



# Regional Plan 2016 - 2019



**Regional  
Development**  
*Australia*

NORTHERN INLAND NSW



An Australian Government Initiative



A NSW Government Initiative

# Message from the RDANI Chair



*The RDANI Mission is to ensure the long-term sustainable growth and development of the region by driving and contributing to initiatives that will support economic development and jobs.*

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 development and jobs. 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, as well as numerous government department and agency plans.

Based on these consultations and reviews, RDANI has an active vision for Northern Inland NSW in 2019 with three RDANI work

priorities directed towards achieving the vision goals. These priorities will drive our organisation over the coming three 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 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 implement this Regional Plan and contribute strongly to real changes to advance the economies and communities of Northern Inland NSW.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell Stewart'.

Russell Stewart | Chair  
Regional Development Australia – Northern Inland

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Cover Photo: Steve Wright Photographics

# Our Region

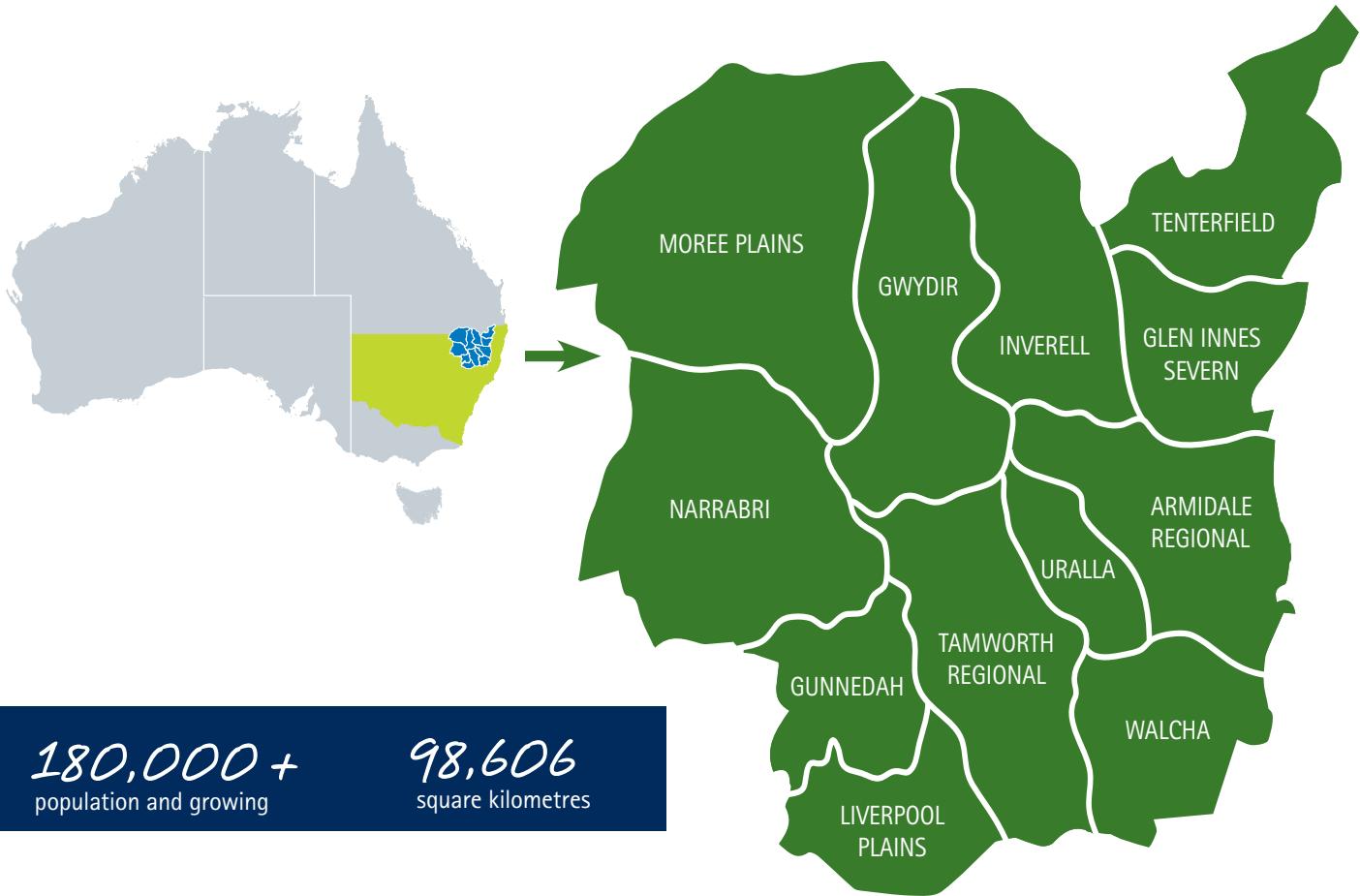
The Northern Inland Region is defined by the twelve Local Government Areas (LGAs) of:

- Armidale Regional
- Moree Plains Shire
- Glen Innes Severn
- Narrabri Shire
- Gunnedah Shire
- Tamworth Regional
- Gwydir Shire
- Tenterfield Shire
- Inverell Shire
- Uralla Shire
- Liverpool Plains Shire
- 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.

Located in northern NSW, the Northern Inland region is conveniently situated half-way between Sydney and Brisbane. Concentrated around the growing regional cities of Tamworth (population 61,000) and Armidale (population 25,000), the region is large and diverse (98,606 square kilometres) and extends from the Queensland border in the north, south to the Liverpool Plains, and west to the Moree Plains (ABS Census 2012).

With a total population of over 180,000, this is forecast to grow to over 200,000 people by 2031, with particularly strong growth in Armidale (24.5% increase), Tenterfield (20.8% increase), Tamworth (17.9% increase), Inverell (17.9% increase) and Uralla (18.8% increase) (NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure 2014).



Orginal region artwork 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 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 and Cities
Small Rural Towns (Cluster A)	500 - 1,000	Tingha, Curlewis, Wallabadah, Boggabilla, Ashford, Mungindi, Dellungra, Drake, Emmaville, Bellata, Deepwater, Woolomin, Bundarra, Carroll, Spring Ridge
Small Regional Towns (Cluster B)	1,000 - 3,000	Uralla, Manilla, Guyra, Walcha, Wee Waa, Werri Creek, Kootingal, Warialda, Barraba, Bingara, Boggabri
Medium Regional Towns (Cluster C)	3,000 - 7,000	Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Quirindi
Large Regional Towns (Cluster D)	7,000 - 10,000	Inverell, Moree, Gunnedah, Narrabri
Small Regional Cities (Cluster E)	10,000 - 20,000	Armidale
Large Regional Cities (Cluster F)	>40,000	Tamworth

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



# Competitive Advantages

## Location & Lifestyle

- Half-way between Sydney and Brisbane
- Growing major centres of Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell, Gunnedah, Moree, Narrabri and Quirindi
- Easy access to the growing markets of Sydney (5 million) and South East Queensland (3 million)
- Affordable real estate
- Diverse geography, stunning landscapes
- Excellent education facilities
- Choice of urban or rural lifestyles

## Economy

- Strong and diverse economy, particularly the agricultural, manufacturing, healthcare and education sectors
- Expanding mining sector
- Skilled labour force with competitive wage rates
- Highly competitive commercial real estate and rental prices

## Key Industries

- Agriculture (cotton, cropping and livestock)
- Health and Aged care
- Manufacturing
- Retail
- Education and training (University of New England, TAFE Campuses, Private & Public schools)
- Tourism
- Aviation training
- Aircraft maintenance
- Poultry

## Emerging Industries

- Mining
- Renewable Energy (solar, wind, bioenergy)
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Information technology

## Capabilities

- Skilled, educated workforce
- Ample water
- Affordable housing
- First NBN rollout site (high-speed broadband)
- Good transport links and freight access by road and rail
- Direct daily flights to Sydney and Brisbane from most major centres

## Strong communities

- Specialist health services
- Family friendly
- Tertiary education – University of New England, University of Newcastle and TAFE New England
- Quality rural lifestyle opportunities
- Minimal commutes to work
- Relaxed country lifestyle
- Affordable residential, commercial and industrial land
- Low business costs

## Investment Opportunities

- Agriculture – servicing, value adding
- Agriculture - Beef, lamb, cotton, grains, dairy
- Mining - servicing
- Renewable energy
- Aviation industries
- Horticulture - 'Clean and Green' food for export
- Rail freight infrastructure
- Ageing population facilities
- Health and Aged care
- Construction services
- Residential and commercial development
- Information Technology
- Eco-Tourism & Hospitality
- Equine industry

**23% Lower**  
businesses wage costs  
compared to Sydney

**World Leading**  
agricultural research in cotton, beef,  
sheep and poultry

**\$133 Per m<sup>2</sup>**  
average price of industrial land

# Key Priorities

Through its consultative review, RDANI has identified three 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 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, job creation, capacity building and resource efficiency

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. 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 12 LGAs relate to local road upgrades. In addition, skills shortages and disengaged youth need to be addressed.

# 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.

## Opportunities

- Economic diversification, but with a focus on high skilled/paid 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.
- 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 business/resident attraction strategies.

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## Key Issues

- High dependence on commodities (agriculture, mining) which leaves the region vulnerable to the vagaries of climate and international commodity prices and exchange rate fluctuations.
- Rising energy costs and high grid access charges for renewable energy projects.
- Limited business growth initiatives and support.
- Issues relating to rapid mining expansion/labour competition, 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.

# Key Messages for Governments

## Energy Costs

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.

## Business Expansion

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.

## Digital Strategy

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.

## Youth

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 and employment for Northern Inland NSW."*

The RDANI Vision for Northern Inland NSW will allow us by 2019 to:

- Over the period to 2019, 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 communities 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.
- Over the period to 2019, 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 enterprise clusters including, through education, to 'navigate transitions' into more diversified, resilient and robust economies.
- By 2016, 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.

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 RDA Northern Inland

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a national initiative which seeks to grow and strengthen the regions of Australia. Comprising 55 Committees, the RDA network covers metropolitan, rural and remote regions across the country. RDA Committees are strong advocates for their region and drivers of change and, as such, have a pivotal role in fostering regional economic development.

The RDA network strengthens partnership across all three tiers of government, regional business and the wider community to boost the economic capability and performance of regions. RDA Committees are active in promoting Australian Government programs and shepherding communities towards appropriate funding sources that will assist projects that work towards economic development.

The RDA Northern Inland Committee is an incorporated not-for-profit community-based organisation funded jointly by the Australian and NSW State Governments. Committee members are volunteers drawn from the region and who bring leadership, skills and experiences from the community, business, local government and not-for-profit organisations. Each RDA Committee has a broad and diverse skills base, with demonstrated networks and alliances.

RDA Committees are responsible for achieving five key Outcomes as set out below:

## Outcome 1: Regional Plan

A current three to five-year plan that focusses on economic development of our region. The plan must take into account any relevant Commonwealth, state, territory and local government plans.

## Outcome 2: Critical issues

Advice to all levels of government on critical issues affecting our region.

## Outcome 3: Priority activities

Advice to governments on priority activities that will drive regional economic development, on future economic opportunities and on our region's comparative advantages, based on consultation and engagement with community leaders.

## Outcome 4: Project proposals

Assistance to local community stakeholders in order for them to develop project proposals; and referral of stakeholders to appropriate public and/or private funding sources - including the \$1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund.

## Outcome 5: Promote Australian Government Programs

Increased awareness of Australian Government programs in our region.

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 2013 - 2016 and beyond 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 Shopping

RDANI has built an online shopping platform for SMEs in the region to sell their goods and services online. This type of custom geographic platform is a first for regional Australia, puts our region at the forefront of the digital economy and will retain the growing online spend in our cities and towns. This project will continue on. See [www.comeonshopping.com.au](http://www.comeonshopping.com.au)

### 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.

## 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 2013-16, over 500 new employees were brought into the region under the program.

## The National Stronger Regions Fund

RDANI played a key role in assisting project proponents for the NSRF as well as previous grant programs, with in excess of \$15 million in successful projects for the Northern Inland region.

## Northern Inland Innovation Awards

Since 2007, the RDA Northern Inland Innovation Awards (NIIA) have successfully attracted a strong level of entries from all industry sectors. 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 has set an operation apart.

The Innovation awards are increasingly raising awareness in the region about what it means to be innovative and how critical that is. Facilitating creative, innovative and resourceful business approaches is key to sustainable regional development. In seven years, the NIIA has had hundreds of business and community representatives thinking about what is meant by innovation in business.

## 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

## CEEP Northern Lights Project

This project 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 over \$1m and will result in street light energy savings of over \$200k per annum.

## 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.

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
<b>Post-school education</b>  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.	✓	
<b>Skill shortages</b>  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.		✓
<b>Indigenous population and disengaged youth</b>  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.	✓	✓
<b>Integration of industry needs with skills training</b>  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.		✓
<b>Business mentoring</b>  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.		✓
<b>Innovation</b>  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.		✓

## Sustainable Communities and Population Change

Issue	Weakness/ Challenge	Strength/ Opportunity
<b>Economic – Unemployment</b>  Regional unemployment is higher than the state and national average. The indigenous population is particularly over-represented.	✓	
<b>Economic – Welfare dependency</b>  21% of the population relies on government support as their main source of income.	✓	
<b>Population – Population change</b>  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).	✓	✓
<b>Population – Demographic changes</b>  Like most regional areas, the population is ageing, though there has been an increase in the proportion of 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.	✓	✓
<b>Population – Migration</b>  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.		✓
<b>Economic – Work and income</b>  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.	✓	
<b>Environment – Murray Darling Basin</b>  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.	✓	
<b>Environment – Mining</b>  There is considerable concern about the potential environmental impacts of mining, especially on groundwater supplies in the Liverpool Plains region.	✓	
<b>Environment- Renewable energy</b>  Numerous opportunities exist to replace fossil fuels with renewable sources (bioenergy, wind, solar) in the region for both environmental and business performance gains.		✓
<b>Social – Housing</b>  Housing shortages are occurring in towns experiencing mining expansion.	✓	
<b>Social – Health</b>  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.	✓	
<b>Social – Health</b>  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.	✓	✓

## Access to Markets

Issue	Weakness/ Challenge	Strength/ Opportunity
<b>Road Transport</b>  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.	✓	
<b>Air Transport</b>  Some regional centres have unreliable air services. Other centres have lost services.	✓	
<b>Rail Transport</b>  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.	✓	✓
<b>The digital economy</b>  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.		✓
<b>Technology Skills</b>  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.	✓	
<b>Access to External Markets</b>  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.		✓

## Comparative Advantage and Business Competitiveness

Issue	Weakness/ Challenge	Strength/ Opportunity
<b>Comparative advantage</b>  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.	✓	✓
<b>The dominance of commodities</b>  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.	✓	
<b>Manufacturing</b>  Largely based around food and agricultural products processing. There is an abundance of cheap, vacant industrial land in most council areas.		✓
<b>Transport</b>  Declining road infrastructure and rail freight being dominated by coal threatens the competitiveness of some industries, particularly agriculture.	✓	
<b>Economic diversification</b>  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.	✓	✓
<b>Renewable energy</b>  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.		✓
<b>Education</b>  The region has a comparative advantage in education due to the presence of the University of New England and several private schools.		✓

The RDANI Mission is to drive the long-term sustainable growth and development of the region by contributing to initiatives that support economic development and jobs. 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 economic 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 will happen anyway. Our plan is to respond to, and profit from these opportunities as they arise by proactively 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.

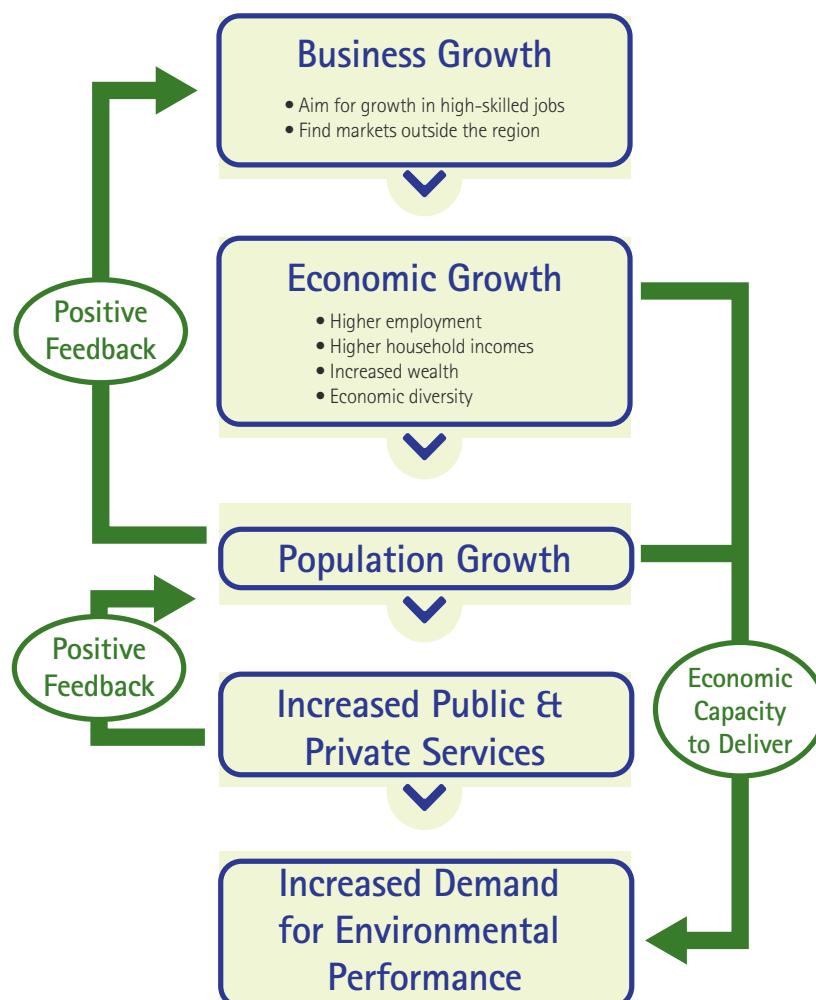


Fig 1. Regional Plan Logic Diagram

## 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 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.

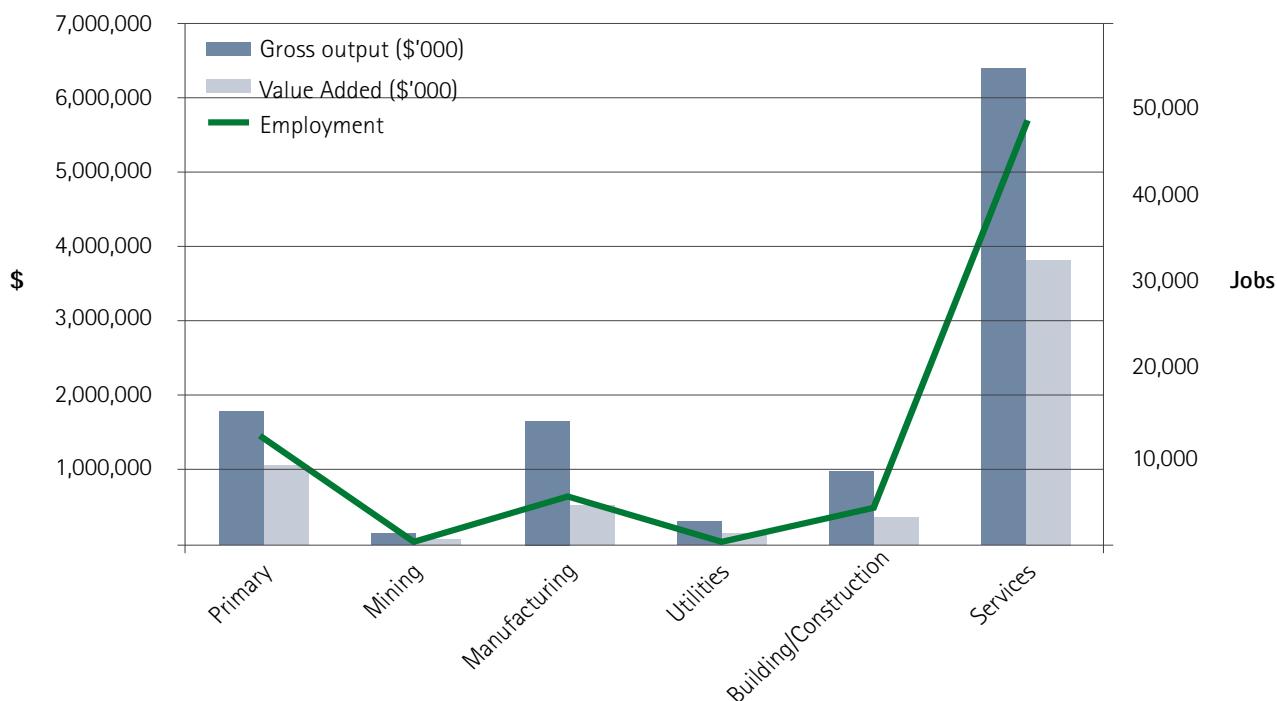


Fig 2. Contribution of Northern Inland Economy Sectors (CARE 2011)

## 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.
- 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.

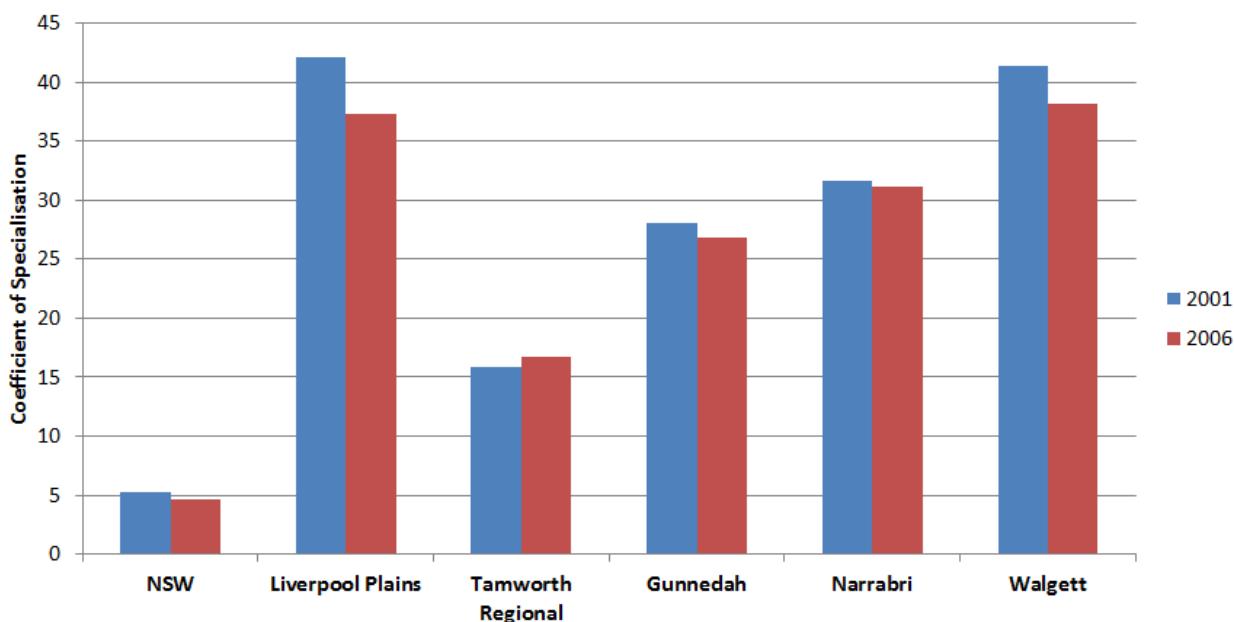


Fig 3 Economic Diversity in the Namoi Region (a higher score means less diversity & more industry specialisation) (CARE 2010)

## NSW State Government Priorities

NSW 'Making it Happen' lists five priorities and 18 reforms to grow the economy, deliver infrastructure, and improve health, education and other services across NSW.

The five State priorities and related reforms are listed below

### 1. Strong budget and economy

- Make NSW the easiest state to start a business
- Be the leading Australian state in business confidence
- Increase the proportion of people completing apprenticeships and traineeships to 65% by 2019
- Halve the time taken to assess planning applications for State Significant Developments
- Maintaining the AAA credit rating
- Expenditure growth to be less than revenue growth

### 2. Building infrastructure

- 90% of peak travel on key road routes is on time
- Increase housing supply across NSW - Deliver more than 50,000 approvals every year

### 3. Protecting the vulnerable

- Successful implementation of the NDIS by 2018
- Increase the number of households successfully transitioning out of social housing by 5% over three years

### 4. Better Services

- Increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 30%
- 70% of government transactions to be conducted via digital channels by 2019
- Increase on-time admissions for planned surgery, in accordance with medical advice
- Increase attendance at cultural venues and events in NSW by 15% by 2019
- Maintain or improve reliability of public transport services over the next four years

### 5. Safer communities

- LGAs to have stable or falling reported violent crime rates by 2019
- Reduce adult re-offending by five per cent by 2019
- Reduce road fatalities by at least 30 per cent from 2011 levels by 2021





# 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, 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).

## Three priorities for Change for Northern Inland NSW

Through its regional planning processes, RDANI has identified three 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 three priorities are:

- A. Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth.
- B. Industry diversification, job creation, capacity building & resource efficiency
- C. Investment in regional infrastructure, education and skills

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, job creation, capacity building & resource efficiency 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.
- 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 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. 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 12 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.
- 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.

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

Priority	Location	Action	Rationale	Responsibility
Road Infrastructure Upgrades (RDANI Priorities: A, C. Key determinants: access to markets, business competitiveness, integrated regional planning)	Key local freight routes as identified in our Road Freight Study.	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)
Skilled Migration Program (RDANI Priorities: A, B. Key determinants: sustainable communities, population growth, business competitiveness, human capital, comparative advantage)	Northern Inland Region	Continue our role as a Regional Certifying Body on behalf of NSW Government for Visa sub-classed 489 and 187.	Address skills shortages and attract new residents	RDANI in conjunction with NSW Dept of Industry 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 2013.	Reduce regional reliance on commodity sectors and expand sectors with higher skilled, higher paid jobs.	RDANI in conjunction with NSW Dept of Industry and the regional business community
Business Attraction (RDANI Priorities: A, B. Key determinants: access to markets, business competitiveness)	Northern Inland Region	Complete a Regional Investment Profile for the Northern Inland Region	Provide information about investing in and moving to the Northern Inland Region	RDANI, NSW Dept of Industry, 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 targetting initiative accordingly.	Promote the benefits of the region to attract in-migration.	RDANI, Local Government
High energy costs (RDANI Priority: B. Key determinants: business competitiveness, sustainable communities)	Northern Inland Region	Undertake a regional energy industry assessment. Investigate the opportunity to provide cheaper and more reliable energy sources to towns as an incentive for energy-intensive industries to relocate.	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 Assistance, (RDANI Priorities: A & B. Key determinants: access to markets, business competitiveness)	Northern Inland Region	Continue the development of comeonshopping.com.au 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, Local Government, NBN Co
Grantsmanship (RDANI Priority: B. Key determinants: business competitiveness, sustainable communities)	Northern Inland Region	Promote available grants and programs for communities via regular newsletter. Provide advice and assistance to local councils, private enterprise and NGOs to access funding for their projects.	Access to project funding for the region's initiatives	RDANI, Local Government, private sector, not-for-profits.
Consultancy services (RDANI Priorities: A,B, C. Key determinants: comparative advantage, business competitiveness)	Northern Inland Region	Provide services to governments and private sector: data provision and analysis, benefit/cost analysis, economic impact assessment	Improved evidence base to attract funding for projects and initiatives.	RDANI, Local government, private sector
Regional Innovation (RDANI Priorities: A & B. Key determinants: access to markets, business competitiveness)	Northern Inland Region	Continuation of the annual Northern Inland Innovation Awards to highlight and promote successful innovation stories	Innovation is key to regional economic development	RDANI, Local Government, local Chambers of Commerce, private sector and NGOs
Employment pathways and opportunities for youth (RDANI Priorities: A, C. Key determinants: human capital, sustainable communities, population growth)	Northern Inland Region	Promote AGCAP (Agribusiness Careers and Professions) Program to schools and employers throughout the region.	Retention of young people locally for further education and employment opportunities.	RDANI, Private sector, NSW Dept of Education.

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 12 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



# Major Projects in the Region

## Armidale Region

- Costa's Tomatoes Glasshouse expansion (\$65M+)
- New Aged Care facility, Guyra (\$7M+)
- Redevelopment of Armidale Hospital (\$60M+)
- Tablelands Clinical Education Centre (\$7M+) New College at the University of New England (\$20M)
- UNE Kirby Farm – SMART Farm Innovation Centre (\$2M)
- Development of the Armidale Regional Airport precinct Stage 1
  - Industrial Park land release
  - Airside / Aviation industrial sites land release
  - Business Park land release
  - Terminal expansion and upgrade (\$7M+)
  - Apron expansion and upgrade (\$3M)
  - Roads and Infrastructure (\$10M+)
  - Highway Service Centre (\$10M+)
  - Motel and Tavern (\$4M+)
- Potential for a abattoir adjacent to the Armidale Regional Airport with access to the New England Highway, and possibility of airfreight to Asia in time.
- Mining – there is significant upside potential in this sector. The region has a rich mining heritage and during the latest mining boom there was much exploration and discovery locally.
- Halls Peak – Zinc, Lead, Copper, Silver and Gold
- Guyra District – Bauxite, Tin, Gold, Diamonds and gemstones
- Hillgrove – Antimony, Gold
- Potential Data Centre Development (\$15M+)

## Glen Innes

- Upgrade to Glen Innes CBD (\$4M)
- Flying school including planes and simulators (\$52M)
- White Rock Solar Farm (\$45M)
- White Rock and Sapphire Wind Farms (\$35M)

## Gunnedah

- Road over rail bridge (\$16M)
- New Industrial Complex Quia Rd (\$2.5M)
- Aldi Supermarket (\$2.4M)



## Gwydir

- The Living Classroom (\$4M)
- Renewable Energy from Waste

- Baan Baa Water Supply (\$4.5M)
- Baradine Creek Bridge (\$1.5M)
- Lagoon Creek Bridge (\$1.8M)

## Inverell

- Bindaree Beef biodigester and Modified Atmospheric Packing room (\$46M)
- Inverell Medical Centre (\$2M)
- National Transport Museum (\$1.5M)
- Sapphire Wind Farm (\$150M)

## Liverpool Plains

- 1500 room Civeo Worker Village at Werris Creek (\$48.5 M)
- Regional Water Supply Upgrade (\$27M)
- Liverpool Plains Emergency Services Precinct (\$6M)
- Health and Wellness precinct (\$5M)
- Kamilaroi Highway Service Centre, Quirindi (\$3.2M)
- 152 Lot Subdivision at East St Quirindi (\$5.97M)

## Tamworth Region

- New employment & Industrial Zone (254 hectares)
- Tamworth Intermodal
- Tamworth Regional Airport - terminal upgrade and expansion (\$3.9M)
- Quality Hotel Powerhouse (\$7M)
- Redevelopment of the old Velodrome site
- Baiada poultry development at Manilla (\$81M)
- Chaffey Dam Upgrade (\$43.3M)
- Australian Equine and Livestock Entertainment Centre - outdoor arena upgrade (\$2.4M)
- Sporting Centre of Excellence (\$17.2M)

## Moree Plains

- Moree Solar Farm (\$200M)
- Moree Gateway mixed commercial facility and truckstop (\$14M)
- Moree Airport upgrade (\$2M)
- Moree Ski Lakes facility (\$5M)

## Tenterfield

- Bolivia Hill Highway Realignment (\$70M)
- Heavy Vehicle Bypass (\$50M)
- Bruxner Park/Town Square (\$1M)
- Northern Growth Corridor - Mt Lindesay Road (\$27M)

## Narrabri

- Whitehaven Coal, new mine at Maules Creek including new rail loop (\$767M)
- Narrabri Airport upgrade Stage 1 (\$10.5M)
- Narrabri water system augmentation (\$14.4M)
- Boggabri Water Augmentation (\$2M)

## Uralla

- Thunderbolt's Way upgrade (\$3.5M)
- Emu Crossing (\$3M)

## Walcha

- Thunderbolt's Way upgrade (\$3.5M)
- Walcha Dairy expansion (\$3M)
- Woolbrook Wind Farm



Australian Equine and Livestock Entertainment Centre

# RDANI Activities, Projects and Initiatives

Based on the three 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 development and rollout of our 'Come on Inland' program in conjunction with LGAs, communities, and other active stakeholders.
- 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.
- Develop a regional online shopping portal ([www.comeonshopping.com.au](http://www.comeonshopping.com.au))
- Promote available grants and programs for communities via emails/ newsletters/PR.
- Work with NSW Department of Industry for identification of new innovative businesses to support with relevant State government programs in the region.
- Assist project proponents to develop appropriate projects for the Stronger Regions Fund

## Priority B. Industry diversification, job creation, capacity building & resource efficiency

- 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 7th annual Regional Development Australia Northern Inland Innovation Awards.
- 'Grantsmanship' – Providing advice and assistance to local councils, private enterprise and community organisations to access funding for their projects.
- Continue with the implementation of our Northern Inland Digital Economy Strategy recommendations focusing on the establishment of a regional online shopping portal.
- Develop and launch a Northern Inland Investment Profile
- Through our CEEP Education Officer, provide advice and support to residents and businesses to reduce their electricity consumption.
- Develop understanding of potential economic and social impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in Northern Inland NSW. Identify the opportunity for investment in alternate industries.
- Investigate opportunities for renewable energy 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.

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

- Promote the AGCAP (Agribusiness Careers and Professions Program) to schools and employers throughout the region.
- Continue with our Digital Economy 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 management of our Regional Broadband Smart Home.
- Assist project proponents to develop appropriate projects for the National Stronger Regions Fund as well as other government grant programs.

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