

**Submission  
No 44**

**INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Regional Development Australia - Orana

**Date received:** 5/09/2011

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1 September, 2011

Mr Rick Colless MLC  
Committee Chairman  
Standing Committee on Senate Development  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

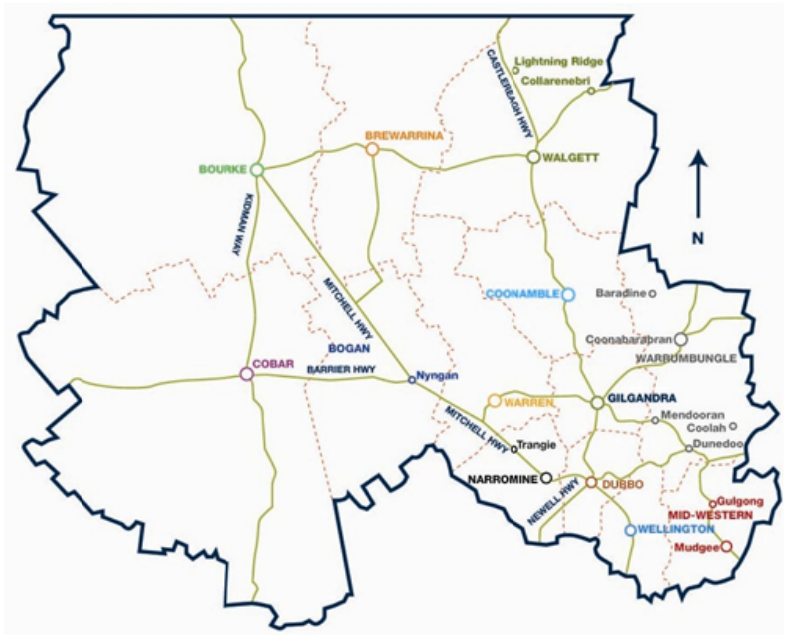
**Inquiry into Economic and Social Development in Central Western NSW**

Dear Rick,

On behalf on the Regional Development Australia – Orana (RDA Orana) Chair, John Walkom and Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry with the goal of achieving some positive outcomes in reducing the issues impacting on the social and economic development in the region of Western NSW.

RDA Orana covers a vast area that encompasses a total of 13 Local Government Areas (LGA's). The area is outlined in the map below;

- Bogan Shire Council
- Bourke Shire Council
- Brewarrina Shire Council
- Cobar Shire Council
- Coonamble Shire Council
- Dubbo City Council
- Gilgandra Shire Council
- Mid-Western Regional Council
- Narromine Shire Council
- Walgett Shire Council
- Warren Shire Council
- Warrumbungle Shire Council
- Wellington Council



We are aware that a number of agencies and organisations are providing submissions into the inquiry and it would be recognised that these entities are well placed to provide specific detail relating to their communities. RDA Orana's

submission contains a general overview using data that is taken from submissions from the agencies and organisations from the individual communities.

The RDA Orana committees are required to develop and annually update a Regional Plan. The plan describes the region, its attributes, industry and employment base and key strengths and weaknesses. The Regional Plan sets out an economic, environmental and social vision for the region over the next 10 years. Most importantly, the plan describes actions that will be taken to capitalise on opportunities to achieve the economic, social and environmental goals identified for the region. A copy of the RDA Orana Regional Plan has also been attached to this submission for the Standing Committee to draw information from and refer to in relation to areas in the Western NSW region if required.

#### **The provision of health, education and cultural facilities**

In the area of Education, school and vocational needs of the areas covered in the Western NSW region are generally well serviced, with towns with a population of 500 or more residents being serviced by Primary Schools both State and Private and High Schools and Central Schools through State. TAFE has Colleges in a number of towns throughout the West and also offers vocational courses in a number of the regional schools. The launch of TAFE Connect at the end of the year will also see an expansion of course offerings to remote locations.

While the area is well serviced by educational facilities, it is however recognised that with population growth in a number of the towns in the West Region due to increased mining activity and the reemergence of agriculture communities since the end of the drought. This is putting strains on current resources in the education sector particularly that in the area of Occupational Therapy, with specific areas of speech therapists in demand.

Specific emphasis on towns with increased economic activities in agriculture and mining activities would be beneficial to ensure that educational facilities are well resourced to cope with the population growth occurring.

Continual research, resources and support is also needed in communities with high Indigenous population to ensure that educational and occupational therapy needs are being met.

There is a high level of concern around the poor literacy and numeracy skills of the population, which is substantially below average. Factors such as these are influencing parents/careers with the economic ability to send their children away to boarding schools which then increases the pressures on schools population and demand for increased resources.

The accessibility and quality of medical and para-medical services and infrastructure is one of the major issues of community concern in the West region. Part of this concern is explained when the demographic features of the region are considered. As outlined earlier in the RDA Orana Regional Plan, the proportion of Indigenous people and aged people in the region are significantly higher than state averages. Both of these groups have higher health care needs.

Most towns have hospitals or multi-purpose health centers. In most of the smaller towns in the western and north western parts of the region, there has been a significant contraction of the services available in the local hospital (e.g. maternity, surgery) and many local residents are now required to travel three or more hours to a hospital in Dubbo to access these services, formerly available at their local hospital.

Attracting and retaining doctors and other medical professionals in smaller Central Western region towns is a major challenge for government and the communities. Targeted resourcing of Aboriginal medical services in communities of high indigenous populations (e.g. in Bourke, Walgett, Brewarrina) has been an important initiative, as have programs such as the Rural and Remote Dental Clinic-a partnership between Brewarrina Shire Council and Griffith University.

Dubbo has comprehensive medical and para-medical services as well as one major public base hospital (150 beds) and a private hospital (50 beds). Many of the residents in towns in the Central West Region access Dubbo Base hospital as this is the closest comprehensive medical facility providing a range of services. Plans and some funding have been foreshadowed for a major upgrade of the Dubbo base hospital. Resident and visiting specialist medical services are available in Dubbo in most medical disciplines, although some concerns have been expressed about reductions in access to some specialist services (e.g. oncology)-patients now requiring access to these specialist services have to travel an extra 2 hours to Orange. The Royal Flying Doctor Service operates from a base in Dubbo and services the Far West, West & Northern Inland Region.

Private sector and community organisations, and some local governr

within the region. Expanded facilities will continue to be demanded as evidenced by the significantly higher than state average proportion of aged people in the this region( 15.5 % of the Orana population aged over 65 years, compared to 9.8% state wide).

It has been noted that there is extreme pressure on Local Council who allocate significant amounts of general rate revenue to the provision of health infrastructure and services.

Ensuring that adequate Education and Health Facilities will assist local businesses in attracting and retaining employees these are two key factors that families consider when relocating.

Increased grant funding towards Culture and Arts is necessary to allow communities to access cultural opportunities. Currently cultural facilities are limited or non- existent in many towns in the West Region.

Population in the Orana region is 122,100 people residing in the thirteen LGAs in the Orana region Population growth has been in line with the State Average, with the current growth in both the agriculture and mining sectors population in the region is expected to grow in the medium to long term.

Overall, 13% of the region's population is of indigenous heritage, compared to 2% state wide. Some LGAs in the west of the Orana region have much higher indigenous populations some as high as 60%.

The key factors that are currently driving population growth in the Orana Region include;

- Mining activities – drive in drive out 's. Live in
- Agriculture activities
- Metropolitan promotions attracting people to regional cities and Towns (e.g. Evocities & Regional Country Living Expo)

Key factors that can have an adverse impact on population growth are;

- Lack of education and health infrastructure

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- Decline in health of elderly and indigenous population
- Water shortages & Environmental conditions – Drought
- Lack of tertiary options
- Environmental conditions – Drought
- Poor roads and transport infrastructure

### **The adequacy of transport and road infrastructure**

With low population density and, in some areas, local government in the region has struggled to maintain road infrastructure to a standard expected by regional residents. This has been exacerbated by a reduction in rail freight services and related infrastructure, which has increased heavy road haulage of freight, particularly grain.

This has increased damage impacts on regional and local roads maintained by local government, and has also increased freight costs for grains and other industries. Public transport services are minimal or non-existent for residents of many of the small urban centres across the Orana region. This is particularly a problem for youth and aged sectors of the population who depend on public transport to access health and cultural services in larger regional centres that are not available in their town.

Some of the larger regional centres (notably Cobar, Bourke, Coonabarabran and Mudgee) have experienced removal or significant reduction of air transport services. This has created difficulties for residents of those centres accessing services and facilities outside the region, and it has also served as a disincentive for professionals and other potential new residents to relocate to those centres.

There are extensive road networks throughout the West and approximately 361km of these are unsealed. The most strategic link road in this area is The Wool Track, which connect the Sunraysia area of Victoria with South East Queensland. The Wool Track is unsealed.

### **Ways to encourage development of local enterprises and the potenti**

Local business enterprises need greater incentives as a tool for encouragement which could include tax relief and various other levels of practical support. Access to funding to run workshops that increase and enhance business owner's knowledge of legislation updates, technology advances and advertising and selling tips that could assist in the growth and expansion of their business to the wider community.

The roll out of the NBN is vital to development of local enterprise to put businesses on a level playing field with that of businesses in larger regional communities and cities, with very limited to no internet access in many remote communities.

The use of travelling experts' delivering workshops on best business practices and offering of new and up to date initiatives would also be beneficial as many enterprises in small remote communities are owner operated with very limited staff to travel away to larger centres to participate in such workshops. Business practices can become old and out-dated and is unattractive to potential clients and customers.

Skills shortages also need to be addressed as many enterprises are limited in their opportunities to expand due to skills and labour shortages.

Many businesses in towns with mining activities are also struggling to compete for labour due to the attractive and unmatched wages offered by mining companies.

In summary RDA Orana has and continues to work closely with the Local Councils and agencies within a number of the communities across the Central Western NSW area. Extensive consultation has taken place with key stakeholders in these towns to identify issues affecting and restricting economic and social development. From the issues identified RDA Orana has established action plans to put in place initiatives and strategic responses to provide solutions to these issues. It would be beneficial for the Standing Committee to refer to the RDA Orana Regional Plan for more detailed information.



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Once again thank you for the opportunity to provide information towards  
indication of the key issues and impacts which will be identified and a constructive action plan with solid outcomes will be  
achieved.

Yours sincerely

John Walkom

Chairperson



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JULY 2011



An Australian Government Initiative



A NSW Government Initiative

The original Regional Plan was developed in August 2010 by Ian Maxwell Rogan Consulting on behalf of RDA-Orana NSW. This updated Regional Plan was developed in May-June 2011.

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***‘ORANA’ – means WELCOME in the Wiradjuri Language***



<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Executive Summary	4
<b>1 Introduction</b>	
1.1 What are RDA and RDA-Orana	7
1.2 Roles and responsibilities of RDA-Orana	7
1.3 Purpose of the Regional Plan	8
1.4 Regional planning process overview	8
<b>2 The Orana Region</b>	
2.1 Geographic profile	9
2.2 Demographic profile	11
2.3 Economic profile	12
2.4 Environmental profile	14
2.5 Education and health profile	16
<b>3 Consultation to Develop and Update the Regional Plan</b>	18
<b>4 Strategic Framework</b>	
4.1 Strengths of the Orana region	20
4.2 Weaknesses/challenges in the Orana region	22
4.3 Opportunities in the Orana region	24
4.4 Issues/developments in 2010/11 which have impacted on the Orana Region	26
4.5 Forecast issues/developments in the next 2-3 years which are likely to impact on the Orana Region	27
<b>5 Visions and Goals</b>	
5.1 Vision	28
5.2 Goals	28
<b>6 Action Plan</b>	29
<b>7 Key Regional Issues and Priorities</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>8 Economic Development and Job Creation Strategy</b>	
8.1 Overview of regional economy	35
8.2 Opportunities for new economic activity	35
8.3 Actions to be taken to assist economic development and job creation	38
<b>9 Government Strategic Context</b>	
9.1 Australian Government	40
9.2 NSW State Government	41
9.3 Local Government	43



<b>10</b>	<b>Plan for Regional Plan Review</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>44</b>

## Executive Summary

The Orana region covers the central and north western sectors of NSW-an area of over 190,000 sq. km or about 25% of the state. Approximately 122,000 people live in the region which comprises the local government areas of Mid-Western Regional (Mudgee and surrounding areas), Warrumbungle (Coonabarabran and surrounding areas), Wellington, Dubbo, Narromine, Coonamble, Walgett, Bourke, Brewarrina, Warren, Bogan (Nyngan and surrounding areas), Cobar and Gilgandra. The region, and Dubbo in particular, also provides services to residents and businesses beyond the Orana region, particularly in western and north western NSW and south western QLD-an estimated total “catchment” of 200,000 people.

Dubbo is the major city and service centre for the Orana region. Located towards the eastern edge of the region, it is home to approximately 34% of the region’s population.

Agriculture is the primary land use with over 85% of the region’s area and this industry accounts for 16% of the employment in the region-the largest employment sector. Agriculture is highly diversified across the Orana region-ranging from intensive irrigated viticulture and horticulture in the eastern areas; to extensive and highly productive dry land winter crops (cereals, oilseeds, grain legumes) in the central parts of the region; irrigated cotton and summer grain crops in the Narromine, Warren, Brewarrina, Walgett and Bourke areas; extensive grazing of beef cattle and sheep for meat and wool across all areas.

Mining and agriculture are the largest contributors to the economic output of the region-contributing 15% and 10% respectively to gross regional product value. Current mining activities range from silver, lead, zinc, gold and copper in the Nyngan and Cobar areas, coal in the Mudgee area, and opals in the Lightning Ridge area. New coal, gold, silver and rare earth mines are at advanced stages of planning in the region.

More than 1.25 million people visit the Orana region each year to see attractions such as Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Warrumbungle National Park, Mudgee wineries, Wellington caves, the Siding Spring Observatory, Lightning Ridge opal mines and the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre.

13% of the region’s population are of indigenous heritage, compared to 2% statewide. 16% of the region’s population are aged over 65, compared to 10% state-wide. 32% of the region’s population aged 15 and over have some form of post-school qualifications, compared to 41% state-wide.



Regional Development Australia-Orana was formed in 2009 and is funded by a partnership between the Australian and NSW State Governments. It is governed and directed by a committee comprising representatives of business, community and government organisations from across the Orana region.

The head office of RDA Orana is based in Dubbo.

## Vision

*To work in partnership with our entire community, and government to achieve outstanding community and economic development, prosperity and manage our environment effectively.*

## Mission

*To act as a strong advocate, exchange information, and work in partnership with our community, local government and other stakeholders to ensure the long term sustainability of the Orana region.*



Key opportunities identified during the regional planning process, to deliver economic prosperity for the Orana region over the next 5 to 10 years are:

- ∞ Expansion of the resources sector, including new mines developed.
- ∞ Increased tourism, particularly ecotourism and Aboriginal culture based tourism.
- ∞ Strengthen sustainable agriculture, food production and processing, underpinned by related research and development.
- ∞ Alternative electrical power generation
- ∞ Expansion of tertiary education opportunities within the region
- ∞ Improved transport infrastructure
- ∞ Strengthened regional approach to health services
- ∞ Improved data and communications infrastructure, including roll out of the National Broadband Network

This plan outlines specific proposals for projects that will capitalize on these opportunities to generate sustainable economic, employment and cultural development in the Orana region. The plan also outlines how RDA-Orana may be able to facilitate these and other projects in order to achieve its vision and mission.

The process of developing the original Orana regional plan occurred over the middle months of 2010 and involved extensive consultation across the Orana region with local government organisations, individual businesses and business representative organisations, providers of community health, education, environmental management and other services, as well as representatives of state and federal government agencies.

Some care has been taken to synchronize with existing strategic and economic development plans which have been developed by many of these organisations. The RDA-Orana committee provided guidance about the plan development and feedback as the plan was drafted. An RDA-Orana committee planning workshop in May 2011 has led to some updates to the original plan.



## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 What is RDA and RDA-Orana?

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a partnership between Australian, State and Local governments to strengthen regional communities.

RDA-Orana is one of 55 RDA entities around Australia—each of which is governed and directed by a committee which is made up of local leaders who work with their communities to identify and address the economic, social and environmental issues affecting them.

The committee of RDA-Orana comprises:

John Walkom-Chairman; Dubbo based businessman

Averil Gillham-Sydney based finance professional

Belinda Colless-Brewarrina based economic development officer

Joseph Flick-Western zone Aboriginal Land Council representative

Tom Gavel-Wellington district based, farmer and Catchment Management Authority representative

Louisa Kiely-Wellington district based, woolgrower and Carbon Farmers of Australia co-founder

Allan Smith-Mayor of Dubbo City Council

Kim Williams-Dubbo based businessman and community service leader

Terry Hoffman-Wellington based businessman and community volunteer.

### 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities of RDA-Orana

A key role for RDA-Orana is to deliver information to regional communities, organisations and businesses about programs, services, grants and initiatives for regional development offered across all levels of government. It is the expectation of Australian and NSW governments that RDA-Orana will:

- ∞ Consult and engage with the communities and local government across the Orana region
- ∞ Contribute to informed regional planning
- ∞ Represent whole-of-government activities
- ∞ Promote government programs
- ∞ Facilitate community and economic development



### 1.3 Purpose of the Regional Plan

All RDA committees are required to develop and annually update a Regional Plan. The plan describes the region, its attributes, industry and employment base and key strengths and weaknesses. The Regional Plan sets out an economic, environmental and social vision for the region over the next 10 years. Most importantly, the plan describes actions that will be taken to capitalise on opportunities to achieve the economic, social and environmental goals identified for the region.

It is intended that residents, community groups, business, service providers and government agencies will use the plan as a source of information on programs, initiatives, resources and opportunities to assist in forming partnerships to realize the vision for the Orana region.

While the plan has a 10 year time frame, it will be annually reviewed and updated by RDA-Orana, to reflect any changes in the region's social, economic and physical environment.

### 1.4 Regional Planning Process Overview

In June 2010, RDA-Orana conducted a consultation process and developed a draft regional plan which reflected the outcomes of that consultation and which also took into account the existing strategic and operating plans of many local government, business and community organisations across the Orana region.

Following the completion of the first phase of the consultation process, a summary of consultation outcomes was produced and presented at two community meetings in late July, 2010:

1. A meeting and discussion forum of economic development officers from local government councils across the Orana region.
2. A meeting and discussion forum of the RDA committee.

Both meetings gave feedback and advice on interpretation of the consultation outcomes. A draft Regional Plan was then considered by the RDA-Orana committee at a meeting in late August 2010.

The plan was completed and submitted to the Australian Government on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

At a planning meeting of the RDA-Orana committee on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011, developments of relevance to the Orana Regional Plan over the past 12 months were considered, as were likely future developments. That meeting recommended some changes to the Regional Plan.





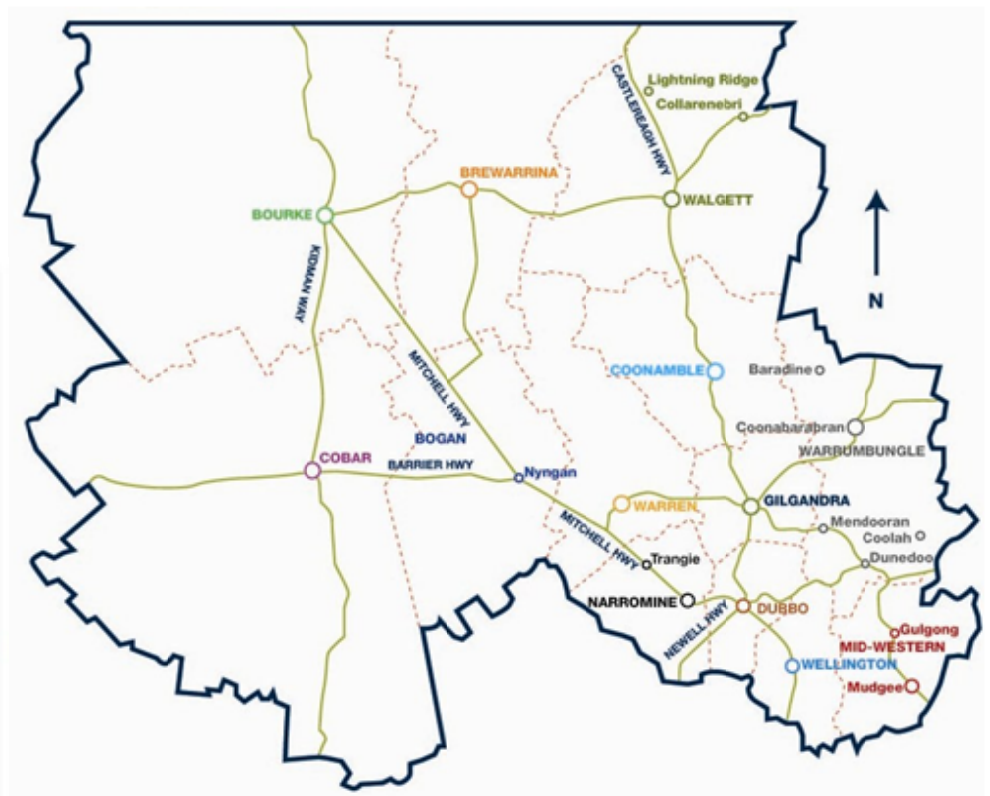
## 2 The Orana Region

### 2.1 Geographic Profile

The following map shows the Orana region, the major cities and towns, the boundaries of the 13 local government areas making up the region, and the major road transport routes.



- Bogan Shire Council**
- Bourke Shire Council**
- Brewarrina Shire Council**
- Cobar Shire Council**
- Coonamble Shire Council**
- Dubbo City Council**
- Gilgandra Shire Council**
- Mid-Western Regional Council**
- Narromine Shire Council**
- Walgett Shire Council**
- Warren Shire Council**
- Warrumbungle Shire Council**
- Wellington Council**



### Major Physical Features

The region measures approximately 500 kilometres from the undulating to hilly western slopes of the Great Dividing Range in Warrumbungle, Mid-Western Regional and Wellington shires in the east, to the predominantly flat plains of Cobar and Bourke shires in the west; and approximately 400 kilometres from the Bogan and Macquarie river systems in the south, to the Queensland border in the north.



Other major river systems in the region are the Castlereagh, Barwon and Darling.

The Warrumbungle Mountains in the central east of the Orana region provide the greatest elevation relief (up to 1000m) in what is, overall, a relatively flat regional topography (200-400m).

### Settlement

Approximately 122,000 people live in the Orana region. Dubbo (approx. 42,000 people) is the largest urban centre in the region, with other major towns being Mudgee, Cobar, Coonabarabran, Wellington, Coonamble, Bourke, Warren, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Narromine, Gilgandra, Nyngan and Brewarrina. When it is considered that the Orana region provides services to residents and businesses beyond the Orana region boundaries, the total “catchment” of the Orana region is estimated at over 200,000 people.

### Land Use

Agriculture is the primary land use on approximately 85% of the Orana region- recognised as one of Australia’s most productive farming regions. Agriculture is highly diversified across the region.

Dry land winter crops such as wheat, canola and grain legumes are the most widely grown crops-particularly through the highly productive plains areas in the central and northern parts of the region.

Irrigated viticulture and horticulture are found in the Mudgee, Wellington and Narromine areas. Extensive irrigated summer crops, predominantly cotton, are grown in the Narromine, Warren, Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett areas. Beef cattle and sheep for meat and wool are grazed across the entire region.



Mining in the region is significant, with zinc, silver, lead and copper mined at Cobar, copper at Nyngan, opals at Lightning Ridge and coal at Mudgee. New coal, gold and rare earth mines are at advanced stages of planning in other parts of the Orana region.



## Transport

Major interstate highways intersect the Orana region including the Newell (north/south) and the Mitchell (east/west). Other highways that cross the region are the Golden, Castlereagh, Oxley, Kamilaroi and Barrier highways. The Kidman Way is a major north/south transport route through the west of the region.

Major interstate north/ south and east/ west railway lines also intersect the region. Many other former branch railway lines servicing most regional towns are now unserviceable. A daily passenger rail service operates between Sydney and Dubbo with connecting bus services to some regional centres.

Extensive, daily commercial air services operate between Dubbo and Sydney, and less regularly between both Mudgee and Cobar and Sydney. Bourke, Walgett, Coonamble and Coonabarabran were formerly serviced by commercial air services but are not at present.

## 2.2 Demographic Profile

A profile of the population and demographic features of the Orana region are shown in the following table

LGA/Region	Population- 2009	Indigenous	Unemployed Sept 2009	Aged 15-24	Aged over 65
Bogan	3003	12%	6.0%	8.8%	17.0%
Bourke	3070	32%	10.9%	14.1%	10.1%
Brewarrina	1911	64%	16.4%	16.2%	9.4%
Cobar	5166	11%	4.1%	13.9%	12.3%
Coonamble	4306	27%	5.0%	11.9%	16.2%
Dubbo	41211	11%	3.7%	14.1%	13.1%
Gilgandra	4669	13%	4.4%	11.0%	18.9%
Mid-Western	22677	Na	4.9%	11.6%	16.9%
Narromine	6818	17%	4.8%	11.9%	15.3%
Walgett	7209	30%	10.1%	10.5%	14.0%
Warren	2833	13%	5.1%	7.0%	16.3%
Warrumbungle	10323	8%	5.3%	9.6%	19.3%
Wellington	8904	16%	7.0%	12.6%	17.6%
ORANA	122,100	13%	5.3%	12.2%	15.5%
NSW	7,134,421	2%	5.6%	13.9%	9.8%

Source: ABS

Population decline has occurred in six of the thirteen LGAs in the Orana region over the past nine years with overall regional population declining by 1.1% in that period. Population growth in the region is limited to three of the more eastern LGAs.

Overall, 13% of the region's population is of indigenous heritage, compared to 2% state wide. Some LGAs in the west of the Orana region have much higher indigenous populations.



Unemployment across the region is similar to state wide average; although some LGAs in the west of the region have unemployment rates approximately double state average.

Residents aged 15-24 years represent 12.2% of the regional population, compared to 13.9% state wide; those aged over 65 years make up 15.5% of the region's population-significantly higher than 9.8% across the state.

## 2.3 Economic Profile

### Industry

Gross value of Orana regional product in 2008/09 was estimated at \$5.6 billion-this has grown from \$4.6 billion in 2005/06. The following table presents an overview of the contribution by different industries to this gross regional product value.

Industry	% of GVP in Dubbo LGA	% of GVP in Orana region	% of GVP in NSW
Ag, forestry, fishing	2.6	10.2	1.8
Mining	0.8	15.8	3.6
Manufacturing	7.2	5.3	10.2
Elect,gas,water,waste services	4.1	3.4	2.3
Construction	11.3	8.7	7.7
Wholesale trade	8.9	6.0	5.4
Retail trade	6.8	5.4	4.8
Accom, food services	3.1	3.0	2.9
Transport	6.3	4.8	6.2
Media, telecomm	2.1	1.2	4.8
Finance, insurance	5.6	3.2	16.6
Rental, real est. services	2.7	1.8	3.3
Prof, scientific, tech services	3.6	2.7	7.7
Admin services	2.5	1.8	3.4
Public admin	8.8	7.4	5.0
Educ and training	6.8	6.5	4.4
Health care , social serv	11.1	8.5	6.6
Arts and rec services	1.4	1.2	1.1
Other services	4.2	3.2	2.1

Source: Dubbo Economic Development Strategy-Economic Profile. 2010.



Australia's largest sheep abattoir operates in Dubbo and exports sheep meat and wool products to many parts of the world. With the exception of wine grape processing in the Mudgee area, there is minimal processing or value adding of other agricultural commodities produced in the region.

## Employment

Labour market statistics (DEEWR Sept quarter 2009) indicate a total workforce across the Orana region of approximately 61,000. Unemployment rate at that time was 5.3% (individual shire unemployment rates varied from 3.7% to 16.4%). The following table indicates the contribution of different industries to employment in the region.

Industry	Dubbo LGA % of total Employment	Orana region % of total employment	NSW % of total employment
Agri ,forestry, fishing	3.8	16.4	2.8
Mining	0.2	3.5	0.7
Manufacturing	7.8	6.0	9.8
Elect, gas, water, waste services	1.4	1.3	1.0
Construction	6.2	5.0	7.2
Wholesale trade	5.0	3.5	4.9
Retail trade	14.3	12.1	11.5
Accom and food services	7.0	7.0	6.7
Transport	4.8	3.9	5.1
Media and telecomm	1.7	1.0	2.5
Finance and insurance	2.9	1.7	5.2
Rental and real estate	1.6	1.1	1.8
Professional and tech	4.3	3.4	7.6
Admin	2.2	1.7	3.2
Public admin	7.8	7.1	6.1
Educ and training	9.1	9.2	7.9
Health care and social services	14.2	11.5	10.8
Arts and rec	1.2	1.0	1.4
Other services	4.6	3.6	3.9

Source: ABS 2007

Agriculture accounts for up to 35% of employment in some Orana region LGAs. Above average rainfall through 2010 and high storage levels in the region's dams in early 2011, as well as positive movements in most rural commodity prices have significantly improved employment and business prospects in the agriculture and related sectors for 2011 and the immediate future.



## 2.4 Environmental Profile

Comprehensive statistics for the physical environment of the Orana region can be obtained from the Central West Catchment Management Authority ([www.cw.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cw.cma.nsw.gov.au)) and the Western Catchment Management Authority ([www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au)). An overview of key features of the Orana region physical environment is given below.

### Climate

An indication of climatic features is gained from the following table of statistics for 3 towns in the east of the region (Mudgee, Wellington, Coonabarabran) and 3 towns in the west of the region (Cobar, Bourke and Walgett).

Town	Elevation (m)	Mean Maximum temp (monthly range)(degrees C)	Mean Minimum temp(monthly range)(degrees C)	Mean annual rainfall (ml)
Mudgee	454	23 (14-31)	8 (1-16)	675
Wellington	390	23 (14-31)	11 (3-18)	619
Coonabarabran	505	24 (15-32)	7 (0-15)	750
Cobar	260	25 (16-34)	13 (5-21)	400
Walgett	133	27 (17-35)	13 (4-20)	477
Bourke	106	28 (18-36)	13 (5-21)	355

Source: BOM 2010

Forecasts from CSIRO scientific modelling of climate change in the region by 2050 (DECC Oct 2008) are:

- ∞ Maximum temperatures for autumn, winter and spring to increase by 2 to 3 degrees across the region,
- ∞ Maximum temperatures in summer to increase by 2 to 3 degrees in the west and 1.5 to 2 degrees in the east of the region,
- ∞ Minimum temperatures are forecast to increase by between 0.5 degrees in the south of the region and 2 degrees in the north,
- ∞ Summer rainfall is forecast to increase by 20-50% in the tablelands areas and by 10-20% in the west of the region,
- ∞ Winter rainfall is forecast to decrease by 10-20% in the region, and
- ∞ An increase in evaporation across most of the region is projected to create drier conditions throughout the year, although high intensity flood-producing rainfall events are likely to increase in frequency.



## Water supplies

Urban, rural stock and domestic and industry water supplies across the region are dependent on a range of surface and groundwater resources.

The Macquarie and Cudgegong rivers are regulated systems with major dams at Windermere near Mudgee on the Cudgegong (368,000ML capacity) and Burrendong near Wellington on the Macquarie (1.2 million ML capacity). Other rivers in the region are unregulated and include the Bogan, Castlereagh, Barwon and Darling. All river systems in the region are part of the Murray Darling Basin.



The majority of the region's urban areas are dependent on water supplies from these rivers, including Nyngan and Cobar that are dependent on water pumped from the Macquarie River near Warren and transported by open channel (the Albert Priest channel) to Nyngan and by pipeline to Cobar.

Irrigation dependent cropping industries have developed in some parts of the region, particularly since the 1970's. These include viticulture in the Mudgee area, vegetables in the Wellington/Dubbo/Narromine/Bourke areas, cotton in the Narromine/Warren/ Walgett/Bourke and Brewarrina areas, citrus in the Bourke and Narromine areas. These industries have licenced entitlements to extract up to approximately 20% of average flows in the regulated sections of the region's rivers. Low storage levels and low river flows over the past 10 years have seen the actual access and water extraction much reduced-such that cotton production in the lower Macquarie Valley has been reduced by up to 80% over that decade. Such changes in water availability have had significant socio economic impacts in the region. A recovery in irrigated crop production is anticipated in 2011 with a major improvement in water storage levels following high rainfall and runoff across the region in late 2010.

Since the 1980's, mining developments in the Mudgee, Nyngan and Cobar regions have required access to significant bulk water supplies-mainly sourced through purchase of regulated surface water licence entitlements from farmers.

Groundwater aquifers (localized alluvial and regional sub-artesian) are important for some urban water supplies, stock and domestic supplies and for some crop irrigation (mainly in the Narromine area). The Great Artesian Basin underlies a significant part of the northwest sector of the region and is accessed for stock and domestic and some town supplies (Lightning Ridge, Goodooga).

Water Sharing Plans and volumetric licencing extraction arrangements are in place for most surface water resources and some groundwater resources in the region. These are likely to be reassessed in the near future under the soon-to-be-released Murray Darling Basin Plan which will set new sustainable diversion limits for



both surface and groundwater resources in the region. Already approximately 20% of surface water licence entitlements in the Macquarie and Darling irrigated cropping regions have been purchased by state and federal government “buy back” programs—designed to increase environmental flows in the Murray-Darling Basin.

### Significant Environment and Conservation Issues for the Region

The Orana region has a very strong, and increasingly valued Aboriginal cultural history. The Wiradjuri, Kawambarai, Weilwan, Wongaibon and Gamilaroi Aboriginal nations and language groups, in conjunction with organisations such as Local Aboriginal Land Councils and Catchment Management Authorities, are making significant progress in identifying and protecting aboriginal artefacts and sites of cultural significance across the region.

It is estimated that approximately 70% of the Orana region has been substantially cleared of the majority of its native vegetation. Various initiatives are attempting to ensure that there is effective conservation of all aspects of native biodiversity. Goobang National Park in the south of the region and Warrumbungle and Coolah Tops National Parks in the east and north of the region are important areas of conservation, as are state forest and nature reserve areas across the region. The Macquarie Marshes nature reserve in the centre of the region is a Ramsar recognized wetland of international significance. Catchment management authorities and private landholders across the region are identifying and protecting many other areas of important remnant native vegetation and riparian areas under a range of voluntary conservation agreements.

Introduced weed species, feral animals (rabbits, foxes, feral pigs, cats and goats) and invasive native scrub are identified as major environmental threats by residents of the Orana region.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing energy consumption and costs, increased carbon sequestration in agricultural soils and agroforestry are seen as opportunities for positive environmental initiatives in the region.

## 2.5 Education and Health Profile

### Education

School and vocational education needs across the region are well serviced. Most towns of 500 or more residents are serviced by several primary schools operated by both state and private providers and by state run high or central schools.



Privately run high schools are found in five of the larger regional towns. The Western Institute of TAFE has colleges in 13 towns in the Orana region and offers vocational courses through some regional schools as well.





Charles Sturt University (CSU) has a campus in Dubbo delivering degree level courses in nursing, education and community health, and the University of Sydney delivers some aspects of its medical courses through the School of Rural Health in Dubbo.

Proportions of the region's population currently enrolled in various stages of education are shown in the following table:

Type of educational institution	Dubbo	Orana Region	NSW
Pre-school	1.9%	1.9%	1.7%
Primary school-govt	6.5%	6.8%	5.7%
Primary school-private	3.8%	3.3%	2.6%
Secondary school-Govt	4.1%	5.0%	4.1%
Secondary school-private	2.9%	1.6%	2.6%
TAFE	2.6%	2.4%	2.5%
University	1.8%	1.3%	3.6%
Other educ institution	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%

Source: ABS 2007

The proportion of the region's population with post school qualifications is significantly below state averages, as shown in the following table:

	Dubbo	Orana	State
% of population with a graduate degree or higher	10.0%	8.3%	16.5%
% of population with any post school qualifications	35.2%	31.6%	40.7%

Source: ABS 2007

## Health

The accessibility and quality of medical and para-medical services and infrastructure is one of the major issues of community concern in the Orana region, particularly for town and rural residents in the western sections of the region. Part of this concern is explained when the demographic features of the region are considered. As outlined earlier in this document, the proportion of Indigenous people and aged people in the region are significantly higher than state averages. Both of these groups have higher health care needs.



Most towns have hospitals or multi-purpose health centres. There are 24 hospitals/ multi-purpose health centres across the Orana region. In most of the smaller towns in the western and north western parts of the region, there has been a significant contraction of the services available in the local hospital (e.g. maternity, surgery) and many local residents are now required to travel three or more hours to a hospital in Dubbo to access these services, formerly available at their local hospital.

Attracting and retaining doctors and other medical professionals in smaller Orana region towns is a major challenge for government and the communities. Targeted resourcing of Aboriginal medical services in communities of high indigenous populations (e.g. in Bourke, Walgett, Brewarrina) has been an important initiative, as have programs such as the Rural and Remote Dental Clinic-a partnership between Brewarrina Shire Council and Griffith University.

Dubbo has comprehensive medical and para-medical services as well as one major public base hospital (150 beds) and a private hospital (50 beds). Plans and some funding have been foreshadowed for a major upgrade of the Dubbo base hospital. Resident and visiting specialist medical services are available in Dubbo in most medical disciplines, although some concerns have been expressed about perceived reductions in access to some specialist services (e.g. oncology)-patients now requiring access to these specialist services have to travel an extra 2 hours to Orange. The Royal Flying Doctor Service operates from a base in Dubbo.

Private sector and community organisations, and some local government councils, have developed aged care facilities in most towns in the Orana region. Expanded facilities will continue to be demanded as evidenced by the significantly higher than state average proportion of aged people in the Orana region( 15.5 % of the Orana population aged over 65 years, compared to 9.8% state wide).

### 3. Consultation to Develop and Update the Regional Plan

Regional Development Australia-Orana recognises it is essential to ensure that its regional plan reflects the needs and opportunities of as many of the Orana regional residents, communities and organisations, as possible.

For development of the first Orana Regional Plan the following regional stakeholder groups and organisations were targeted for consultation prior to the development of the plan.

- ∞ All local government councils in the Orana region (and OROC, the peak regional group for local government in the region)
- ∞ Chambers of Commerce (or equivalent) in regional towns
- ∞ Rural industry organisations
- ∞ Mining industry organisations



- ∞ Community service organisations
- ∞ Finance institutions
- ∞ State and Australian Government agencies
- ∞ Indigenous organisations
- ∞ Environmental organisations
- ∞ Major business operators
- ∞ Major utility service providers
- ∞ Education and health service providers
- ∞ State and federal elected representatives

An information sheet (about RDA-Orana and its planning process) and a short survey were developed, in consultation with the RDA-Orana committee. This was emailed to 112 individuals representing 76 organisations from the above stakeholder list, in the period 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010 to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

Respondents provided their opinions about the strengths and weaknesses in their parts of the Orana region; the opportunities they see for their area; the projects that they would like to see developed in the next 5 to 10 years; the current challenges for economic development, job creation and infrastructure and community services in their part of the Orana region.

In addition to the above survey process, the author of this report met with the General Manager of the Dubbo City Development Corporation, attended a workshop of the Working Party for the Dubbo Economic Development Strategy, and participated in a workshop with the Economic Development Officers of all councils in the Orana region. The prime purposes of these direct consultations were to collect personal perspectives to supplement the survey process, and to take steps to ensure complementarity between the RDA regional planning process and other strategic planning processes that were underway around the region.



To update the Regional Plan in May 2011, a planning workshop was conducted by the RDA-Orana Committee in Nyngan on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The committee considered actual developments over the past 12 months as well as forecast issues and developments of relevance to the Orana region over coming years, before agreeing on changes to the original Regional Plan.

## 4. Strategic Framework

The following information has been substantially compiled from inputs gathered in the community consultation process outlined in the previous section, and from the RDA-Orana Committee planning meeting held in May 2011 prior to updating this Regional Plan.

### 4.1 Strengths of the Orana Region

#### **Diverse and Productive agricultural sector**

Orana region agricultural industries have evolved over 160 years since first settlement and initial dominance by extensive livestock grazing, to now being one of the most diverse and productive “food and fibre” bowls in Australia. Soils are regarded as highly fertile and the climate is generally favourable and rainfall is a seasonal, although highly variable. The sector has been severely hampered by drought over the past 8-9 years and changing market conditions for agricultural commodities have brought about some broad changes (less emphasis on wool production; increased emphasis on grain cropping). Development of irrigated cropping in the region, particularly since the 1970’s, has stimulated diversification and intensification of farming systems in some parts of the region, although confidence in these sectors has been somewhat eroded by seasonal and government policy driven reductions in water availability. Productivity growth and diversification have been driven by public and private investment in rural R, D & E and there are some excellent rural research facilities and expertise in the region.

#### **Lifestyle and quality of life**

Many Orana region residents perceive the region as having excellent lifestyle and quality of life features. Clearly, this is primarily a subjective assessment, but is most likely influenced by factors such as housing affordability, relative absence of serious crime, accessibility of basic human services, climate, employment, and relative absence of time stressors. It is noted that some attempts at independent and semi-objective assessment of lifestyle (e.g. by Bankwest 2008) have actually rated some local government areas in the Orana region quite lowly on aggregate lifestyle scores.

#### **Mining and mineral resources**

There is a relatively long history of mining in the Cobar region, which has seen strong development of employment, investment and cultural services in what was a small, remote rural town. Opal mining in the Lightning Ridge area has similarly stimulated development there, and this has been augmented by strong tourism business. More recent mine developments in the Nyngan and Mudgee areas have contributed strongly to employment and economic activity.



A number of new mining developments are at relatively advanced planning stages in the region. A consortium of NSW electricity generators has formed a joint venture to develop the Cobbora coal mine in the Dunedoo area east of Dubbo, with a proposed output of 20-30 million tonnes of coal per annum over an estimated 21 year mine life with 1700 jobs sustained. A decision to defer development of the Cobbora mine was announced in early 2011. Alkane Resources, an ASX listed company, has two mining developments in the late stages of planning in the region. One is a gold mine development at Tomingley, south of Narromine, and the other is a rare earth (zirconia and other minerals) mine development at Toongi south of Dubbo.

Cobar Consolidated Resources is at a late stage of planning the development of the Wonawinta silver mine south of Cobar. The mine is expected to begin operations in late 2011 with 60 to 80 ongoing jobs.

The employment and other economic impacts of mine development in the region are not just those that come directly from the mine development and operation. Businesses that supply services to mining companies, including drilling, survey, environmental management, construction, human resources and training-have already been established in the region.

#### Central/strategic location and iconic attractions

The Orana region in general, and its primary service centre-Dubbo- in particular, are ideally located at the crossing points of major north/south and east/west transport routes. This is a strength for both business linkages and transport services as well as for tourism. A reasonably long list of iconic tourism and cultural assets adds to this central location to create a strong strategic advantage for the Orana region. These assets include:

- ∞ Warrumbungle Mountains; Macquarie Marshes; Macquarie, Barwon and Darling rivers
- ∞ Indigenous cultural sites and artefacts; outback landscape, heritage and culture; Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre
- ∞ Wellington Caves; Taronga Western Plains Zoo; Lightning Ridge opals; Mudgee district wines



## 4.2 Weaknesses/Challenges in the Orana region

### Skill shortages

This challenge or weakness surfaces in various forms across the Orana region. In the smaller, remote centres it is most evident for doctors and medical professionals. In areas where mining is active, skilled tradespeople and professionals such as engineers are in short supply. As reflected in the age demographic analysis for the region, where these professional and trades people are present in the small communities, many are approaching retirement age and their communities are concerned about a relative absence of skilled young people to replace the retirees.

A related weakness identified in the consultation process, was the lack of in-region tertiary education facilities. If young people have to leave the region to pursue tertiary education, they are unlikely to return to work and live in the region after completion of studies. Furthermore, with many low socio-economic groups in some parts of the region, with low proportions of the population having undertaken post school qualifications (as revealed in the region's demographic profile), it is less likely that young people will be encouraged to undertake tertiary training if they have to leave the region to do so.

### Poor transport infrastructure and services

With low population density and, in some areas, population decline, local government in the region has struggled to maintain road infrastructure to a standard expected by regional residents. This has been exacerbated by a reduction in rail freight services and related infrastructure, which has increased heavy road haulage of freight, particularly grain.

This has increased damage impacts on regional and local roads maintained by local government, and has also increased freight costs for grains and other industries. Public transport services are minimal or non-existent for residents of many of the small urban centres across the Orana region. This is particularly a problem for youth and aged sectors of the population who depend on public transport to access health and cultural services in larger regional centres that are not available in their town.



Some of the larger regional centres (notably Cobar, Bourke, Coonabarabran and Mudgee) have experienced removal or significant reduction of air transport services. This has created difficulties for residents of those centres accessing services and facilities outside the region, and it has also served as a disincentive for professionals and other potential new residents to relocate to those centres.



### Health services and infrastructure



While most towns in the region have a hospital or multi-purpose health centre, there has been a significant decline in the range of health services that can be accessed through those facilities by local

residents (e.g. maternity services and most surgical procedures are no longer provided from these facilities). This has required a greater proportion of the region's residents to travel to Dubbo or further afield (Orange or Sydney) for most medical procedures other than general practice diagnosis, treatment and advice.

Dubbo Base Hospital, while providing a wide range of high quality medical and surgical services, is regarded by many to be antiquated and overdue for major upgrades, particularly considering the increasing role it is playing as a hub for medical services for the entire Orana region and beyond (including the far west region of the state). Almost 50% of patients treated at Dubbo Base Hospital reside outside the Dubbo LGA.

As noted in the "skills shortage" section above, there is widespread community concern about the capacity of the region to replace current doctors and other health professionals in small regional centres. There is currently heavy reliance on overseas trained doctors to staff medical practices in some Orana region towns and some difficulty in retaining adequate Visiting Medical Officer coverage for hospitals in those towns.

### Youth services and support

Most of the Orana region councils have some commitment to youth activities and support, as do Indigenous, church or other community service organisations. However resources and skills for effective, specialized youth services in these small regional towns are often extremely limited. Sometimes there is a lack of cohesion between councils, agencies and community groups in planning and undertaking youth activities-further exacerbating the problems created through a shortage of resources for community services in these towns.

Youth unemployment is high (greater than 20%) in many regional towns due to the lack of diversity in employment opportunities and lack of training opportunities. Without public transport, and due to the large distances involved, there are extremely limited opportunities for youth in these towns to travel for training, employment or recreational activities.



### **Secure, reliable water supplies**

The recent prolonged drought has brought to light some current and potential future water supply concerns in the region. The reliance on the 73km open, earthen Albert Priest Channel to supply water for town, stock and domestic and industrial (including mining) purposes for Nyngan and Cobar involves major inefficiencies (up to 50% water losses). Other town and stock and domestic water supplies dependent on alluvial aquifers, have noted significant drops in water levels in these aquifers in recent years—a product of lower recharge rates in drought, but also increased usage of groundwater by mining and irrigated farming.

Short and longer term climate changes have lessened the reliability of water supply to irrigation farmers and miners throughout the region.

This is further impacted upon by current and likely future government policy to ‘buy back’ bulk water licence entitlements to enable a restoration of environmental flows in the Murray Darling Basin system.

## **4.3 Opportunities in the Orana Region**

### **Increased Tourism**

Tourism is an important industry for the Orana region. An average of 789,000 people visit Dubbo every year and it is estimated that 1.25 million tourists visit the Orana region every year. These visitors generate significant business turnover and employment as outlined in the regional profile section of this report.

Subject to addressing the transport infrastructure weaknesses outlined elsewhere in this report, Orana region residents, businesses and councils believe there is significant potential to increase tourism activity in the region.

Specific opportunities highlighted include ecotourism and tourism related to the strong Aboriginal heritage of the region.

### **New mining developments**

Mining is already a leading contributor to revenue and employment in the region.

As outlined in a previous section, significant new mining developments are at an advanced planning stage. With thorough attention to associated infrastructure developments and careful consideration of environmental impacts and water supply security, these mines will have positive impacts for the region.

There will be further opportunities to develop businesses and services (including education and training services) which support an expanded mining sector in our region.





### **Sustainable agriculture, food production and processing**

Capitalising on the current strengths of agriculture in the region, there will continue to be incremental improvements in productivity while reducing the impacts of our farming systems on the soil, water and other natural resources. Specific improvements will be made in water use efficiency-particularly in the “off river” irrigation schemes- and in reduced energy inputs and increased carbon sequestration which will ultimately bring both commercial and productivity benefits for our farmers.

Opportunities will develop to locally process more of our raw, agricultural commodities produced in the region, and with this, opportunities for branded marketing of these value added products. These developments will be supported and, to some extent, driven by, within-region research and development of new farming systems and natural resource management.

### **Development of new or expanded tertiary education facilities**

Lack of access to within-region tertiary education facilities has been identified as a significant need. Progress has been made in the medical sector with the University of Sydney, School of Rural Health and Charles Sturt University, Dubbo campus.

There is significant potential to capitalize on the two business strengths of the region, mining and agriculture, to establish new or expanded tertiary education facilities in the Orana region.

Skill areas of need identified include Occupational Health and Safety training, all disciplines of engineering, environmental science, hydrology and geology.



### **Strengthened regional approach to health services**

This is the issue of most concern to Orana regional residents. A comprehensive regional health plan, with a new Dubbo base hospital as the hub, with commitment to maintaining necessary infrastructure and skilled medical staff in regional towns, with attention to aged care and mental health, and with attention to succession planning in key skill areas- is essential.



### Alternative electrical power generation



The region has abundant space, sunlight, wind and potential access to natural gas. Opportunities exist for the region to take a lead in establishment of new, clean, low emission electrical power generation.

## 4.4 Issues/Developments in 2010/11 which have Impacted on the Orana Region

- State election and change of state government
- Widespread rainfall and flooding in some parts of the region
- Federal Election leading to a delicate balance of power involving the Greens and regional independents
- Release of the guide to the Murray Darling Basin Plan
- Further progress towards development of wind and solar electricity generation in the region
- Growth/ expansion of some existing mines and progress towards opening of new mines in the region
- Further exploration for coal seam gas and progress in planning for mines and pipelines
- Progress towards the imposition of a tax on carbon emissions
- The Carbon Farming Initiative implemented
- Evo Cities campaign strengthened
- Progress towards regional roll out of the NBN
- High market prices for rural and resource commodities
- Changes to skilled migration legislation
- Foreign corporations buying large farms
- Increased skilled labour shortages
- Ongoing drain of labour supply from agriculture and trade sectors by mining industries
- New machinery technology developments in farming



#### 4.5 Forecast Issues/Developments in the next 2-3 Years which are likely to impact on the Orana Region

- Increasing demand from India and China for food and minerals
- Difficulty in encouraging young people to return to farms
- Continued loss of Australia's manufacturing base to India, China and other developing economies
- A federal election and possible change of government
- Local government elections
- New Murray Darling Basin water policy
- Involvement of agriculture in carbon trading
- Recruitment and job retention incentives implemented in remote communities
- Strong seasonal, commodity price and irrigation water supply outlooks for farmers
- Pressure on housing and education facilities in indigenous communities
- Change in local government/RDA relationship
- Loss of young people from the region
- Young people not getting involved in community organisations, making continued existence of some organisations problematic
- Growth of partnerships and resource sharing between local government councils
- Continuing welfare dependency in some communities in the region
- Melbourne/Brisbane rail link commences development
- NBN infrastructure rolled out in the region and connections commenced
- More e-commerce, e-health and e-education services accessible in the region
- New ACSMP mining and related industries tertiary education and training facility established in the region
- Feasibility of a Western Region Police Academy investigated
- Transport infrastructure priority upgrades commenced
- More widespread use of social media
- Land Council elections



## 5 Vision and Goals

### 5.1 Vision

**To work in partnership with our entire community and government to achieve outstanding community and economic development, prosperity and to manage our environment effectively.**

### 5.2 Goals

#### **Enhanced Community Engagement and Consultation**

Through enhanced community engagement and consultation, RDA-Orana is able to act as an effective conduit between governments and the community to ensure the community is able to provide input to governments about key issues that impact upon them, and inform the community about government programs and activities.

#### **Improved Regional Planning**

By playing a leading role in building and driving the delivery of the Regional Plan-obtaining community input on planning matters, sharing plans and data with other organisations, and working in partnership with all key stakeholders, RDA-Orana is able to provide input into, influence and improve regional planning.

#### **Enhanced Whole-of-Government Approach**

By working in partnership with all three levels of government, particularly local government and enhancing our knowledge about government programs and activities, and engaging with the community and other stakeholders to exchange relevant information, RDA-Orana is able to participate in, support and contribute to whole-of-government activities.

#### **Enhanced Awareness of Government Programs**

Through enhanced awareness of government programs, RDA-Orana is able to create wider community awareness and promote Australian, NSW and local government programs including those targeted at industry development, job creation, skills development, protection of the environment and other programs of importance to the region.

#### **Improved Community and Economic Development**

By working in partnership with government, industry groups, business, non-profit organisations, community groups and other stakeholders to promote the region, encourage and support the growth of community groups, business investment, skills development and other relevant programs,

RDA-Orana is able to contribute to community and economic development in the region.



## 6 Action Plan

### Goal: Enhanced Community Engagement and Consultation

	Actions to be Undertaken	Responsibility	Timing	KPI's
1	Engage regularly with key community and industry groups, including OROC and individual councils, EDO network, Murdi Paaki, Aboriginal Ed Cons Group, Aboriginal Health Group, Central West CMA, NSW Farmers, Macquarie River Food and Fibre, Dubbo City Development Corp, and other groups and individuals.	CEO, Committee members.	Ongoing	Meetings held with OROC 3 times per year, EDO network 4 times per year; and with other organisations on an as-needed basis
2	Create awareness of the roles and responsibilities of RDA-Orana using media including social media, forums and through direct consultation with stakeholder groups	CEO, Committee members	Ongoing	Record of contacts with RDA-Orana office by regional groups

### Goal: Improved Regional Planning

	Actions to be Undertaken	Responsibility	Timing	KPI's
1	Produce an updated Orana Regional Plan	Committee	June 2011	Plan accepted
2	Contribute to planning activities of other regional organisations(eg OROC, individual councils, CMA)	CEO, Committee	Ongoing	RDA Orana recognized in plans of other orgs



**Goal: Enhanced Whole of Government Approach**

	<b>Actions to be Undertaken</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>KPI's</b>
1	Engage regularly with local councils and OROC	CEO, Committee	Ongoing	Record of meetings held at least quarterly
2	Engage regularly with relevant state government departments and alert regional stakeholders about relevant government programs, grants, policies and initiatives using media, forums, and through direct engagement	CEO	Ongoing	Number of media releases, forums held, meetings with stakeholder groups
3	Engage regularly with relevant federal government departments and provide a two way flow of information to/from regional stakeholders	CEO	Ongoing	Record of enquiries/requests received from stakeholders; action taken and timing

**Goal: Facilitate Enhanced Awareness of, and engagement with, Government Programs**

	<b>Actions to be Undertaken</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>KPI's</b>
1	Promote relevant government programs in industry development, job creation, skills enhancement and other programs of importance to the Orana region businesses, local government and community groups	CEO, Committee (in partnership with OROC)	Ongoing	Participation rates by Orana region businesses, councils and organisations in Govt programs
2	Assist regional stakeholders to apply for financial support for on-ground action in the region, particularly from the Regional Development Australia Fund	CEO	Ongoing	Successful applications acknowledging RDA-Orana input
3	Provide feedback to state and Australian government agencies as new projects, programs and initiatives are being planned-to ensure increased relevance of new government programs to regional stakeholders	CEO, Committee (in partnership with OROC)	Ongoing	Orana region inputs to program design noted by state and Australian governments.



**Goal: Improved Community and Economic Development**

	<b>Actions to be Undertaken</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>KPI's</b>
1	Work with community and business groups, and relevant government agencies to plan priority projects identified as key opportunities in the RDA-Orana Regional Plan. Specifically: -new transport infrastructure developments -increased tourism -new mining developments -sustainable agriculture, food production and processing -new tertiary education facility -strengthened regional approach to health services -alternative electrical power generation (Note: further details on these priority projects is given in the "Economic Development and Job Creation Strategy" component of this plan	RDA Committee in partnership with OROC, individual councils and business organisations	July 2012	Plans developed for each project. Commitment by industry organisations and State/Australian Govt received.
2	Promote the business and community strengths of the Orana region through targeted events and programs.	CEO, Committee members	Ongoing	Numbers of events participated in

**7 Key Regional Issues and Priorities**

The following issues and priority projects have been identified by the RDA-Orana committee as key to the sustainable economic development of the Orana region. The identification of these issues has been informed by consultation with a broad range of regional stakeholders.

∞ **Water Security for Existing and Future Urban and Industry Development**

Specific priorities for this region are to improve the efficiency of water delivery to Nyngan and Cobar via the Albert Priest channel; improve water use efficiency in off river irrigation schemes in the lower Macquarie valley through channel and other infrastructure upgrades; continued focus on improvement of on-farm water use efficiency for all farming systems; ensure social and economic impacts are clearly understood and accounted for during consideration of changes in "Sustainable Diversion Limits" under the new Murray Darling Basin Plan; investigate and implement changes in urban water use through storm water harvesting and re-use.



∞ **Transport Infrastructure**

Specific priorities for this region are the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail route; the Bell's Line of Road expressway; upgrades to the Golden and Newell highways; improved access for road trains to key industrial precincts and ports; improvements to rail infrastructure including the Coonamble line for grain freight and rationalizing rail freight operations out of Dubbo city centre; sealing segments of the alternate inland highway( Wool Track); re-establish air services linking major Orana regional centres to Sydney and establish air services between Dubbo and other major urban centres.



∞ **Enterprise and Workforce Development**

Specific priorities for this region are to support major new value adding investment projects when they arise, including manufacturing, agribusiness and mining; ensure access for all regional centres to the National Broadband Network; address skill shortages through targeted marketing and new, within-region tertiary education opportunities; promote linkages between business operators, industry groups and local government with new trade training centres in regional schools.

∞ **Economic Security of Aboriginal People and the Viability of Small Regional Centres**

Specific priorities for this region are to improve the performance and viability of Aboriginal businesses through targeted programs and mentoring; develop capacity of Aboriginal stakeholders to participate in tourism and cultural business opportunities and develop Aboriginal assets.

∞ **Structural Change in the Agricultural Industries**

Specific priorities for this region are to promote value adding to agricultural commodities produced in the region; research, develop and implement improvements in farming systems that use less energy inputs, are more water use efficient and which can take advantage of carbon trading opportunities.

∞ **Health Services and Infrastructure**

Specific priorities for this region are to develop a whole of region approach to health care centred around a new Dubbo base hospital and with suitably resourced and staffed outreach services in all regional centres; continue and strengthen initiatives to train doctors and other medical professionals in regional areas and offer incentives for them to live and work in small regional centres.

∞ **Education Services and Infrastructure**

Specific priorities for this region are to develop more opportunities for tertiary education in the region which are focused on regional strengths





(and job opportunities) in mining and agriculture; capitalize on the potential for Trade Training Centres in regional schools.

∞ **Human Potential not being fully Utilised**

Specific priorities for this region are to work with local government, schools, community service groups and business to ensure young people in the region have access to skills development, personal development, career guidance and employment opportunities to fulfil their potential and remain in the region; promote and provide access to recreation and cultural activities that engage young people, particularly in smaller and remote regional communities.

∞ **Communication**

Specific priorities for this region are to extend broadband access to remote locations; strengthen a positive Orana region image using media including social media, newsletters and the web



∞ **Aging Population**

Specific priorities for this region are to work with all levels of government and community groups to develop and maintain appropriate aged care facilities; facilitate training and employment opportunities for the over 55's.

∞ **Pressure on Local Government to Deliver more Services with Limited Budgets**

Specific projects for this region are to work with the State and Australian governments to create awareness of the growing demands on local government for infrastructure and community services, and to seek additional resources for local government in the region; facilitate more cooperation and cohesion between local government, community service groups and other government agencies in the planning and delivery of community services.

∞ **New Resource Developments**

Specific projects for this region are to encourage and support the sustainable development of new mineral, coal and natural gas resource projects (including the Cobbora coal project, the Tomingley gold project and the Toongi rare earth project, the Wonawinta silver project); recognize and encourage the establishment of businesses that support the mining industries of the region; facilitate the development of tertiary training facilities in the region that focus on providing skilled professionals for regional mineral resources and natural resource management sectors.

#### ∞ **Alternative Energy Developments**

Specific projects for this region are to encourage and support the development of alternative electrical power generation facilities which utilize solar, wind, biofuels or natural gas as lower cost, lower emission energy sources.

#### ∞ **New Tourism Developments**

Specific projects for this region are to encourage and support the development of new tourism opportunities and associated business and employment, specifically in the fields of ecotourism and tourism which capitalizes on the region's strong Aboriginal culture and heritage.

Priority Projects for facilitation and consultation by RDA-Orana in 2011/12 are outlined in the following table:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Who's responsible</b>
Develop regional facility for the Australian Centre for Sustainable Mining Practices	RDA in collaboration with OEC, UNSW, TAFE Western and Minerals Council
Develop Western NSW Indoor Multipurpose Equine Facility at Coonamble	RDA in collaboration with Coonamble Shire Council
Commence planning for redevelopment of Dubbo Base Hospital	RDA supporting the Western Local Area Health Network and health service providers
Upgrade and replace the Albert Priest Channel providing water to Nyngan and Cobar	RDA supporting Bogan and Cobar Shire Councils
Reinvigorate Trangie Research Centre to provide relevant R,D&E services for modern agricultural systems	RDA in consultation with NSW DPI, Carbon Farming Initiative, MLA, GRDC, Cotton Aust.
Investigate biofuels for power generation	RDA in consultation with power generators
Plan and establish inter-town transport services	RDA in consultation with local councils
Conduct a regional transport infrastructure summit	RDA to facilitate in consultation with OROC and local councils
Create an RDA Young people's communication plan	RDA in consultation with community groups and directly with young people via social media

Note: RDA-Orana will consider supporting other projects which are proposed by local councils and which have demonstrable community support and the potential to contribute to Orana region social and economic strength.



## 8 Economic Development and Job Creation Strategy

### 8.1 Overview of the Regional Economy

As indicated in the Economic Profile section of this regional plan, primary industries (mining and agriculture) are clearly the biggest drivers of the current economic output and employment in the Orana region. Also important are the health, education, retail and tourism services sectors.

Manufacturing is underrepresented in the region, relative to other regions in the state. Remoteness, weaknesses in transport infrastructure and skills shortages are the likely reasons for this lack of development to date in manufacturing and other secondary industries.

Dubbo, the major city and service centre in the region, is growing and is strategically one of the best located regional cities in Australia. While sometimes seen as draining population, business and services from other parts of the Orana region, Dubbo is a major asset to the future development of the region.

Despite recent regional population decline and one of the worst droughts on record, RDA-Orana and other regional leaders are optimistic about future growth potential in business and population, capitalizing on our current strengths in agriculture and mining, through simultaneously addressing some of the weaknesses and opportunities outlined earlier in this regional plan.

The following sections highlight the major opportunities for new economic activity and the actions that RDA-Orana and its partner organisations will take over the next two years to help create economic development and job creation in the Orana region.

### 8.2 Opportunities for New Economic Activities

#### ∞ Sustainable Agriculture, Food Production and Processing

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Larger areas of higher value crops grown with high water-use efficiency irrigation systems. These will include increased plantings of fruit and vegetable crops utilizing sub-surface drip irrigation systems.
- Major upgrades of infrastructure to improve water use efficiency in off-river irrigation schemes in the lower Macquarie valley.
- Value added processing and packaging of grains, fruit and vegetables produced in the region.
- Further develop and evaluate farming practices which reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions, and which sequester



carbon for productivity, profitability and environmental benefits.

∞ **New Resource Developments**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Commencement of new and expanded mine developments.
- Upgrade/ replace the Albert Priest water supply channel to improve efficiency of water supply to Nyngan and Cobar communities and mines.
- New education, training and other services to support current and new mining and natural resource management operations in the region.
- Occupational Health & Safety training.

∞ **New/Expanded Tertiary Education Facility(ies)**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Expansion of current CSU and USyd campuses in the Orana region.
- Establish a new tertiary education facility in the region, targeted at the full range of skills required for mining and other natural resource management sectors.

∞ **High Speed Broadband Internet Services**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Installation of National Broadband Network infrastructure in all Orana region communities.

∞ **New Transport Infrastructure**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Develop new Inland Rail route from Melbourne to Brisbane, through the Orana region
- Develop the Bells Line expressway over the Blue Mountains and improved Bdouble access to Sydney port.
- Upgrades to the Golden highway connecting Dubbo with the port of Newcastle
- Upgrade the rail line to Coonamble to enable more efficient grain transport
- Upgrade the Newell highway, including Dubbo city bypass and improved road train/Bdouble access to Dubbo saleyards and industrial areas, and to interchange service areas for drivers.
- Upgrade and bitumen seal a number of key access routes in the western part of the region, including the Goodooga/ Brewarrina road



and the alternate inland highway (Wool Track).

- Upgrade of Dubbo regional airport to enable improved air services.
- Establish public transport opportunities, particularly for youth and aged persons, connecting remote communities with regional centres.

∞ **New Health Services and Infrastructure**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Redevelop or replace Dubbo base hospital as an expanded hub for coordinated regional health services
- Develop accommodation and staffing plans to ensure continued delivery of (at least) general medical consultation, diagnostic and treatment services at all regional centres of 1000 or more residents and at smaller centres where alternative medical services are located at a significant distance.
- Deliver training and relocation incentives for doctors and other medical professionals located in small regional centres.

∞ **New Tourism Developments**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Develop new eco-tourism venture(s) which focus on river systems, Macquarie Marshes and other natural assets
- Develop new Aboriginal culture focused tourism venture(s)
- Develop new tourism venture(s) focused on the mineral resources of the region.

∞ **New Alternative Energy Projects**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Develop new electricity generation facility (ies) based on natural gas, solar, biofuels and/or wind.

∞ **New Youth Initiatives**

Opportunities in the region for new economic activity in this area include:

- Expanded options for tertiary education in the region.
- Coordinated planning and delivery of targeted youth recreational and cultural activities across small regional centres and/or with transport linkages provided to such activities in larger centres.



### 8.3 Actions to be taken to assist Economic Development and Job Creation

Note, the following actions are proposed by RDA-Orana for the next two years. Each action corresponds with the opportunities for new economic activity outlined in the previous section. RDA-Orana will assess progress and update planned actions on an annual basis.

Opportunity	Action	Timing	KPI's
Sustainable agriculture, food production and processing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet with Macquarie River Food and Fibre, irrigation scheme operators, local councils and agribusiness entities to assist with planning and attraction of funding to enable upgrades of irrigation and other water supply infrastructure, including Albert Priest Channel.</li> <li>2. Facilitate linkages between farming and environmental organisations and government agencies to enable participation by Orana region farmers in carbon trading</li> </ol>	<p>Dec 2011</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Meetings held; Plans developed for upgrades; upgrades commenced</p> <p>Farmers in the region participating in the carbon market and evaluating new approaches to carbon sequestration</p>
New/expanded tertiary education facility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Facilitate planning activities for a new tertiary education facility through bringing resource sector and agriculture industry representatives together to clarify skill needs and commence planning</li> </ol>	June 2012	Development of Business Plan. New tertiary education facility management structure established
New regional transport infrastructure plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. In consultation with OROC and individual shire councils, develop a prioritized plan for transport infrastructure upgrades in the region. Communicate this prioritized plan to NSW and Australian government agencies.</li> </ol>	June 2012	Summit involving councils and transport agencies to be held. Prioritised Regional Transport Infrastructure Plan signed off by OROC and submitted to NSW and Australian governments.



High speed broadband internet service	5. Facilitate linkages between Orana region organisations and the Dept. of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy, and NBN Co, to initiate planning for installation of appropriate infrastructure and NBN rollout in the Orana region	Ongoing	Community forum held in the Orana region to report on progress and plans for NBN rollout in the region
New health services and infrastructure	6. Contribute to joint planning between OROC, the Western Local Area Health Network, regional health service providers and councils to develop a coordinated regional health plan.	Dec 2011	Development of coordinated regional health plan for the Orana region, commenced.
New tourism developments	7. Liaise with new regional tourism groups to facilitate the development of business plans for two new regional tourism initiatives-in ecotourism and Aboriginal culture related tourism. Advocate for funding on behalf of these initiatives to relevant funding bodies,	Dec 2012	Business plans commenced.
New alternative energy opportunities	8. Potential operator(s) of alternative energy generation project(s) identified and facilitate meetings between operator(s), relevant local government organisations, Essential Energy, power generation authorities and major users. Facilitate access to funding programs where appropriate.	Ongoing	Planning meetings held and project planning commenced. Provide annual update to RDA Orana committee and OROC on the status of potential new alternative energy generation options in the region.
New initiatives for communicating with young people	9. Establish presence in social media for RDA-Orana with an aim to establish two way communication channels with young people in the region-with a priority on the 25-35 year old cohort	June 2012	Face Book or equivalent presence established for RDA-Orana with a minimum of 600 participants.

## 9 Government Strategic Context

### 9.1 Australian Government

In compiling this plan of priority future actions for the Orana region, RDA-Orana is acutely aware of the need to link these proposed actions to programs and priorities of the Australian Government-in fact, creation of such linkage is a key goal of RDA-Orana. The following table summarises the linkage between key Australian Government programs and key issues and priorities identified in this Orana Regional Plan.

<b>Aust Govt Department</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Orana Issues/Priorities</b>
Dept of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Govt	Nation Building Infrastructure. Regional and Local Community Infrastructure. Regional Development Australia Fund	Transport infrastructure; Pressure on Local Govt to deliver more services with limited budgets; Alternative energy developments
Dept. of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	Closing the Gap Strategy. National Partnerships Agreement.	Economic security of Aboriginal people and viability of small regional centres; New Aboriginal culture based tourism
Dept. of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy	National Broadband Network	Communications; Enterprise and workforce development
Dept. of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	Water for the Future. Strengthening Basin Communities. Caring for our Country. Murray Darling Basin Plan.	Water security for existing and future urban and industry development; structural changes in agricultural industries
Dept. of Health and Aging	National Health and Hospitals Network. National Rural and Remote Health Infrastructure.	Health services and infrastructure; Aging population
Dept. of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	Trade Training Centres	Enterprise and workforce development; Education services and infrastructure





## 9.2 NSW State Government

RDA-Orana has paid close attention to the NSW State Plan and its related Western NSW Local Action Plan when developing the Orana Regional Plan. The following table summarises linkages between the State Plan and the Orana Region-Regional Business Growth Plan and the issues and priorities identified in this Orana Regional Plan.

State Plan Priority	Strategies	Orana Issues and Priorities
Better transport and liveable cities	Improve the road network; Better freight access; Maintain road infrastructure; Increase the number of jobs closer to home; Grow cities and centres as functional and attractive places to live, work and visit.	Transport infrastructure; Pressure on local government to deliver more services with limited budgets;
Supporting businesses and jobs	Maintain and invest in infrastructure; Increase business investment and support jobs; Speed up planning decisions; Drive innovation to grow productivity; Ensure a reliable electricity supply	Enterprise and workforce development; Structural change in agricultural industries; New mining developments;
Clever state	Support students to reach their full potential; Engage students in learning for longer; Improve access to jobs and training; Increase access to knowledge and skills in partnership with universities	Education services and infrastructure; Human potential not being fully utilized;
Healthy Communities	Improve and maintain access to quality healthcare; Improve survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness; Promote healthy lifestyles; Reduce preventable hospital admissions; Improve outcomes in mental health	Health services and infrastructure;
Green State	Tackle climate change; Develop a clean energy future and grow high quality low carbon jobs; Secure sustainable supplies of water; Protect our native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways; Reduce waste	Water security for existing and future urban and industry development; Structural change in agricultural industries; Alternative energy developments;



Stronger Communities	Improve child wellbeing, health and safety; Strengthen Aboriginal communities; Support people with disabilities; Increase participation in recreational and sporting activities; Increase participation in arts and cultural activity	Economic security of Aboriginal people and the viability of small regional centres; Human potential not being fully utilized; Aging population; Lack of confidence in communities in the region
Keeping people safe	Reduce rates of crime and anti-social behaviour; Reduce re-offending;	Human potential not being fully utilized.
Orana Region-Regional Business Growth Plan	Water security to support industry growth and viability; Transport and telecommunications infrastructure; Support innovation in regional manufacturing and value adding to improve competitiveness; Enterprise and workforce development; Tourism development; Aboriginal business development	Enterprise and workforce development; New mining developments; Communication; Aging population; Human potential not being fully utilized; Water security for existing and future urban and industry development; Alternative energy developments; Transport infrastructure; Structural change in agricultural industries; New tourism developments; Economic security for Aboriginal people.



### 9.3 Local Government

During the course of this Regional Plan development, RDA-Orana has consulted specifically with each of the 13 local government organisations in the region and with the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils. In addition to this individual consultation, attention was paid to the following planning documents produced by some of these organisations:

- Orana Regional Organisation of Councils Strategic Plan 2010-2015
- Mid-Western Regional Council Economic Development Strategy
- Wellington Shire Council 2010/2015 Strategic/Management Plan
- Dubbo City Council Strategic Plan 2010-2030
- Dubbo Economic Development Strategy 2010
- Grow Dubbo Regional Infrastructure Development Plan 2009
- The Dubbo 21 Plan
- Narromine Shire Community Strategic Plan 2010-2020
- Gilgandra Community Strategic Plan 2009-2020
- Bourke Shire Strategic Directions

Many of the specific infrastructure and service priorities in this Orana Regional Plan are also reflected in the above shire-specific plans. There are common themes, particularly, in the areas of health infrastructure and services, transport infrastructure, economic development needs and opportunities and youth development and support.

## 10 Plan for Regional Plan Review

Although RDA-Orana has developed this Regional Plan, and believes it is a reasonable reflection of the needs, opportunities and priorities of the whole of the Orana region when the initial plan was developed in mid 2010, it will be essential to continually update the plan as RDA-Orana works with community groups and businesses in the region and with all three levels of government, towards achievement of the economic and community goals outlined in the plan.

At a minimum, the plan will be revisited annually as part of the annual business planning process for RDA-Orana. Progress will be reported against KPI's identified in the plan and new strategies and priority actions may be added as economic, social and environmental issues change. An update of the plan has been completed in May 2011 and further updates will be undertaken as appropriate.



## 11 References

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2. Australian Government Dept. of Education, Employment and Work Place Relations (2009)-Small Area Labour Markets
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4. Bureau of Meteorology-data accessed from [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)
5. Dept. of Environment and Climate Change(2008) Summary of Climate Change Impacts-Western Region
6. Dubbo City Council (2010) Dubbo Economic Development Strategy-Economic Profile
7. NSW Industry and Investment (2010) State Plan and Orana Region-Regional Business Growth Plan
8. Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (2004) Orana Regional Profile

