to:

Nathan Axelsson  
Executive Officer  
RDA Northern Inland  
PO Box 72 Armidale NSW 2350  
02 6771 2790 rdani@rdani.org.au



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# 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

The Northern Inland region is dominated by resource-based agricultural activity, including a high dependence on irrigated agriculture in some locations. When flow-on effects are included, agriculture accounts for 40-50% of economic activity in some localities. Much of the services sector is geared to support agricultural production, though in the larger cities such as Tamworth and Armidale, the economies are more diverse, with services geared toward the needs of household consumption. Expanded mining activity is also a key feature of some local economies including Gunnedah, Narrabri and Werris Creek.

Environmental issues are largely focused around land and water management, though with the advent of the carbon economy, waste disposal and energy use now feature strongly in the sustainability plans of local government. Land-use conflict between mining (especially coal-seam gas mining) and agriculture has emerged as a key issue. The focus is mostly on the environmental effects of mining on the extensive groundwater which supports irrigated agriculture on the Liverpool Plains, a highly productive agricultural region surrounding Narrabri, Gunnedah, Tamworth and Quirindi.

Key social and cultural features include a strong connection to the land, a large indigenous population (9% indigenous compared to the state and national average of 2.5%, ABS Census 2011), social events often based around small localities, strong representation of Australian and English ancestry (ABS Census 2011) and very high proportion of households (92.7%) where English is the only language spoken (ABS Census 2011).

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 North West Slopes covers 29,500 square kilometers.

The North West 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, Warialda and Inverell.

## The North West Plains

An extensive pastoral area covering over 32,000 square kilometers west of the NW Slopes, featuring prime agricultural land drained by the Namoi and Gwydir Rivers and its tributaries, the Mooki, Mehi and Peel Rivers. 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:

Population Cluster Description	Size	Towns Et Cities
Small Rural Towns (CLUSTER A)	500-1000	TINGHA, CURLEWIS, WALLABADAH, BOGGABILLA, ASHFORD, MUNGINGINDI, DELUNGRA, DRAKE, EMMAVILLE, 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

Table 1: Northern Inland NSW population clusters (RDANI 2010)



Original region artwork kindly provided by Regional Arts NSW

# Key Priorities

Through its consultative review, RDANI has identified six action Priorities for RDANI work, plus associated short and longer term Initiatives. Priorities A and B are the key messages from regional community meetings. The need to grow population sustainably while regenerating regional communities by building on strengths, growing local businesses, attracting tourists, and devising strategies to facilitate relocation of new residents and businesses.

## A. Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth

Many smaller towns and communities within the region are experiencing sustained out-migration of young people and families, which in turn has a detrimental effect on communities and essential services such as health and education.

## B. Industry diversification, business growth and job creation

Agriculture and related services account for around 40-50% of the region's economy and is the predominant employer. Communities are therefore looking to leverage this comparative advantage and foster value-adding in the sector. The need to diversify beyond agriculture is also apparent.

## C. Integrated and improved health care

Northern Inland population clusters, particularly smaller localities under 5000 people, identify a lack of access to regular and basic health and community services as one of their greatest needs.

## D. Investment in regional infrastructure, education and skills

One of the biggest inhibitors to economic growth and the flow of goods to market is the condition of many of the local roads throughout the region. The priority infrastructure projects of many of the 13 LGAs relate to local road upgrades. In addition, skills shortages and disengaged youth need to be addressed.

## E. Social inclusion and engaging Aboriginal communities

Communities want to explore partnered enterprises and re-think how to engage with their Aboriginal communities around ways to increase employment and the creation of Aboriginal-owned and operated businesses.

## F. Environmental achievement and resource efficiency

With energy costs around 20% higher than Sydney or South East Queensland, there is also a strong interest by communities and industry to explore renewable energy opportunities like biogas as a way of lowering energy costs and the positive economic and environmental outcomes this new sector would provide to the region.

# Strengths and Challenges

## Region Strengths

- A strong natural resource base (land, soils, water, climate and forests) which support agriculture, mining, forestry and accompanying food manufacturing activities.
- 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.
- Central location with rail, air and road networks connecting the region internally and with other parts of Australia, east to west, north to south.
- Aviation industries, including training, airline maintenance and aerial agricultural services, plus a range of manufacturers servicing the region.
- Strong sense of community in localities and co-operation across the region.
- Competitive telecommunications infrastructure including an NBN fibre first release site in Armidale, second release site in Tamworth and NBN Fixed Wireless throughout the region, providing opportunities to further develop our digital economy.
- Nature based tourism – national parks, hot artesian springs, rural landscapes.

## Key Issues

- High dependence on commodities (agriculture, mining) which leaves the region vulnerable to the vagaries of climate and international commodity prices.
- Community and landholder opposition to mining on prime agricultural land.
- Rising energy costs and high grid access charges for renewable energy projects.
- Lack of business growth initiatives and support.
- Issues relating to rapid mining expansion/labour competition, impacts on water table, accommodation shortages, strong dollar effects.
- Murray Darling Basin Plan: impacts unknown, depends where water buy-backs occur, stakeholders feel other water quality issues are just as important as water volume.
- Fragmented and uncoordinated approaches to attracting new residents, businesses and tourists.
- High numbers and sustained out-migration of young people 20-30 years.

- Unskilled and skilled labour shortages and centralisation of tertiary education.
- Erosion of transport services, and lack of infrastructure spending, particularly for local roads.
- Access to integrated health and aged care services.
- Large and growing Indigenous population requiring particular education, employment and community services.
- Youth inclusion, youth unemployment, education and skills pathways, employment opportunities.
- Over-reliance on volunteerism and ageing community leaders.
- Challenges associated with a rapidly expanding mining sector, and what will happen 'after the boom ends'.

## Opportunities

- Economic diversification, but with a focus on high skilled/payed jobs.
- Continue to develop mechanisms to attract new businesses/ assist existing businesses in other sectors (e.g. manufacturing)
- Development of a business growth/support/mentoring program to provide sufficient employment opportunities such that youth return to the region.
- Maximising the benefits and minimise the costs of the mining boom.
- Continued work with local stakeholder groups to reveal the unknowns and minimise socio-economic impacts/maximise environmental benefit of the MDB Plan.
- Develop renewable energy industries with regional economic benefits.
- Provide more local input into infrastructure projects which will have real economic benefits e.g. The Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Railway.
- Most in-migration is from SE Qld and North Coast NSW, not from metropolitan areas. Use this information to re-focus resident attraction strategies.

# Key Messages for Governments

The cost of energy is 20% higher in our region compared to Sydney or South East Queensland. This is a major barrier to economic growth in our region. One identified solution is to establish a bioenergy industry to provide low-cost base load power on a town-by-town basis.

One way to develop our region is to help existing businesses expand. Based on this, we have had proven success in providing one-on-one mentoring through our Business Growth Program using a respected local entrepreneur. The focus is on the 40% of businesses that have the capacity and motivation to expand.

The digital revolution is having a major impact on local retailers. Our Digital Strategy has identified new ways for local SMEs to embrace new technology and utilise it to expand into new markets and compete on a global scale.

One of the major drivers of economic growth is harnessing the capacity of youth in our region. With youth unemployment at around 20 percent, we are investigating new ways to engage with and provide work experience opportunities for young people.



# Vision for the Region

"To work in partnership with governments, communities, businesses and organisations to achieve long-term sustainable economic growth for Northern Inland NSW."

The RDANI Vision for Northern Inland NSW will allow us by 2018 to:

- 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 or existing growing 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 75% 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 25% 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 economic development outcomes.

## 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 review will evaluate progress, achievements and otherwise, effectiveness of RDANI involvement, identifies issues, and proposes changes. The next review round should commence in early 2015.

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.

The projects and initiatives outlined in RDANI Activities, Projects and Initiatives section of this Regional Plan will articulate how we will aim to achieve the above vision for the region.

# Role of RDANI

Regional Development Australia Northern Inland (RDANI) 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.

RDANI works with all sectors of the community to identify potential needs. A key focus of RDANI is economic, social and environmental issues affecting communities. RDANI 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 RDAs so committees can help identify priorities for infrastructure, services and development, and be linked to regional employment and skills initiatives.

RDANI 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. RDANI 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 Northern Inland NSW.

## Achievements

Some of the projects and initiatives RDANI has been involved in during 2012 - 2013 include:

### Regional Freight Study

This project identified the most worthy road upgrade projects in our region utilising a benefit-cost framework. Projects were ranked in order of net benefit, and the public versus private

benefits of upgrades were identified. The work has been used to advance road infrastructure projects in the region (e.g. the Mt Lindsey Highway, Thunderbolts Way) which have become the subject of RDA Fund applications.

### Come On Inland

A brand and social media marketing campaign has been developed for the Northern Inland region. Marketing material has been developed for all 13 LGAs and the website launched ([www.comeoninland.com.au](http://www.comeoninland.com.au)). The aim of this project is to attract new residents and business to the region.

### Business Growth Project

This project, centred around the concept of identifying local businesses with growth potential, is now complete. 51 businesses were interviewed, with 6 being chosen to receive more detailed individual advice from the Business Mentor. These businesses benefited from specific business planning and problem solving advice. The project was responsible for in excess of 30 new jobs.

### NBN Related Projects

The Armidale Broadband Smart House is now complete. Led by RDANI, the Broadband Smart Home, located in Queen Elizabeth Drive demonstrates many of the real-world applications of the NBN, including home automation, remote health monitoring, video-conferencing, rehabilitation, education, remote business, sensor monitoring and environmental sustainability.

### Skilled Migration Project

This on-going program assists regional employers who find it difficult to recruit and retain skilled labour in regional areas. This program has provided invaluable support to regional employers and the expansion of the labour to the local economy. The Northern Inland region has benefited through new businesses being established, expansion of existing products and services and increased employment opportunities. During 2012-13, 145 new employees were brought into the region under the program

### The Regional Development Australia Fund

RDANI played a key role in the assessment of Round 3 and 4 projects. A total of three projects in the region were successful in obtaining funding with \$500,000 each for the Glen Innes Airport Aviation College Upgrade and the Varley Oval Sporting Complex Redevelopment in Inverell. Under Round 4, \$3.8 million was committed to upgrade the Thunderbolts Way between Gloucester and Uralla.

## Northern Inland Innovation Awards

Since 2007, the Northern Inland Innovation Awards (NIIA) have successfully attracted a strong level of entries, despite the depressed and disenchanted state of the small business sector in recent years. The Awards provide an important showcase of innovative businesses and organisations in Northern Inland NSW. There is tremendous value in getting positive business stories out but these awards are all the more important and unique because they have identified, highlighted and promoted innovation – that new product, service, approach or market capture that has set an operation apart.

## CEEP Northern Lights Project

This project has secured \$576,000 of Commonwealth funding under the Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP) to upgrade 4,700 lights across 7 Local Government Areas in our region. The total project value is \$909,000 and will result in street light energy savings of 26% (or 930 MW hours). The project will also employ an Energy Efficiency Education Officer to work with communities and businesses to lower their energy use and costs.

## Industrial Land Study

Having good information available on industrial land helps with both business attraction and growth. RDANI has compiled information on industrial land availability and prices for inclusion on the Come On Inland website.

## Policy Context

The Commonwealth government has been working with state, territory and local governments through the COAG Regional Australia Standing Council to support communities in a coordinated approach to regional development. RDAs are a critical component in working across governments to achieve outcomes on the ground. The Council has agreed five key determinants of long term regional economic development that focus on areas with the greatest potential to deliver positive economic outcomes for regions. These five key determinants provide a firm foundation on which regional analysis, planning and initiatives are built. The five key determinants are:

- Human capital.
- Sustainable communities (economically, environmentally and socially).
- Access to international, national and regional markets.
- Comparative advantage and business competitiveness.
- Effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships and integrated regional planning.

## 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, existing Federal, State, Local Government and key stakeholder plans, a review of existing RDANI plans and projects, and an analysis of international best-practice in regional economic development. 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 six 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.



# Analysis of the Region

A brief analysis of the Northern Inland region using (four of) the five key determinants of long-term regional economic growth is presented in this section. For an extensive analysis of the region based on the key determinants of long-term regional economic growth (Human capital, sustainable communities and population growth, access to international, national and regional markets, and comparative advantage and business competitiveness), please see Annexure 1.

## Human Capital

Issue	Weakness/ Challenge	Strength/ Opportunity
<p><b>Post-school education</b></p> <p>The region is under-performing relative to the state/nation in terms of post-school tertiary education at university level. This may impact on the capacity of the region to diversify the economy into high skilled/higher paid industry sectors.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Skill shortages</b></p> <p>There is a need to identify current and looming skills shortages, including consideration of the impacts of mining expansion on other sectors of the regional economy. There may be opportunities for upskilling to take more local advantage of mining, rather than the industry flying in those skills from outside the region.</p>		✓
<p><b>Indigenous population and disengaged youth</b></p> <p>The region has a high indigenous population (9%) compared to the state/national average (2.5%), and also high levels of indigenous/youth unemployment. This needs to be addressed via specific programs which re-engage these sectors of our community. One successful local program (Backtrack) has already been implemented and represents a possible model for expansion.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>Integration of industry needs with skills training</b></p> <p>It has been suggested that there is scope for greater collaboration between industry sectors and the education sector to better tailor training to current and future industry needs, especially at the TAFE level.</p>		✓
<p><b>Business mentoring</b></p> <p>Building the regional economy from within, by assisting existing businesses with high growth potential and business start-ups has been used successfully overseas. This requires access to experienced business mentors, over an extended period of time. One-off forums are generally not sufficient.</p>		✓
<p><b>Innovation</b></p> <p>The presence of several key research and education facilities within the region provides scope for innovative business developments and practices. Collaboration between industry and these institutions should be encouraged.</p>		✓

## Sustainable Communities and Population Change

Issue	Weakness/ Challenge	Strength/ Opportunity
<p><b>Economic – Unemployment</b></p> <p>Regional unemployment is higher than the state and national average. The indigenous population is particularly over-represented.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Economic – Welfare dependency</b></p> <p>21% of the population relies on government support as their main source of income.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Population – Population change</b></p> <p>The population has increased modestly by 1.73% between 2006 and 2011 and this trend is forecast to continue. However, most of this increase is in the larger towns, while smaller towns and rural areas have experienced population decline. The regions indigenous population is increasing (16.2% between 2006 and 2011).</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>Population – Demographic changes</b></p> <p>Like most regional areas, the population is ageing, though there has been an increase in the proportion on 0-4 year olds between 2001 and 2011. Youth (20-30 year olds) are still leaving the region however, and the challenge is to find ways to allow them to return.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>Population – Migration</b></p> <p>Despite recent initiatives to attract residents from metropolitan areas to the region, analysis of the in/out-migration statistics reveals that most new arrivals come from SE Qld, the N Coast and other regional areas of NSW. This suggests a re-focussing of resident attraction activities.</p>		✓
<p><b>Economic – Work and income</b></p> <p>Northern Inland residents work longer hours per week than the Sydney residents, but earn far lower hourly rates of pay. This suggests a need to diversify the regional economy with higher-paying industry sectors.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Environment – Murray Darling Basin</b></p> <p>Irrigated agriculture is a major industry sector in the region. There is currently considerable uncertainty surrounding potential socio-economic impacts of diverting more water to environment under the plan.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Environment – Mining</b></p> <p>There is considerable concern about the potential environmental impacts of mining, especially on groundwater supplies in the Liverpool Plains region.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Environment- Renewable energy</b></p> <p>Numerous opportunities exist to replace fossil fuels with renewable sources (bioenergy, wind, solar) in the region for both environmental and business performance gains.</p>		✓
<p><b>Social – Housing</b></p> <p>Housing shortages are occurring in towns experiencing mining expansion.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Social – Health</b></p> <p>According to the Regional Australia Institute's [IN]Sight index, the region ranks poorly for several key health measures. This is particularly an issue amongst the indigenous population.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Social – Health</b></p> <p>Lack of GPs and medical specialists are a challenge in the region, however a recent joint venture between UNE and the University of Newcastle is one initiative which has been implemented to address this problem. The NBN rollout also offers opportunities for telehealth services.</p>	✓	✓

## Access to Markets

Issue	Weakness/ Challenge	Strength/ Opportunity
<p><b>Road Transport</b></p> <p>Local government maintains 22,000kms of road. There is a \$226M maintenance backlog to make those roads 'satisfactory'. Poor roads are impacting of the efficiency of the freight task, and tourism potential as well as safety.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Air Transport</b></p> <p>Some regional centres have unreliable air services. Other centres have lost services.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Rail Transport</b></p> <p>Rail freight is increasingly being dominated by coal, excluding opportunities for other freight. A new rail line from Moree to Yamba, with a new floating port at Yamba has been investigated by RDANI and provides an opportunity to improve the regional rail transport task.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>The digital economy</b></p> <p>The NBN rollout in Armidale has demonstrated the potential of the digital economy in accessing new markets and improving operations for businesses. It is hoped this will be expanded to the rest of the region.</p>		✓
<p><b>Technology Skills</b></p> <p>The Regional Australia Institute's [IN]Sight index indicates the region ranks poorly for IT and technology related skills. This could hinder the development of market access via digital technologies.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Access to External Markets</b></p> <p>Given the relatively slow growth of population in the region, business expansion will require access to external markets (nationally and internationally). Access to detailed customer demographic databases (as exist in the US) would assist this task.</p>		✓

## Comparative Advantage and Business Competitiveness

Issue	Weakness/ Challenge	Strength/ Opportunity
<p><b>Comparative advantage</b></p> <p>The region's comparative advantage largely hinges around natural resources – land, soil, water, forests and climate. Government natural resources policy can have significant impacts on this advantage.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>The dominance of commodities</b></p> <p>The regional economy is dominated by agriculture (30% of businesses are related to agriculture, 18% of employment), leaving it vulnerable to the vagaries of climate and international commodity prices. An expanding minerals sector will present the same problem.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Manufacturing</b></p> <p>Largely based around food and agricultural products processing. There is an abundance of cheap, vacant industrial land in most council areas.</p>		✓
<p><b>Transport</b></p> <p>Declining road infrastructure and rail freight being dominated by coal threatens the competitiveness of some industries, particularly agriculture.</p>	✓	
<p><b>Economic diversification</b></p> <p>Diversifying the economy is essential to reduce our reliance on commodities. However, attracting new technology/knowledge based businesses to the region (or growing them from within) requires access to good business support services. Location quotients show that the region is weak in businesses support services which is an obstacle.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>Renewable energy</b></p> <p>The region has several important pre-requisites to develop a renewable energy industry in the area – land, sunshine, wind, agricultural/forestry/municipal residues. However current policy settings do not favour the development of renewables over fossil fuels – they cannot compete economically in most instances and access to the electricity grid is cost-prohibitive.</p>		✓
<p><b>Education</b></p> <p>The region has a comparative advantage in education due to the presence of the University of New England and several private schools.</p>		✓

The RDANI Mission is to drive the long-term sustainable growth and development of the region by building and contributing to initiatives that support economic and community development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. A range of consultation methods and internal research has revealed features of the Northern Inland region which provide evidence to guide the Regional Plan.

The role of RDANI is to facilitate coordinated activity across the various tiers of government which will facilitate regional development and provide leadership to ensure that these activities result in real outcomes.

RDANI has invested in understanding what really drives our regional economy and building on those strengths while at the same time addressing important gaps. We have moved away from an external single 'silver bullet' solution, or non-strategically seeking new residents. Attempts at these solutions have largely failed. Factors entirely unrelated to economic development effort (e.g. the mining boom) will happen anyway. Our plan is to respond to, and profit from these opportunities as they arise by pro-actively helping businesses, while ensuring we protect our underlying economic strengths and environmental assets.

The RDANI plan is based around the premise that economic development through business growth will drive many of the other benefits the region seeks (Fig 1).

It is also based on the fact that we have some industries in which we have a comparative advantage. This is positive, but also leaves us vulnerable to being very specialised and 'commodity' dependent (see Fig 3). Those industries should be nurtured, and built upon (more value-adding) to provide further economic diversity, while also protecting our natural comparative advantage. In seeking economic diversity, it will be important not to undermine our existing economic strengths, particularly in agriculture. We also have some important economic gaps which need to be filled before further diversity is possible.

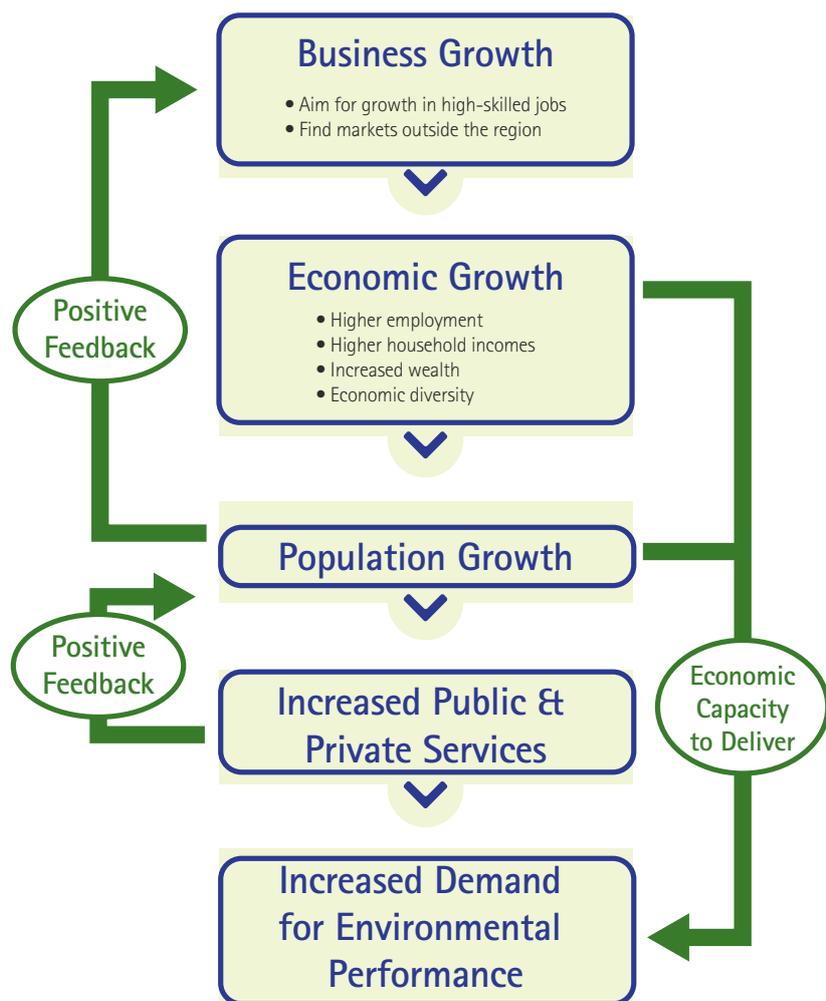


Fig 1. Regional Plan Logic Diagram

## Region Strengths

- The regional economy is underpinned by the natural resource base – land, water, climate and minerals. Economic activity is centred on agriculture, mining, forestry, food processing including abattoirs, and grain products (see Fig 2). We excel in these economic sectors and in large part under-pin the services sector in the region. We can build on them.
- Central location with rail, air and road networks connecting the region internally and with other parts of Australia, east to west, north to south.
- 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. These businesses can prosper by finding new markets outside our region.
- Strong sense of community in localities and co-operation across the region.
- Competitive telecommunications infrastructure including an NBN fibre in Armidale and Tamworth.
- High aesthetic, amenity and outdoor recreational values, more relaxed lifestyle compared to metropolitan areas. Great place to raise children.

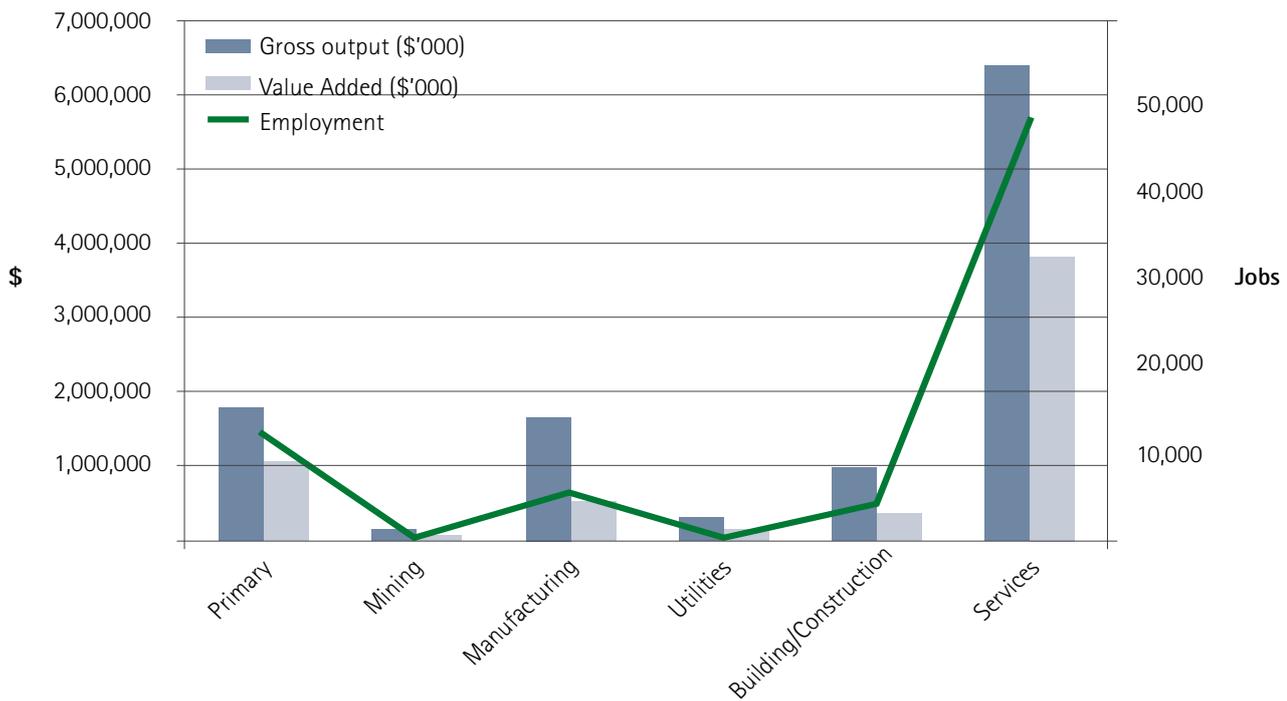


Fig 2. Contribution of Northern Inland Economy Sectors (CARE 2011)

## Regional Challenges

- Lack of economic diversity – high dependence on commodities (agriculture, mining). The need to develop some additional high-skilled, higher wage-paying industries/businesses which are less exposed to climate and commodity price cycles (see Fig 3).
- Lack of business growth initiatives in the region. Growing businesses is the key to economic and social development. Businesses generate employment, which generates population growth, and public/private service provision follows. A vibrant economy means more scope for investing in environmental performance.
- Need to find new markets outside the region for our products/ services.
- Making the most of the expanding mining sector – infrastructure needs, businesses which supply mining, competition for labour.
- Fragmented and uncoordinated approaches to attracting new residents, businesses and tourists. Who is our real target market?
- 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.

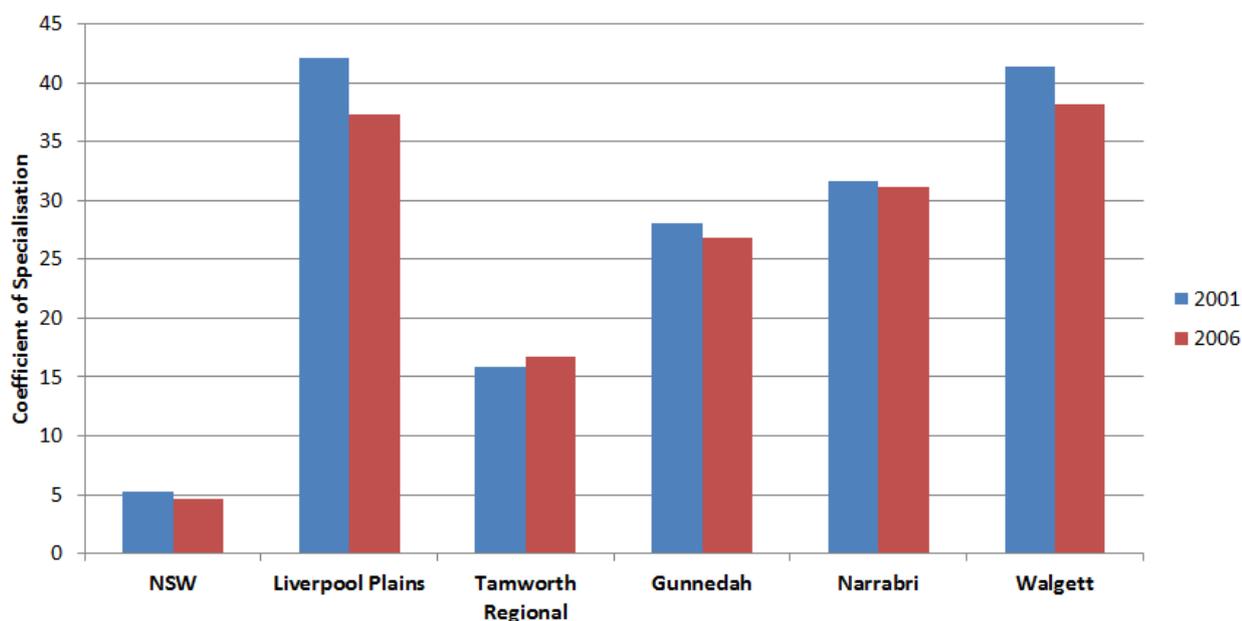


Fig 3 Economic Diversity in the Namoi Region (a higher score means less diversity & more industry specialisation) (CARE 2010)

## NSW State Government Planning and Priorities

The NSW 2021 Plan is a 10 year plan to rebuild the economy, return quality services, renovate infrastructure, restore accountability to government, and strengthen our local environment and communities.

Complementing the NSW 2021 Plan are the individual Regional Action Plans (RAPs). These plans focus on immediate actions the NSW Government will take to improve outcomes in each region. Overwhelmingly, the key themes raised across the State were transport, economic growth and local jobs, and land use planning to protect both the local environment and prime agricultural land.

The actions in the New England North West RAP represent the NSW Government's initial response to the priorities raised by communities. These two year plans will complement longer term strategies for the region and the whole of State, to deliver improvements the community expects. Delivery of the Regional Action Plans will be driven locally by Regional Ministers, supported by new cross-government leadership frameworks.

In the development of the RDANI Regional Plan, we have ensured a close alignment to the Regional Priorities and Actions of the New England North West RAP, which include:

- Supporting sustainable economic growth;
- Investing in regional and local infrastructure;
- Improving education pathways for young people;
- Delivering quality integrated health services;
- Delivering integrated and coordinated human services; and
- Supporting strong, safe communities.

Specific actions for RDANI arising out of the New England North West RAP, include:

- Fostering industry growth sectors;
- Providing support to local businesses;
- Provide support to primary industries to improve water efficiency ahead of the Murray Darling Basin Plan implementation;
- Promoting the region to attract new residents and businesses;
- Building a strong and skilled local workforce; and
- Supporting delivery of the National Broadband Network.



# Regional Priorities

## Northern Inland NSW – Strategic Framework

By harnessing information and insights from four streams of review and consultation, the RDANI Committee has shaped a Strategic Framework for the identification of its key priorities.

These four streams were a series of community meetings throughout the region to learn of the aspirations of residents, an analysis of existing RDANI plans and projects, demographic research, and review of all Local, State and Federal Government

plans, Catchment Management Authorities / Local Land Services Plans, as well as various government department and agency plans. The priorities are therefore based on a comprehensive understanding of the Northern Inland region.

The Regional priorities in this section will address the issues identified in Section 5 (Analysis of the Region).

## Six priorities for Change for Northern Inland NSW

Through its regional planning 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, education and skills.
- E. Social inclusion and engaging aboriginal communities.
- F. Environmental achievement and resource efficiency.

Priorities A and B are the key messages 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 RDANI to facilitate strategic partnerships and projects to achieve these outcomes. It should be noted that due to modest resourcing, RDANI will predominantly play an advocacy or facilitation role rather than being responsible for service delivery itself.

### A. Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth

- With the exception of the two largest centres Tamworth and Armidale, most towns and communities within the region are experiencing sustained out-migration of young people and families which in turn has a detrimental effect on communities and essential services such as health and education.
- In addition to retaining families, young people, businesses and employment opportunities, most Northern Inland centres want and need to attract new industry, workers, families, visitors, tree changers and retirees. This will be achieved through collaborative marketing campaigns and promoting incentives such as the Regional Relocation Grant.
- To encourage and sustain population growth, we require increased health, education and infrastructure services which support economic activity. RDANI, communities and all levels of government need to ensure this occurs.

Referring to the five key determinants of long-term regional economic development, this priority aligns to Sustainable communities (economically, environmentally and socially) and population growth. According to the Regional Australia Institute's Competitive Index [In]Sight, the Northern Inland region ranks 28th out of 55 regions nationally based on this theme.

## B. Industry diversification and job creation

- Agriculture and related services account for around 40-50% of the region's economy and is the predominant employer, particularly west of the New England Highway. Communities are therefore looking to leverage this comparative advantage and foster value-adding in all sectors from agriculture and food processing to advanced technologies. Tremendous opportunity exists for hi-tech firms to relocate to Armidale, one of only a handful of cities in Australia to receive Fibre-to-the-Premises as part of the NBN rollout.
- Within the region there are too many jobs situated in industries that are valuable and productive but declining employment wise, such as agriculture. Communities know they need high value-adding, worker intensive, higher-skilled, higher-paid employment opportunities to support inward migration of workers and families. Many local Councils have affordable industrial land and other incentives on offer to attract new businesses to town. Industrial land information needs to be made available for the region.
- Tailored mentoring programs are needed to grow existing businesses and provide additional employment. There are potential employment opportunities with developments in mining in the Gunnedah basin, although expansion of the industry is being met with community resistance from many landholders.
- There is a role for regional research bodies to investigate economic opportunities based on the region's comparative advantages.

Referring to the five key determinants of long-term regional economic development, this priority aligns to both Comparative advantage and business competitiveness and Access to international, national and regional markets. According to the Regional Australia Institute's Competitive Index [InSight], the Northern Inland region ranks 37th out of 55 regions nationally based on these themes.

## C. Integrated and improved health care

- Access to health and aged care services equivalent to the average in major cities, reaching as closely as possible to where people live in the region, is a priority that resonates often across the region.
- Northern Inland population clusters, particularly smaller localities under 5000 people, identify a lack of access to regular and basic health and community services as one of their greatest needs. Lack of GPs, dentists and other health professionals willing to relocate to small centres like Bingara, Barraba and Warialda plus a lack of viable and regular transport options means these populations are not serviced adequately.

- There has also been a centralisation of acute care and specialist services to both Tamworth and Newcastle, which has meant a decline in services and neglected health infrastructure in towns like Armidale, Inverell and Glen Innes. It is difficult for RDAs to have an impact in this space, however we will continue to play a strong advocacy role.

Referring to the five key determinants of long-term regional economic development, this priority aligns to Sustainable communities (economically, environmentally and socially) and population growth. According to the Regional Australia Institute's Competitive Index [InSight], the Northern Inland region ranks 28th out of 55 regions nationally based on this theme.

## D. Investment in regional infrastructure, education and skills

- One of the biggest inhibitors to economic growth and the flow of goods to market is the condition of many of the local roads throughout the region. The priority infrastructure projects of many of the 13 LGAs relate to local road upgrades which also serve as key freight and passenger routes.
- Identified projects include upgrades for Thunderbolts Way, Mt Lindesay Highway, Tenterfield Bypass, Warialda-Yetman Road and Boomi-Mungindi Road to name a few. Armidale, Narrabri and Glen Innes communities want enhanced airport infrastructure.
- The recentralisation of train and airline services, high-cost, lack of choice in providers, timing, and lack of frequent access to metropolitan hubs from smaller population centres are all issues in the Northern Inland. A railway and deep-sea port development from Moree to Iluka has been identified by the private sector as a way to move mining and agricultural products more efficiently to international markets.
- In relation to education and skills, the centralisation of TAFE courses to Tamworth and deregulation of the industry, as well as comparatively poor results in NAPLAN testing for primary and secondary students are key causes for concern within the region. Projects that increase the capacity and participation of disengaged youth in employment, by way of work experience are required.

Referring to the five key determinants of long-term regional economic development, this priority aligns to Sustainable communities (economically, environmentally and socially) and population growth, Human Capital and Access to international, national and regional markets. According to the Regional Australia Institute's Competitive Index [InSight], the Northern Inland region ranks 33rd out of 55 regions nationally based on these themes.

## E. Social inclusion and engaging aboriginal communities

- The high Aboriginal population in the region relative to the rest of NSW presents both challenges and opportunities for the region. The Northern Inland contains several of the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities in the State, including Toomelah, Tingha and Boggabilla, as well as extremely high social welfare dependency and youth unemployment rates in many Aboriginal communities.
- Communities want to explore partnered enterprises and re-think how to engage with their Aboriginal communities around ways to increase employment and the creation of Aboriginal-owned and operated businesses. RDANI are facilitating projects in conjunction with Local Aboriginal Lands Councils to look at ways to leverage their assets for commercial and economic gain.

Referring to the five key determinants of long-term regional economic development, this priority aligns to Sustainable communities (economically, environmentally and socially) and population growth, as well as Human Capital. According to the Regional Australia Institute's Competitive Index [In]Sight, the Northern Inland region ranks 34th out of 55 regions nationally based on these themes.

## F. Environmental achievement and resource efficiency

- The natural environment is one of the key competitive advantages for the region with the Northern Inland playing host to some of the most productive agricultural land in the country and producing around 25% of the value of NSW's agricultural output.
- Finding a balance between the demands of agriculture and mining, particularly in the Gunnedah Basin is a key concern for many communities. In addition, towns like Moree, Narrabri, Wee Waa and Mungindi are highly-susceptible to the removal of productive water under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.
- With energy costs around 20% higher than Sydney or South East Queensland, there is also a strong interest by communities and industry to explore renewable energy opportunities like biogas as a way of lowering energy costs and the positive economic and environmental outcomes this new sector would provide to the region.

Referring to the five key determinants of long-term regional economic development, this priority aligns to Sustainable communities (economically, environmentally and socially) and population growth, as well as Comparative advantage and business competitiveness. According to the Regional Australia Institute's Competitive Index (InSight), the Northern Inland region ranks 16th out of 55 regions nationally based on the theme of Natural Resources.

An overview of how specific initiatives, actions and projects relate to the six higher level RDANI priorities is provided in Table 3.

Priority	Location	Action	Rationale	Responsibility
Road Infrastructure Upgrades (RDANI Priorities: A, D. Key determinants: access to markets, business competitiveness, integrated regional planning)	Thunderbolts Way (Walcha, Uralla), Mt Lindesay Highway (Tenterfield), Tenterfield main street bypass (Tenterfield)	Promote the priorities identified in the Freight Transport Study, assist local government to access funds.	Improved efficiency of freight transport, improved visitor access, road safety.	RDANI (funding access), Councils (apply for funding, conduct upgrades)
Business Growth Program (RDANI Priorities: A, B. Key determinants: human capital, business competitiveness)	Northern Inland Region, particularly communities under 10,000 population	Build on the findings of the pilot Business Growth Program run by RDANI in 2012-13, work with NSW Trade & Investment on this initiative.	Find local businesses with growth potential and implement mentoring systems to improve their performance, hence boosting regional employment and wealth	RDANI in conjunction with NSW Trade & Investment and the regional business community
Economic Diversification (RDANI Priorities: A, B. Key determinants: sustainable communities, population growth, business competitiveness, human capital, comparative advantage)	Northern Inland Region	Build on the findings of the pilot Business Growth Program run by RDANI in 2012-13 and work with NSW Trade & Investment on this initiative. Build on research into renewable energy industry options.	Reduce regional reliance on commodity sectors and expand sectors with higher skilled, higher paid jobs.	RDANI in conjunction with NSW Trade & Investment and the regional business community
Business Attraction (RDANI Priorities: A, B. Key determinants: access to markets, business competitiveness)	Northern Inland Region, particularly outside of Armidale and Tamworth	Complete Industrial Land Register and commence Business Demand Register.	Provide information about industrial land availability, costs etc. to ease business relocation decisions.	RDANI, NSW Dept Planning, NSW Trade & Investment, Local Government
Resident and Business Attraction (RDANI Priorities: A, B. Key determinants: human capital, sustainable communities, population growth)	Northern Inland Region, particularly outside of Armidale and Tamworth	Continue with Come-On-Inland program, including refining data on in/out-migration and targeting initiative accordingly.	Promote the benefits of the region to attract in-migration.	RDANI, Local Government
High energy costs (RDANI Priorities: B, F. Key determinants: business competitiveness, sustainable communities)	Northern Inland Region	Continue to pursue renewables opportunities, CEEP energy efficiency project and Northern Inland Sustainable Business network projects/trainign programs for business.	Increase business profitability and reduce carbon tax liability by reducing energy costs and shifting to renewable energy sources.	RDANI, Local Government, NISBN network
Digital Economy, including NBN Coordinator (RDANI Priorities: A, B, C, D, E. Key determinants: access to markets, business competitiveness, integrated regional planning)	Armidale initially, then entire Northern Inland Region	Continue to develop initiatives to assist businesses to grow, taking advantage of the NBN rollout and other digital economy developments.	Improved business market access and new markets via digital technologies.	RDANI, Armidale Digital Economy Implementation Group, Local Government, NBN Co
E-Health initiatives (RDANI Priority: C. Key determinants: sustainable communities, population growth, integrated regional planning)	Armidale initially, then entire Northern Inland Region	Facilitate e-health pilots to leverage advancements in broadband infrastructure and improve patient access to health services.	Improved healthcare outcomes at lower cost.	RDANI, Hunter New England Area Health Service, Armidale Digital Economy Implementation Group, Local Government, NBN Co
Regional health professional shortages (RDANI Priority: C. Key determinants: sustainable communities, population growth, integrated regional planning)	Northern Inland Region, particularly outside of Armidale and Tamworth.	Implement programs to identify shortages, recruit overseas health professionals and train more medical students locally to fill skill shortages.	Improved health services.	RDANI, Hunter New England Area Health Service, UNE
Social Inclusion (esp. Aboriginal Communities) (RDANI Priorities: C & E. Key determinants: sustainable communities, integrated regional planning))	Northern Inland Region, particularly in towns with a high Aboriginal population.	Economic Development Forum with Land Councils to assist Aboriginal owned and operated businesses.	Boost economic outcomes for low socio-economic groups.	RDANI, DEEWR, Aboriginal Land Councils
Murray Darling Basin Plan impacts (RDANI Priorities: A,B,C, F. Key determinants: comparative advantage, business competitiveness, sustainable communities, population growth, integrated regional planning)	Inverell, Wyallda, Moree, Mungindi, Narrabri, Wee Waa and Gunnedah	Continue to work with the Murray Darling Basin Authority on socio-economic impact analysis. Continue to work with community groups devising projects to optimise the use of environmental water at offset impacts on SDLs.	Develop initiatives to minimise any negative socio-economic impacts and maximise benefits from environmental water.	RDANI, Northern Basin Advisory Committee, MDBA, local water user groups

Table 3 RDANI Priority Summary

# Local Government priorities for the region

A strong correlation can be drawn between RDANI's key priorities for the region and the 13 individual LGA Community Strategic Plans. The most cited Local Government priorities for our region are summarised in Table 4.

Economy	Community	Environment	Transport	Health
Diversify economic base	Exodus of youth	Waste reuse/recycling	Expand air services	Attract new medical practitioners
Promote as a location for business investment	Create a learning culture	Increase use of renewable/ green energy	Safe, efficient, effective roads	Encourage healthy lifestyles - walking / cycling paths
Improve telecommunications	Affordable housing	Improve energy efficiency	Access to reliable public transport	Hospital upgrades
Provide advice and economic data to attract investment	Indigenous culture	Pest & weed management		Expand aged care facilities
Improve council approval process	Crime & anti-social behaviour prevention	Native vegetation corridors		Mental health services
	Support cultural activities	Water use efficiency		
	Safe, serviceable public facilities	Sustainable farming practices		
		Reliable high quality water supply		

Table 4 Local Government Priorities

## Local Government Priority Infrastructure Projects for Our Region

Consultation with the Local Government Authorities in our region has identified the following priority projects for which they are seeking infrastructure funding:

### Industry:

- Further development of the Guyra Tomato Glasshouse project to upgrade council water supply and incorporate energy from biogas.
- Developing a 'green data storage facility' in Armidale.
- Servicing the new industrial area in Armidale with water and sewerage to facilitate business growth – this is currently holding back business expansion.
- The Moree Gateway Project (transport and bulky goods facility).
- Industrial water and sewer augmentation in Gunnedah.

### Roads:

- Upgrade of the Thunderbolts Way and Oxley Highway.
- Transport infrastructure upgrades (Industrial Precincts) Armidale and Tamworth.
- Road upgrades to cater for agricultural produce and mining development in the Gunnedah Shire.
- Tenterfield Heavy Vehicle Bypass and
- Upgrade of Mt Lindesay Highway and bridges from Tenterfield to Woodenbong.

### Rail:

- Rail bypass in Quirindi to overcome problems with increasing coal train movements.

### Air:

- Narrabri Airport Upgrade.
- An aviation training college in Glen Innes.
- Armidale Airport Upgrade.

### Community:

- Upgrade of the main street in Tingha.
- A new library in Armidale.
- Tenterfield town centre beautification.
- Development of Bicentennial Park in Tamworth including roads and buildings and Fitzroy Street upgrade including tree planting, resurfacing, lighting etc..
- Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture (A Living Classroom) at Bingara.

### Sporting:

- A multi-purpose indoor sports stadium for Quirindi.
- Narrabri Aquatic Centre.
- An upgrade to the Glen Innes CBD and Swimming Centre.
- Establish a Northern Inland Centre of Excellence in Tamworth.

### Environment:

- Development of additional recycled water treatment plant in Tamworth and construction of distribution lines to supply recycled water to users.
- Upgrading the Liverpool Plains regional water supply, including dams, pipes and the water treatment plant.
- Narrabri Waste Facility.
- The Moree Green Precinct (Re-use of artesian spa water).
- Stabilisation of the Tenterfield Water Supply Dam and replacement of the Water Treatment Facility.

# RDANI Activities, Projects and Initiatives

Based on the six key priorities identified in this Regional Plan and recognising the wide range of regional and local agencies and groups, 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 RDANI 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.

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 will be held to account against these, as a useful, results-oriented organisation.

The following tables summarise how each regional priority will be progressed and achieved and will support the development of a detailed Business Plan.

## Priority A. Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth

- Continue the RDANI Chair's forum with key stakeholders to bring together lateral thinking around 'wicked' problems.
- Consolidate and review research on barriers to inward migration including tree-changers. Analyse with reference to Northern Inland NSW 2011 Census Data.
- Develop a regional 'Come on Inland' program in conjunction with NSW Department of Trade & Investment, Federal Government, Local Government Areas, communities, and other active stakeholders. Northern Inland brand and 'prospectus' to be sent to target markets (families/businesses).
- Skilled Migration Program – Regional Visa Certification Role (200 applications per annum).
- 'Grantsmanship' – Providing advice and assistance to local councils, private enterprise and community organisations to access funding for their projects.

- Undertake research on skills shortages (e.g. medical, hospitality, agriculture) and actively target skilled migrants based on eligible vacancies and employer demand.
- Continue Economic Development forums for Local Council representatives.
- Promote available grants and programs for communities via emails/ newsletters/PR.
- Work with NSW Department of Trade & Investment for identification of new innovative businesses to support with relevant State government programs in the region.

## Priority B. Industry diversification and job creation

- Business Growth Program using local entrepreneur to grow existing business from within and identify new market opportunities.
- Undertake a Northern Inland Industrial Land Survey for the 13 LGAs and host on [www.comeoninland.com.au](http://www.comeoninland.com.au).
- In conjunction with NSW Trade & Investment, establish a 'Demand Register' for businesses that want to relocate to or establish themselves in regional areas.
- 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.
- Continuation of the annual Northern Inland Innovation Awards.
- 'Grantsmanship' – Providing advice and assistance to local councils, private enterprise and community organisations to access funding for their projects.
- Launch and implement the Northern Inland Digital Economy Strategy recommendations.
- Investigate options for a local Entrepreneur start-up fund.

## Priority C. Integrated and improved health care

- In conjunction with Medicare Local, promote a partnership approach to the provision of an integrated health, aged care, Home and Community Care strategy.
- Promote awareness of existing health services to overcome barriers.
- Consolidate information on local hospital efficiency and with stakeholders consider application of benchmarks in the Northern Inland region.
- With Hunter New England Area Health Service and other key stakeholders, facilitate a series of e-health pilots to leverage advancements in broadband infrastructure.
- Consolidate research into Doctor and Specialist shortages and work with HNEAHS to recruit Skilled overseas Doctors and Allied Health Professionals.

## Priority D. Investment in regional infrastructure, education and skills

- Develop an advocacy campaign for increased funding for local and regional roads.
- 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, including the establishment of a Regional Broadband Smart Home.
- In conjunction with our Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Co-ordinator, undertake a skills shortage survey of regional businesses.
- Seek funding for a Moree-Iluka rail and port facility Feasibility Study (private-sector funded).
- Facilitate, encourage and promote 'work-experience' programs with interested local businesses and organisations.

## Priority E. Social inclusion and engaging Aboriginal communities

- Research successful indigenous 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.
- In conjunction with local Aboriginal Lands Councils and DEEWR, hold an economic development forum to build capacity for Aboriginal owned and operated businesses.
- Through our CEEP Energy Efficiency Education Officer, provide advice and support to residents and businesses to reduce their electricity consumption.
- Implement MOU actions between RDANI and regional Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

## Priority F. Environmental achievement and resource efficiency

- Develop understanding of potential economic and social impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in the Northern Inland. Identify the opportunity for investment in alternate industries.
- In conjunction with key stakeholders, develop a local model to provide a response to the reduction of water in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Investigate opportunities for biogas production and local electricity retailing in the Northern Inland.
- Management of CEEP Northern Lights Project - \$576k for 7 LGAs to upgrade to energy efficient street lighting.
- In conjunction with the Northern Inland Sustainable Business Network, investigate the opportunity for bulk-electricity purchases to reduce energy costs for members.
- Explore and promote options for NI and incoming businesses to engage in developments in the emerging renewable energy and recycling sectors.
- In conjunction with the Murray Darling Basin Authority's Northern Basin Panel, identify, formulate and access funding for regionally devised projects aimed at responding to the MDBA Plan and maintaining economic integrity of the region.

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