

# FAR NORTH WEST Joint Organisation

## Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities

2019 – 2022



## Acknowledgements

The members of Far North West Joint Organisation would like to acknowledge and thank all those that have contributed to and assisted with the development of the Statement of Regional Priorities, including:

- Council Mayors and Far North West Joint Organisation Board:
- General Managers
- Project Officer– Mark Riley
- Department of Premier and Cabinet – Regional Director, Ashley Albury
- Plan developed with assistance of Donna Galvin Consulting [galvinassoc@outlook.com](mailto:galvinassoc@outlook.com)

### Member council representatives:

Council	Mayor	General Manager	Contact
Bourke Shire Council	Clr Barry Hollman	Mr Ross Earl	PO Box 21 Bourke NSW 2840 <a href="mailto:council@bourke.nsw.gov.au">council@bourke.nsw.gov.au</a>
Cobar Shire Council	Clr Lilliane Brady OAM	Mr Peter Vlatko	PO Box 223 Cobar NSW 2835 <a href="mailto:council@cobar.nsw.gov.au">council@cobar.nsw.gov.au</a>
Walgett Shire Council	Clr Manuel Martinez	Mr Greg Ingham	PO Box 31 Walgett NSW 2832 <a href="mailto:council@walgett.nsw.gov.au">council@walgett.nsw.gov.au</a>

Interim Executive Officer – Far North West JO	Peter Vlatko General Manager, Cobar Shire Council	Cobar Shire Council PO Box 23 COBAR NSW 2835 <a href="mailto:council@cobar.nsw.gov.au">council@cobar.nsw.gov.au</a>
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# About the Far North West Joint Organisation

## Membership

The Far North West Joint Organisation was proclaimed under the *Local Government Act 1993* in May 2018 with the inaugural board meeting held on 20 July in Bourke. Membership of the Organisation is voluntary, and current the current membership is made up of:

- Bourke Shire Council
- Cobar Shire Council
- Walgett Shire Council

The Far North West Joint Organisation Board comprises the Mayors of the Member Councils (the voting members), as well the NSW Government, represented by a nominee of the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, currently the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Director Western Region (a non-voting member) and the General Managers of the Member Councils (also non-voting members). The Board is supported by an Executive Officer.

## Purpose

Joint Organisations (JOs) are legal entities established by the NSW Government to work across traditional council boundaries. JOs aim to transform the way that the NSW Government and local councils work together to collaborate, plan, set priorities and deliver projects on a regional scale across the state.

## Role and Function

The principle functions of the Far North West Joint Organisation are:

- 1. Strategic Planning:**  
Establish strategic regional priorities for the Joint Organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.
- 2. Leadership and Advocacy:**  
Provide regional leadership for the Joint Organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.
- 3. Intergovernmental Collaboration:**  
Identify and take up opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation on matters relating to the Joint Organisation area.

In addition, the Far North West Joint Organisation will also provide support for the operations of its Member Councils aimed at strengthening local government in the Joint Organisation area.

## OUR VISION AND PRINCIPLES

### Our Vision

*“A vast region of diversity and opportunity that cares for its people and environment”*

### Our Principles







The JO Board members pledge to the following principles.

#### *We will:*

- Make decisions and support initiatives, programs and projects based on the best outcome for the entire region
  - Focus on the strategic visions for the region and our communities
  - Be respectful of member council representatives, work cooperatively, communicate often and ensure good governance.
  - Work collaboratively across all levels of government and with key partners and stakeholders in the region
  - Make informed decisions considering the risks and benefits
  - Support major projects, initiatives and programs applying sound project management methodologies and financial rigour
- Support the success of the individual member councils - identifying strategies and actions to share and work together for service delivery

## ABOUT THE FAR NORTH WEST REGION

The Far North West region covers an area approaching 110,000 square kilometres classified entirely as Remote and Very Remote Australia.

 <p>Population 13 388</p>	 <p>The region covers an area of 108 080 square kilometres</p>	 <p>Population declined by 10% between 2007-17</p>
 <p>Gross regional product estimated at \$9.48 m</p>	 <p>5, 078 jobs with average unemployment rate of 7.9%</p>	 <p>Median weekly income per person is \$630</p>

### Population

There are 13 388 people who live in the Far North West region, with a median age between 36 – 43 years. The region has experienced a population decline of approximately 10% over the past ten years from 2007, with the largest declines in the Bourke and Walgett regions.

### Industry and Employment

Far North West's Gross Regional Product is estimated at just under \$1 billion, representing slightly less than 0.2% of the New South Wales' Gross State Product. The major industries across the region include Agriculture, Mining and Public Administration & Safety (in Bourke). Across the region, an average of 63% of people who are employed are employed on a full-time basis – higher than the NSW average of 59%, with an additional 23% employed on a part time basis. Unemployment is at an average 7.9% (5.8 – 10.6%), higher than the NSW state average of 6.3%,

### Income and Housing

The median weekly income across the region is \$630 per week, significantly less than the NSW median of \$1, 468 per week. Nearly 40% of homes are owned outright across the region, with a further 16% owned with a mortgage and 29% of homes being rented. However, an average of 96% of homes are appropriate for their occupants with no need for additional bedrooms or spare bedrooms.

## DEVELOPING THE REGIONAL PRIORITIES PLAN



The Far North West Joint Organisation embarked on a process in October 2018 to develop its initial statement of Strategic Priorities Statement.

This process involved surveys and interviews with all Member Councils to identify both their local and regional priorities, challenges and opportunities. A desk top audit of relevant plans and documents from all levels of government was completed to ensure that this plan integrates with and is aligned to the priorities of the NSW State Plan.

The planning process culminated in a planning workshop attended by the Mayors and General Managers of the Member Councils, NSW State Agency representative and Joint Organisation staff in December 2018. The draft plan was also reviewed by the Western Region Regional Leadership Executive (RLE) in February 2019. A subsequent session was held with the Board in February 2019 when the final draft plan was agreed and adopted in principle

## Connecting Regional Priorities and Plans

This table outlines the member Council strategic priorities from their Community Strategic Plans.

BOURKE	COBAR	WALGETT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Environmental sustainability</li> <li>▪ Liveable and vibrant communities</li> <li>▪ Economic prosperity</li> <li>▪ Governance and organisational performance</li> <li>▪ Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community strategies</li> <li>▪ Economic Strategies</li> <li>▪ Governance</li> <li>▪ Infrastructure strategies</li> <li>▪ Environmental strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Governance and Civic Leadership</li> <li>• Sustainable living</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> </ul>

## COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The delivery of the regional priorities will be dependent on the collaboration of member councils and other key partners and stakeholders including:

LOCAL/REGIONAL	STATE	FEDERAL
Our residents and businesses Member Councils/ Councillors Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Orana Joint Organisation NSW Farmers Federation Aboriginal Land Councils	Local Member Regional Leadership Executive Regional Economic Subcommittee Water NSW Mining and Resource Development Task Group Health, Education, Planning, Infrastructure, Trade and Investment NSW Premiers Department Tourism NSW Country Outback NSW Local Land Services	Federal Member Department Infrastructure and Local Government Regional Development Authorities Murray Darling Basin Authority

The regional priorities identified by the Joint Organisation align to other NSW and regional plans and strategies.

RESILIENT & FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITIES	A STRONG REGIONAL ECONOMY	A SUSTAINABLE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
<p><b>Premiers Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protecting our kids</li> <li>Reducing youth homelessness</li> <li>Making housing more affordable</li> <li>Improving education results</li> <li>Improving service levels in hospitals</li> </ul> <p><b>Regional Development Framework:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing quality services and infrastructure to regional NSW</li> <li>Aligning effort to support regional centres</li> </ul>	<p><b>Premiers Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating jobs</li> <li>Delivering Infrastructure</li> </ul> <p><b>Regional Development Framework:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing quality services and infrastructure to regional NSW</li> <li>Identifying and activating economic potential</li> </ul>	<p><b>Premiers Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keeping our Environment Clean</li> </ul> <p><b>Regional Development Framework:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing quality services and infrastructure to regional NSW</li> </ul>

## **KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The Far North West is an expansive and challenging place. The distances between communities and regional centres are a constant challenge – for people, for movement of goods and for the delivery of cost effective accessible essential services.

A decreasing and aging population places additional constraints on communities and increased demand for health and aged services. The flow on effect of decreasing population has impacts on the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the region.

A higher than average unemployment rate and completion rates from schools are key challenges for the region.

For all these challenges the people are resilient and love the lifestyle the area offers. Creative solutions developed with communities and key stakeholders will see the region sustain and grow.

## **THE JOINT ORGANISATION CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY TO DELIVER**

The JO Board have committed to a range of short term (2019) and longer-term strategies (2020-22).

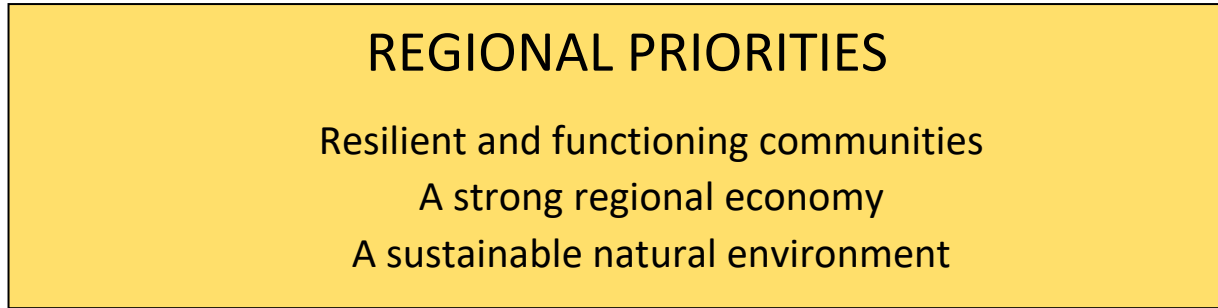
In preparing this strategic plan the Board considered a range of issues and priorities for the region. However, the Board acknowledge the challenges and constraints the JO will have to deliver on all these strategies with the limited resources and number of member councils who have little spare capacity and capability to support JO outcomes.

The JO will continue to engage positively with Brewarrina Council and encourage them to formally join the Joint Organisation.



## REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Through detailed analysis and consultation three regional priorities emerged about what the future desired vision of the region will look like. Strategies and actions have been developed that aim to deliver this regional vision.



RESILIENT AND FUNCTIONING COMMUNITIES	A STRONG REGIONAL ECONOMY	A SUSTAINABLE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
Accessible and quality education and training opportunities  Accessible and quality health services across the region  Accessible and quality social and community services  Safe communities  Transport Infrastructure  Energy Security	Economic development  Improved digital connectivity  Improved tourism attractions and infrastructure	Water security  A sustainable natural environment  Recognising climate change impacts  Culture and heritage is protected and valued
ON A FOUNDATION OF <b>A STRONG, CAPABLE AND RESOURCED JOINT ORGANISATION</b>		

## PRIORITY 1: RESILIENT and FUNCTIONING COMMUNITIES

### *Why is this important for our region?*

The communities of the Far North West Region are geographically dispersed across a vast area covering 108,080 square kilometres which is 13.5% of the total area of all of NSW, and yet the population represents only 0.18% of the NSW population.

Quality infrastructure is critical to the liveability of the communities and the connectedness of the region. Transport of people and produce is a daily consideration with the remoteness of some communities from their towns and from the further regional city centres.

The Western Region Economic Development Strategy identifies reliable and improved energy infrastructure as a critical success factor for business and economic growth as well as an essential infrastructure for residents and visitors.

Services delivered by regional partners such as health and education are highly valued by the people of the region.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMING
Accessible and quality education and training opportunities	Advocate to government to support quality education services, infrastructure, access and outcomes	Examples of advocacy	ongoing
	Collaborate with Orana JO with a view to the provision of local cost-effective delivery of skills based training to member councils.	Local training options expanded	ongoing
Accessible and quality Health services across the region	Advocate to government for enhanced and expanded quality health services in the region	Examples of advocacy	ongoing
	Assist the local health distribute to attract and retain health professionals to live and work in the region	Program developed and implemented	ongoing
Accessible and quality social and community services	Advocate to government to support the delivery of a range of social and government services to the region	Examples of advocacy	ongoing
Safe communities	Advocate to and on behalf of government agencies for the development of strategies and the implementation of programs to provide safe liveable communities	Examples of advocacy	ongoing
Transport Infrastructure	Work with Public Works Department and members council to update existing regional road plans	Plans updated	2020
	Work with stakeholders to develop strategies and resourcing plans for freight and people transport	Strategies developed	2021
	Lobby and advocate at both federal and state level for the maintenance and capital improvement of the regions road network	Increased funding provided to the region	2020 and ongoing

	Coordinate the tender and selection by the Board of an airline provider.	Airline services available in the region	2019
	Manage the administration of the air service subsidy contract including the provision of reports as required to Government	Reports will be provided No breaches of contract	2019-2023
	Work with member councils to identify airport infrastructure deficiencies and lobby government for funding.	Infrastructure audit completed	2020
Energy Security	Work with key stakeholders to develop regional energy infrastructure priorities and lobby providers to improve and expand energy infrastructure and services.	List of priorities developed	2021
	Work with key stakeholders to find and fund alternative energy solutions and opportunities for solar farming	Examples of alternate energy solutions in the region	2020
	Continue to work collaboratively in respect of the procurement of electricity supply by member Councils	Competitive electricity prices achieved	ongoing

## PRIORITY 2 - A STRONG REGIONAL ECONOMY

### *Why is this important for our region?*

A strong regional economy will drive population growth and the liveability of communities. With increased employment in a diverse range of business and industry the region will grow and prosper. Population growth will secure the provision of a range of education, health and social services and businesses to provide essential products and services to the communities.

The region is vast with significant distances between the communities as well as to the regional city centres. Transport connectivity is essential for the social and economic health of the region. Roads, air, rail and public transport infrastructure and services are critical to moving people and goods around and in and out of the region.

Digital innovations and access to reliable telecommunications are essential to businesses, industry and across all service delivery. The tyranny of distance can be somewhat overcome with access to high speed internet for education and health, and day to day transactional requirements.

Tourism is a focus for regional development and growth. The “rugged outback” this area is steeped in history, indigenous culture, heritage and significant sites. Increasing visitor numbers would have a direct positive impact on the regional economy and local business.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TIMING
Economic development	Review and report to the Board on the status of the implementation of actions identified in the Western Area Regional Economic Development Strategy (RED’s) with a view to the JO being party to necessary identified actions.	Lower unemployment Greater number and diversity of employment	2019/20
	Identify population growth strategies including but not limited to the sourcing of skilled migrants	Strategies identified	2021
Improved digital connectivity	Advocate on behalf of the region to communication providers for improved services, range and pricing for the region’s residents and businesses	Examples of lobbying and advocacy	2019 and ongoing
	Work with member Councils in the region to identify ways to share Information Technology expertise, infrastructure and capacity	Professional group established and strategies identified	2021

Improved tourism attractions and infrastructure	Allocate funding provided by the NSW Government for cultural and tourism initiatives by member councils	Funding allocated	2019
	Oversight progress and report to Government as required the delivery by member Councils of projects funded through tourism and cultural fund initiative.	Funding distributed and programs completed	2019
	Collaborate with Destination NSW and cross border councils to develop a signage infrastructure strategy to promote back country travelling routes	Strategy developed	2020

## Priority 3 – A SUSTAINABLE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### *Why is this important for our region?*

The Far North West is a region of expansive spaces and harsh climatic conditions. Water security is paramount to a region that often experiences long periods of drought and low rainfall. The region is part of the Murray Darling Basin River system which is the subject of significant national and international political interest.

All localities in the region face ongoing supply issues in respect of town water.

The region has a large agriculture sector including irrigation cropping. The natural environment has eco-tourism opportunities, and there are significant indigenous sites of cultural importance.

STRATEGIES	ACTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMING
Water security	Encourage member councils to maintain membership of the Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance with a view to their achieving and maintaining best practice status	Membership of the Alliance	2019
	Advocate and lobby government for funding to expand regional water storage facilities.	Funding secured	ongoing
	Advocate a position regarding regional water security programs with a view to influencing water policy development for the region	Examples of participation in policy development	ongoing
A sustainable natural environment	Investigate opportunities for the establishment of a weeds county council based on FNW JO regional boundaries.	Analysis completed and report prepared	2020
	Work with Netwaste to support initiatives for sustainable regional waste management programs	Examples of regional involvement in initiatives	ongoing
Recognising climate change impacts	Advocate for and promote programs that support the region response to significant long-term drought impacts	Examples of advocacy	ongoing
Culture and heritage is protected and valued	Advocate as required to support strategies, programs and initiatives that preserve, promote and protect the regions history and sites.	Examples of advocacy	ongoing
	Support initiatives that celebrate Indigenous culture and history	Examples of cooperation and support	ongoing

## THE CAPACITY OF THE JOINT ORGANISATION TO DELIVER

The new Joint Organisation Model aims to bring regional stakeholders together to deliver on regional priorities. Driven through the local government sector success is dependent on collaboration across agencies, clear strategy and direction and a capable and well-resourced Joint Organisation to coordinate and drive activity.

The member Councils of the Far North West have a long and successful track record of working together recognising the value of their collective strength but are constrained in the resources that they can provide to the JO. The member councils would be encouraged to pursue opportunities to share resources and expertise recognising the challenges of attracting and retaining skilled and experienced professionals.

STRATEGIES	ACTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMING
Enabling the Joint Organisation	The JO is provided the support and funding to coordinate the delivery of the regional priorities	JO funding is secured and is sufficient	ongoing
	The JO operates with good corporate governance principles and frameworks	JO meets compliance requirements	ongoing
	A capable and committed Executive Officer is engaged to coordinate and support the delivery of the JO program	EO engaged and delivers on priorities and projects	2019
	Grant funding for strategies and initiatives are pursued	Grant funding is secured	ongoing
Collaboration between member councils.	Specialist professional groups are formed from within the member councils for the purpose of sharing information, expertise, practices and resources	Specialist groups meet regularly	ongoing
	Opportunities are investigated to implement shared services between member councils or where the Joint Organisation could engage resources that could be accessed by member councils (eg procurement, project management, etc)	Shared services opportunities are identified and implemented	2020
	The JO will continue to encourage Brewarrina council to become a member of the JO	Membership confirmed	ongoing
Collaboration with State Government and key stakeholders	Establish and nurture strong relationships with State agency representatives particularly Department of Premier and Cabinet.	Quarterly meetings held with DPC	ongoing

**DESKTOP AUDIT OF RELEVANT PLANS, PROGRAMS, REPORTS LIST:**

The following documents were reviewed as part of the development of this Regional Strategic Priorities plan to identify the linkages and other projects, programs or initiatives that will support the Joint Organisation operation and outcomes.

**Local/Regional:**

- Member Councils Community Strategic Plans
- Far North West Joint Organisation Charter

**NSW State Government:**

- NSW Regional Development Framework  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/regional-development-framework/>
- Premiers Priorities <https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/>
- Regional Growth Fund <https://regional.gov.au/regional/programs/regional-growth-fund.aspx>
- Other Joint Organisation Statements of Regional Strategic Priorities
- NSW Joint Organisations 'Working together for regional communities'  
[www.olg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au)
- Fact Sheet – Preparing a Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities [www.olg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au)
- Western Region Economic Development Strategy (REDs)

**Federal Government:**

- 2016 ABS data <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2016>
- Murray Darling Basin Plan <https://www.mdba.gov.au/basin-plan-roll-out/basin-plan/developing-basin-plan>
- Orana Regional Development Authority and resources <https://www.rdaorana.org.au>



This plan was developed with the assistance of Donna Galvin Consulting



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