



# South West Queensland Future Economy Strategy

A coordinated regional plan backed by six  
council roadmaps

May 2026



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Next Economy acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and sea in the regions where we work. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and offer our solidarity and support to First Nations groups across the country working towards economic sovereignty and justice.

## About The Next Economy

The Next Economy (TNE) is an economic development organisation that supports communities to manage change well.

Find out more at: [www.nexteconomy.com.au](http://www.nexteconomy.com.au)

## Acknowledgement

We are grateful to all the individuals and organisations who have directly contributed insights to help inform the development of this report, and whose activities have also informed the report findings.

## Document information

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Front Cover Image: Balonne River St George | Credit: Leeroy Todd

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## Executive summary

**South West Queensland is defined by resilient, capable communities** whose deep connection to land and local identity shapes how the region navigates change. Across the six local government areas (LGA) – Maranoa, Balonne, Murweh, Quilpie, Paroo and Bulloo – councils, businesses and residents pride themselves on practical problem-solving, stepping in where access to services falls short, and supporting each other through droughts, floods, industry shifts and the realities of distance. These strengths sit at the heart of the South West Queensland Future Economy Strategy (Future Economy Strategy), developed by the South West Queensland Region of Councils (SWQROC) in partnership with regional economic development agency The Next Economy (TNE).

**Global changes are impacting local communities.** Weather extremes and geo politics are increasing the cost of living and insurance, global competition for fuel and resources whilst industries and supply chains are decarbonising, impacting local business opportunities. SWQROC, Councils and stakeholders are being proactive, considering what opportunities are there to respond to change and develop a more resilient region.

**The Future Economy Strategy is a practical, region-driven blueprint to guide South West Queensland** as it navigates change in ways that strengthen, not unsettle, local communities, industries and economies. Supported by six LGA roadmaps, it is designed to better prepare the region early for a gradual shift toward more resilient and diverse economies so communities can shape, not just react, to outcomes that impact them.

### Part 1: Region-wide insights

**Part One outlines what we heard across the region – identifying Opportunity Areas that respond to the Drivers of Change by building on the Regional Characteristics** (summarised in the illustration below). The pressures and strengths that shape the South West Queensland economy underpin the Strategy and Roadmaps emerged directly from engagement.

Drivers of Change	Regional Characteristics	Opportunity Areas
<p><b>Communities across South West Queensland are already experiencing change and pressures, making early planning essential to shape – not react – to them.</b></p>	<p><b>The South West economy is shaped by consistent regional realities that determine what will work – and what will not.</b></p>	<p><b>Seven Opportunity Areas emerged directly from what communities said would make the biggest difference to their future.</b></p>
<p>Drivers of Change identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More intense weather events, rising insurance and input costs</li> <li>• Unreliable energy</li> <li>• Workforce shortages</li> <li>• Constrained housing</li> <li>• Ageing infrastructure</li> <li>• Shifting global markets</li> </ul>	<p>Engagement confirmed six defining characteristics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Great communities, not afraid to take on challenges</li> <li>2. Agriculture is a central pillar</li> <li>3. Established resource industries under pressure</li> <li>4. Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions</li> </ol>	<p>The Strategy identifies opportunities across:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tailored energy solutions for regions, industries, businesses and households</li> <li>2. A future plan for gas and oil industries</li> <li>3. Future-ready agriculture and grazing</li> <li>4. Diverse enterprise and tourism growth</li> </ol>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decarbonisation commitments</li> <li>• Uncertainty in gas and oil</li> </ul>	<p>5. Energy infrastructure limits opportunities</p> <p>6. The environment shapes our reality</p> <p>Each area draws on what is already working and outlines what further action is both feasible and beneficial, along with the support that is needed to make it a reality.</p>	<p>5. Value from waste, recycling and the circular economy</p> <p>6. Infrastructure to meet future needs</p> <p>7. Liveability, services and workforce capability</p> <p>These opportunities build on proven local leadership and outline the support required to scale what works.</p>
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## Part 2: Council-led action through tailored Roadmaps

**Part Two of the Strategy provides a practical, staged roadmap for each council – recognising that every LGA begins from a different position, with different constraints and opportunities.** These Roadmaps build on real work already underway, from energy audits and water security upgrades to new tourism ventures and freight studies. They outline next steps that councils can take without overstressing limited staff and budgets, while clarifying where external support is needed.

Short examples demonstrating the diversity of local strengths and practical actions planned or underway include:

- **Maranoa:** Coexistence of wind, gas and agriculture through early engagement on the Bottle Tree Energy Park.
- **Balonne:** Green ammonia feasibility to stabilise fertiliser costs and build sovereign input supply.
- **Murweh:** Expanding tourism strengths including the Cosmos Centre and WWII heritage, with emerging logistics opportunities.
- **Quilpie:** Repurposing waste, microgrid and HV-loop options, and exploring new back-freight opportunities in response to high freight costs.
- **Bulloo:** Planning for long-term economic shifts while building on emerging opportunities including Outback tourism strengths.
- **Paroo:** Community-led health access through the Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health, coordinating 33 visiting services.

**Some opportunities and challenges are too large, complex or interdependent for any one council to manage alone.** Part Two includes a clear role for SWQROC to:

- Coordinate regional approaches on issue like waste recovery, energy advocacy, freight and logistics, digital connectivity, water security, housing pathways and regional workforce initiatives
- Strengthen collective advocacy and funding bids
- Maintain shared data and evidence.

**It also identifies actions industry, Queensland and Federal government can take to support this.**

## Possible actions include:

- **Industry:** Proactive planning for gas phase-down, transparent local procurement, strong coexistence practices and delivering meaningful community benefits from renewable projects.
- **Queensland Government:** Prioritising rural grid upgrades, intermodal freight, regional waste solutions, digital linkages, water security and proportionate regulation for remote contexts.
- **Federal Government:** Co-investing in worker and social housing, telehealth and connectivity, and supporting long-term workforce transition in fossil-fuel-exposed regions.

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*'There's more opportunity for different things and ways of people living out here than there has ever been. I'm quite positive.'* – **Local business owner**

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**This Strategy was shaped by the SWQROC, through a collaborative process, that built on the extensive work already undertaken by the region.** More than 77 people contributed through workshops, interviews, and discussion including councillors, council staff, producers, industry representatives, First Nations organisations, local businesses and community members. This engagement confirmed the consistent regional realities that define the South West and ensured the Strategy and six LGA roadmaps were grounded in lived experience, while considering broader state, national and global realities.

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# Introduction

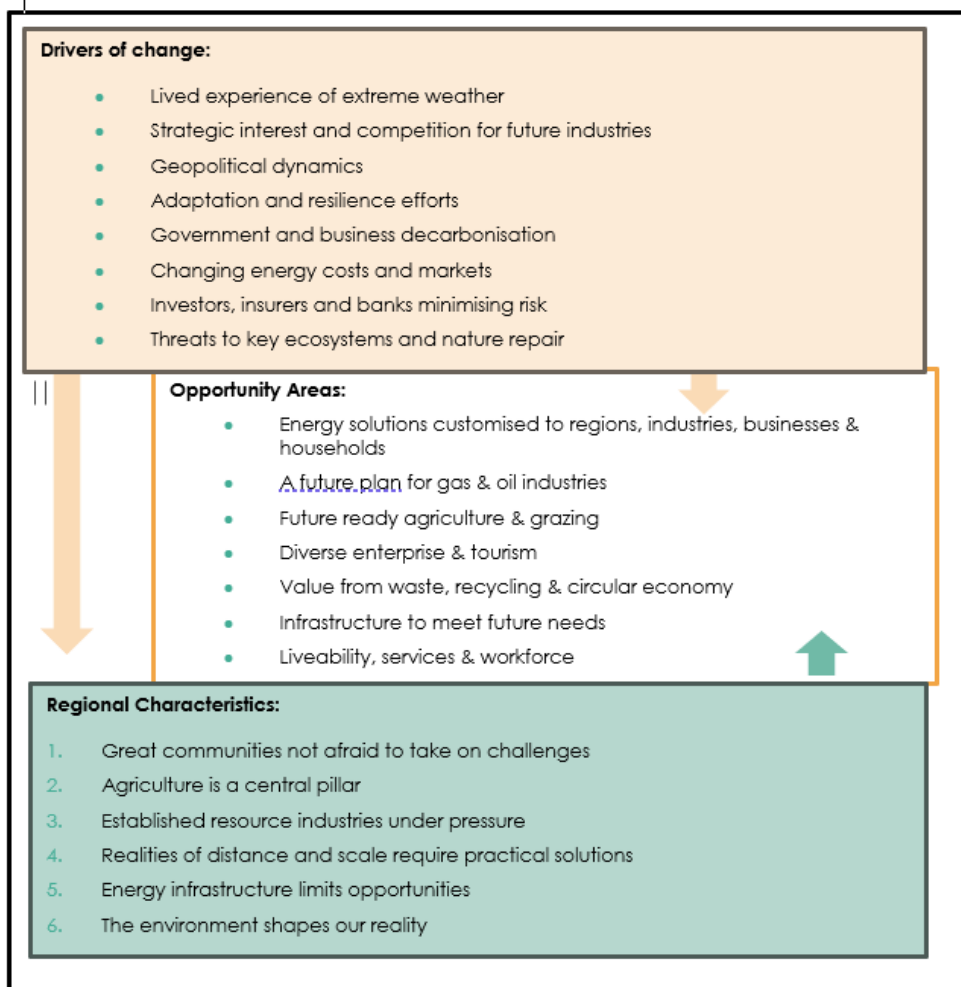
South West Queensland is already experiencing change, whether through shifts in climate, markets, supply chains, technology or policy. Some of these forces originate well beyond the region, but their impacts are felt locally in businesses, households and council decisions. Planning for the region's economic future is therefore not about predicting a single outcome. It is about understanding the forces shaping the region, recognising its distinct characteristics, and making deliberate choices about where to act and how to strengthen long-term resilience and prosperity.

The South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (SWQROC) invited The Next Economy to support the region respond to changes in their regional context, to strengthen the foundations for economic diversification, decarbonisation and climate resilience.

Through on line and in person engagement, including workshops and interviews, councils, economic development officers, tourism officers, business owners, landholders, First Nations and local community leaders were asked how does the regional economy operate and what is changing?

The Opportunity Areas that were identified through these discussions were shaped by the Regional Characteristics and the Drivers of Change, these are outlined in the figure below.

Figure 1. Changing regional context



Acknowledging that a lot of work has been done, this Strategy is designed to be a practical tool that councils, regional bodies and community partners can use to shape investment proposals, advocate for funding, and guide implementation. It helps identify where to scale what is already working, where innovation or partnership is needed, and where further research or support can unlock new opportunities. It includes case studies which show what is already underway locally, and what has been done elsewhere in areas facing similar constraints.

## Why plan for transition in South West Queensland?

Change is already happening in regional Australia, shaped by national and global trends. These shifts are affecting infrastructure, industry and daily life, and they determine where investment flows. While different levels of government and different parts of the country are responding in different ways, the overall direction is clear: change and transition is here.

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*'The speed of change and transition and how it's managed has impacts. We need to get government to start thinking creatively, not the same way they did 20 years ago.'* – Council representative

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## Local queries about change and 'transition'

During engagements, there were many different interpretations about what 'transition' is, and what it means for the region. Some of the key points of these conversations are outlined below.

Query	Response
<b>'Transition will happen whether we like it or not, and we need to capture the benefits that relate to our shire.'</b>	Transition is not a choice, but how it plays out locally is. With a clear strategy, regions can position themselves to attract investment, support existing industries to adapt, and unlock new opportunities that align with local strengths and priorities. Doing nothing means those benefits may pass the region by.
<b>'Why do we need to manage change, why can't we let it happen 'organically'?'</b>	Change is already happening and often driven by forces outside the region or council's control. Letting it happen 'organically' often means reacting late, after problems have already hit. Planning doesn't mean forcing change. It means understanding what's coming and getting ahead of it, so the region can shape outcomes in its favour rather than just coping with the consequences.
<b>'If it isn't broke, don't fix it.'</b>	The current system may be working for now in some areas, but many people are already feeling the cracks ... whether it's rising energy costs, workforce shortages or loss of services. Waiting until things are 'broke' makes the fix harder and more expensive. Planning now helps protect what is working and steer change, so it strengthens, rather than weakens, the region.
<b>'We don't fully understand what our opportunities are ... What are we transitioning to?'</b>	There is no single answer to this question – transition is being driven globally and nationally by markets, policy, nature, and technology, but how communities choose to respond to that looks different in different places. A plan written for Brisbane or Canberra cannot simply be applied to somewhere like South West Queensland. Part of this work is defining what transition means here: based on local strengths, realities and aspirations and then setting out a practical path forward based on that.

## What is 'transition'?

This Strategy takes a very broad definition of **transition: a gradual shift to a future economy that is more resilient, more diverse and better prepared for changing conditions.**

Transition means:

- Looking at the big picture, the national and global market forces, policies and other dynamics (see next page) that are shaping future patterns of risk and opportunity in South West Queensland.
- Understanding what people care about in the region, and what needs to be preserved through change.
- Understanding the challenges and barriers that block change from happening and how to address these, for example through regional collaboration.
- Adopting an opportunity mindset to identify and attract new opportunities to strengthen regional economies and communities where the above points intersect.
- Advocating for what the region needs to manage change well.

Planning at the regional level gives local areas a way to shape their own path. It allows communities to define what matters most, where to focus effort, and how to manage change in ways that support local priorities. With clear direction, regions can reduce disruption, support industry to adapt, and make sure that transition builds community wellbeing rather than undermining it.

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*'It's like managing the seasons –We want to make decisions early, keep flexible and keep looking for ideas on how we can do things better.'*

**– Sustainable land management professional**

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The challenge for SWQROC and its member councils is to plan for it in a way that reflects local realities and positions the region to navigate risks while capturing benefits. That involves careful prioritisation, strong partnerships and action that supports resilience, competitiveness and wellbeing over the long term. This Strategy contributes to that by setting shared priorities, highlighting local strengths and constraints, and identifying practical actions that can guide investment, policy and collaboration across South West Queensland into the future.

# Part 1: Planning for South West Queensland's economic future

## Drivers of change

A number of global and national forces are driving change in regions across Australia and the world. These forces are not abstract, and they are already being felt on the ground in places like South West Queensland through shifting risks and emerging opportunities.

**The lived experience of weather extremes** is placing increased pressures on people, businesses and infrastructure, as the impacts of drought, flooding and extreme heat are felt. These events affect everything from productivity and health to insurance availability and costs, and freight reliability, and are expected to become more frequent and more intense into the future. There is growing recognition across governments, markets and communities of the need to become more resilient to these shocks.

**Sovereign capability has re-emerged as a priority** in response to geopolitical instability and changing global dynamics. This puts new attention on what Australia can produce and how, with implications for things like gas, fertiliser, minerals, clean energy, agriculture and nature-based markets. Export markets for resources such as coal and gas are becoming increasingly uncertain and volatile.

**Many governments and businesses have committed to reducing emissions** in line with net zero targets. This shift is no longer being driven by regulation, but increasingly by markets and cost. Large corporations, including supermarkets and agricultural buyers, now often require emissions reductions throughout their supply chains.

**Renewable energy is now the cheapest form of new generation** and reduces exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets. This means producers and processors across the South West may need to alter practices, further improve transparency and prove sustainability credentials to maintain access to key markets.

**Financial institutions and insurers are also factoring climate and transition risks** into how they lend and insure. In some parts of the South West, households and businesses are already seeing rising premiums or struggling to get insurance at all. Similarly, banks and investors are now looking at whether businesses and regions are preparing for transition, with favourability towards those that can demonstrate viability under future conditions.

**New markets and incentives are emerging in areas like natural capital and biodiversity offsets.** This is driven by a growing awareness that economic success must be grounded in the systems that make life possible, such as functional ecosystems, clean air and water, fertile soils, biodiversity and access to nature. These foundations are increasingly being seen as not just environmental assets but as economic foundations, with global attention turning to how they can be measured, restored and sustained. This is creating new areas of value that regions can engage with. However, many of these markets come with technical complexity and are difficult to enter without targeted support.

**How economic strategies deliver wellbeing for people and communities**, not just markets is attracting more attention in Australia and globally. This includes addressing persistent issues such as healthcare access, housing pressures, workforce gaps and depopulation of our regional areas. Frameworks like Measuring What Matters reflect this shift and offer tools to track progress beyond conventional measures of GDP. For South West Queensland, this means transition planning must not only focus on things like future industries and infrastructure, but also the conditions that make communities and life here promising.

## Regional Characteristics

### What are 'Regional Characteristics'?

Regional Characteristics are the features of a region and its economy, ongoing conditions or behaviours that shape how people live, work and do business in a place. You can see them in what people talk about and the problems that keep coming up. These characteristics help explain why some strategies succeed and why others fall flat, and any plan or strategy for the region should account for them.

While doing in-region engagement, instead of leading with 'what would you like to see in transition', we asked: how does the economy work here? What are the forces and conditions shaping it? Based on what we heard, we developed a set of core Characteristics that are central to this region's identity and economy and further refined them with local stakeholders.

### The six Regional Characteristics of South West Queensland:

1. Great communities, not afraid to take on challenges
2. Agriculture is a central pillar
3. Established resource industries under pressure
4. Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions
5. Energy infrastructure limits opportunities
6. The environment shapes our reality

### Why this matters for strategy and planning





Starting with Regional Characteristics helps to develop strategies that fit the region and identify the most suitable areas of opportunity that this Strategy goes into detail on. It allows us to:

- Name what is already working and build on it
- Identify barriers that create challenges for the region in economic development
- Find practical opportunities that align with local strengths
- Minimise threats and weaknesses most pertinent to the area

This avoids copy/paste solutions and gives local leaders and communities a shared starting point for action and helps identify where targeted investment or policies can make the biggest difference.





## Regional Characteristic 1: Great communities, not afraid to take on challenges

**What it means:** This reflects the way local communities, councils and businesses routinely take on responsibilities beyond their formal roles to keep services running, attract investment, and support population and workforce needs. It includes council-led planning and infrastructure development, locally driven innovation, and efforts to maintain liveability despite limited funding and workforce pressures. It also involves a strong role for volunteers and community organisations in filling service gaps.

 <b>Strengths to build from</b>	 <b>Weaknesses to acknowledge and address</b>
<p>The region has a strong base of local leadership and innovation. Councils often step beyond their traditional roles to attract investment and drive strategic planning. Families with young children continue to live and invest in the region, supported by infrastructure like Country Universities Centres (CUCs) that help retain population and build skills. Communities are known for their independence and resilience, and housing remains more affordable than in metro areas.</p>	<p>Workforce attraction and retention remain difficult, especially given the shortage of rental housing. Population decline and ageing continue, with many young people leaving for school and not returning. Training often lacks strong links to local jobs, and there are few social spaces for young people, particularly alcohol-free options in the evenings. Succession planning is a challenge, with young people unable to finance business purchases unless they inherit. Some businesses are highly profitable but are not reinvesting locally, instead directing wealth into coastal retirement assets. Building costs are high, limiting local development. The low rate base means Councils rely heavily on grant funding.</p>
 <b>Opportunities to harness</b>	 <b>Threats to minimise</b>
<p>There is room to expand CUCs and better connect training with local industry needs. The region is well placed to attract immigrant entrepreneurs who bring new energy and skills. Investments in assets like hot springs can boost tourism and improve liveability. First Nations-led initiatives, such as the Balonne Shire advisory group, offer models for more inclusive governance. Many locals have ideas or innovations but need support to act on them. With the right business mentoring and incremental help, more people could grow viable local enterprises.</p>	<p>Rising insurance and input costs are threatening business viability. The low population/ demand and the vast distances, limit private sector interest in servicing the region. Access to capital is a major barrier, especially for small tourism businesses and for community members who cannot use self-managed super funds to invest locally. Over-reliance on volunteers is putting pressure on already stretched communities, risking burnout and loss of key services. If not addressed, population decline may continue, particularly as aged care shortfalls drive older residents away.</p>





## Regional Characteristic 2: Agriculture is a central pillar

**What it means:** Agriculture remains the dominant industry across South West Queensland, shaping land use, infrastructure and the wider economy. It involves a broad range of activities including cropping, grazing and horticulture, and reflects deep generational knowledge, local entrepreneurship and strong regional identity. The sector underpins many local businesses and services, supports large-scale freight and logistics activity, and is increasingly influenced by global markets, policy settings and environmental pressures. This dynamic also includes the region's evolving relationship with agricultural innovation, biosecurity, land use change, and emissions reduction.

 <b>Strengths to build from</b>	 <b>Weaknesses to acknowledge and address</b>
<p>Agriculture remains the backbone of the South West Queensland economy. The region produces high quality, diverse products and has a strong base of generational knowledge and skills. Many producers are highly entrepreneurial and are already leading innovation and research in areas like regenerative agriculture and input reduction. There is a strong culture of peer learning and pride in the quality of local production. The presence of existing peak bodies provide a base for regional coordination and advocacy.</p>	<p>Input costs remain a major pressure on producers, particularly fertiliser, energy and transport. Many landholders feel existing peak bodies are too narrowly focused and are calling for more support in preparing for long-term change. There is limited financial recognition for producers who apply best practice, and sustainability credentials are not always rewarded or clearly distinguished in domestic markets.</p>
 <b>Opportunities to harness</b>	 <b>Threats to minimise</b>
<p>There is scope to design sustainability frameworks that suit local conditions and link directly to market requirements and expectations. Local production of key inputs, such as anhydrous ammonia, could reduce reliance on external supply chains. Nature repair markets and regenerative agriculture approaches offer economic and environmental benefits if designed well. Expanded rail capacity could open new market opportunities.</p>	<p>Producers face growing exposure to climate risks, including increased weather extremes and variability. International competitiveness may decline if costs continue to rise or if supply chains are disrupted. Land may be lost to unintended consequences of carbon farming or water schemes if not properly designed. Livestock producers will need to reduce emissions in response to shifting markets and policies. Ongoing biosecurity threats, such as invasive pests or disease outbreaks, pose an ongoing risk to the region's agricultural base.</p>





### Regional Characteristic 3: Established resource industries under pressure

**What it means:** Oil and gas have shaped parts of South West Queensland's economy for decades, bringing investment and supporting infrastructure and services in some towns. These industries, while still active, are increasingly shaped by external market pressures, shifting global demand and national transition policy. Their contribution to long-term local employment and their future is uncertain. Alongside the resource sector, tourism and small business also bring income into the region but face their own vulnerabilities, including seasonality and workforce gaps. This dynamic reflects the need to strengthen economic diversity, reduce exposure to shocks, and support businesses to adapt in a changing environment.

 <b>Strengths to build from</b>	 <b>Weaknesses to acknowledge and address</b>
<p>The region has experience servicing large-scale industries, including oil and gas, with supporting infrastructure, local supply chains and operational expertise in place. This capacity could be leveraged to support new industries such as green manufacturing or regional logistics. Lower property and business costs help small enterprises establish themselves, and some businesses have adapted by scaling seasonally or shifting to creative and visitor-facing sectors. Existing tourism offerings provide a base to grow from, particularly if better linked across the region.</p>	<p>The regional economy remains concentrated in a small number of sectors, increasing vulnerability to external shocks. Many SMEs struggle with access to finance, compliance and workforce retention. Ageing infrastructure and complex regulation make it hard to start or grow businesses. The tourism sector lacks consistent year-round trade, and the service sector finds it difficult to attract and keep staff. The resource sector offers limited long-term local jobs, and local economies have little influence over major investment or pricing decisions.</p>
 <b>Opportunities to harness</b>	 <b>Threats to minimise</b>
<p>There is potential to repurpose infrastructure and supply chains currently servicing oil and gas to support new industries such as fertiliser production, clean energy logistics or agri-processing. Better coordination of regional tourism experiences could spread visitor demand more evenly. With mentoring and peer support, SMEs could increase digital engagement and access new markets.</p>	<p>Oil and gas industries remain highly exposed to market volatility, trade disruptions and policy shifts. Without a clear transition plan, communities may face sudden downturns linked to price changes or divestment. Tourism and service sectors are also vulnerable to labour shortages and changing travel patterns. Export competition is growing, and new visa settings may reduce seasonal workforce availability. Without active diversification, these overlapping pressures could undermine regional economic stability.</p>





## Regional Characteristic 4: Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions

**What it means:** South West Queensland's economy is shaped by large distances, low population density and high service delivery costs. Freight, connectivity and infrastructure investments all carry higher risks and lower returns than in urban areas. At the same time, these conditions have fostered ingenuity, inter-council collaboration and a pragmatic approach to getting things done with limited resources. Managing change well in this context means designing modular, scalable solutions that make the most of regional strengths and deliver value despite structural constraints.

 <b>Strengths to build from</b>	 <b>Weaknesses to acknowledge and address</b>
<p>The region benefits from low congestion, available space for new projects, and a culture of resilience and problem-solving. Councils and communities often work together, such as through intermodal freight projects. Productivity per capita is high, reflecting the efficient use of time and resources across many sectors. Country Universities Centres offer local education pathways, and there's a high level of ingenuity in how people navigate challenges. The area's liveability and affordability are attractive for those seeking more space and lower housing costs.</p>	<p>Large distances make freight and service delivery expensive, with councils often left covering the gaps. Roads are vulnerable to flood damage and heavy vehicle wear. Access to services can be limited and involve long delays as local trades try to service a vast area. People reported a lack of adequate health services and minimal access to subsidised health transport. Improved waste management is difficult with low volumes, and private investment can be hesitant due to limited economies of scale. Air transport is unreliable, and digital connectivity is inconsistent in some areas.</p>
 <b>Opportunities to harness</b>	 <b>Threats to minimise</b>
<p>There is potential to improve regional procurement and resource sharing, including through the regional waste coordinator role or shared freight systems. Modular or staged projects can spread costs and better fit regional realities. Improved digital connectivity would help overcome distance for businesses, students and health access. Expanding intermodal capacity and enabling back freight solutions could lower transport costs and this is being actively explored. The region could also attract people seeking affordable housing and a different pace of life, particularly if essential services and transport reliability improve.</p>	<p>A lack of funding for enabling infrastructure (including roads, waste, health transport and digital upgrades) risks locking in disadvantage. Poor digital access and unreliable air travel isolate the community and reduce capacity to address natural disasters. Floods disrupt transport and isolate towns, with long-term costs for businesses and services. Rising fuel and insurance costs further erode already thin freight margins. If these barriers are not addressed, even highly motivated communities will face limits to what can be achieved locally.</p>





## Regional Characteristic 5: Energy infrastructure limits opportunities

**What it means:** Access to affordable, reliable and scalable energy remains a major barrier across South West Queensland. While the region has a long history of energy innovation, from early hydro power in Thargomindah to commercial gas power in Roma, current infrastructure has not kept pace with changing needs or emerging opportunities. Grid constraints, lack of competition, and slow connection processes are stalling investment and increasing costs. Managing change well here means ensuring the region is not left behind by energy system upgrades, and supporting tailored solutions that reflect local demand, geography and economic potential.

 <b>Strengths to build from</b>	 <b>Weaknesses to acknowledge and address</b>
<p>South West Queensland has long been home to energy innovation, including early hydro and gas developments. The region hosts major gas pipelines, producing wells and a refinery, with access to raw materials that also support uses such as fertiliser production. Many councils have invested in solar installations on community buildings. There is strong local interest in developing solutions, and lessons from legacy projects can help inform what is viable. The area's energy challenges are well known and widely acknowledged by stakeholders, creating a case for targeted advocacy and investment.</p>	<p>Many communities are constrained by ageing and limited infrastructure, including Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) lines that restrict energy reliability and solar capacity. Councils report a lack of competitive pricing due to a sole energy provider existing, and delays in grid connections are increasing project costs. Exporting power back into the grid is restricted due to the limited infrastructure, and off-take volumes are often too low to justify microgrids. There is no designated Renewable Energy Zone in most of SWQ, limiting external investment in energy infrastructure.</p>
 <b>Opportunities to harness</b>	 <b>Threats to minimise</b>
<p>There is potential to explore technologies such as community-scale batteries, solar water pumping, and anaerobic digesters at feedlots and saleyards. Inland rail development may create openings for waste-to-energy systems if cost and policy barriers are addressed. Improved coordination and targeted upgrades could unlock latent demand from businesses and reduce operating costs. Government reforms to network access and pricing could create new pathways for local generation. There is also value in advocating for inclusion in regional planning processes and for better alignment between funding timelines and connection processes.</p>	<p>Without action, worsening grid limitations and brownouts will continue to damage equipment, raise costs and deter investment. Delayed upgrades risk widening the gap with better-connected centres and weakening the region's ability to attract new industries. Uncertainty about future infrastructure planning adds to cost and risk. There is also ongoing debate about the future role of gas in the energy system, with regulatory and environmental challenges to its expansion. If current constraints are not addressed, the region could miss out on investment in renewable and circular economy solutions altogether.</p>

## Regional Characteristic 6: The environment shapes our reality

**What it means:** In South West Queensland, the climate and landscape are not background condition but are central to how people live, work and plan. Drought, floods, heat extremes and distance shape every part of the economy, from farm productivity to insurance costs, population movement and infrastructure design. At the same time, the region has deep experience managing environmental variability, from feedlot investment and plant breeding to cluster fencing and dryland farming. Managing change well means planning within these environmental realities, not around them, and supporting approaches that strengthen local resilience while opening new economic opportunities grounded in landscape and culture.

 <b>Strengths to build from</b>	 <b>Weaknesses to acknowledge and address</b>
<p>Communities have extensive local knowledge and experience dealing with environmental extremes. There are existing examples of landscape-scale collaboration, such as cluster fencing, and strong regional representation on national agricultural bodies. Large land areas support broadacre cropping, and investment in feedlots has improved productivity in variable conditions. The region's scale and biodiversity also support emerging interest in ecotourism, bush foods and carbon or biodiversity markets.</p>	<p>Environmental shocks, particularly drought, drive population decline and undermine business viability. Water reliability remains a constant constraint, and water buybacks in the past have had negative socio-economic impacts. Insurance and compliance costs are increasing, and some cover is being withdrawn. There is a lack of integrated planning across transport modes, and poor regional flight access reduces connectivity. Harsh conditions can be a disincentive for people to move to the region, and top-down regulations are often poorly matched to local context.</p>
 <b>Opportunities to harness</b>	 <b>Threats to minimise</b>
<p>Good seasons can be used strategically to invest in resilience. Adjusted farming practices, and improved plant varieties offer opportunities to improve sustainability and reduce vulnerability. There is growing potential in nature repair, timber and bush tucker industries, and in expanding ecotourism and nature-based visitor experiences. Local knowledge can be a resource in shaping better policy and with such a unique regional context: 'get to know us before you regulate us' remains a key message.</p>	<p>Climate variability is expected to increase, bringing more intense droughts, pests and disease outbreaks. Biosecurity threats have national implications, and this region plays a key role as a geographic buffer. Further water policy changes, if not carefully managed, could undermine agriculture and flow-on benefits for communities. Rising input, insurance and compliance costs risk making it harder for producers to innovate or diversify. Regulatory decisions made without local understanding can reduce flexibility at a time when it is most needed.</p>

## SWQROC's role

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*'How do we dovetail all six of the individual council strategies to address the common issues to get a great outcome collectively so we can continue to drive population growth and liveability?'* - **Council representative**

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Delivering this Strategy will require coordination beyond what any one council can reasonably lead on its own. Many actions relate to regional advocacy, shared services, specialised expertise or economies of scale that are more effective when approached collectively.

SWQROC can provide regional oversight and practical support to help councils prioritise, sequence and implement actions, while avoiding duplication and unnecessary burden on smaller shires. Its role is to convene, connect and back council and local leadership.

In practice, SWQROC can:

- Coordinate regional advocacy for common needs such as regulatory settings, enabling infrastructure and essential services.
- Speak with one regional voice to State and Commonwealth partners.
- Share knowledge, data and lessons to build the evidence base.
- Deliver projects jointly where scale or efficiency makes sense.
- Attract and guide new investment aligned with regional priorities.
- Communicate change clearly and consistently across the region.

Councils have emphasised that additional capacity will be needed to deliver the actions detailed in this strategy. Several noted the value of shared or regional roles, for example a dedicated point of contact for energy or transition-related initiatives, and the importance of aligning new or funded positions (such as economic development or resilience roles) with priorities identified in this strategy. A coordinated regional approach through SWQROC helps concentrate limited local resources where they are most useful, while ensuring smaller councils are not expected to lead work that is better done at a regional or state level.

## Opportunity Areas

The Strategy presents opportunities for the region to pursue the benefits of transition under seven Opportunity Areas. These are informed by the drivers of change impacting patterns of risk and opportunity in the region and grounded in local reality through the Regional Characteristics.

Each Opportunity Area responds to several Regional Characteristics, and builds on existing plans and strategies, local leadership and past innovation. Local Councils, businesses and industries have already invested significantly in developing local energy solutions, with a lot of the low hanging fruit identified and investigated (see case study). There are many examples of local innovation and leadership that show what is possible when creative solutions are tailored to local need, and these are highlighted as case studies throughout. With the right support, these solutions can be expanded and replicated.

This section presents a broad overview of regional-scale opportunities.

**Specific actions for each Council and SWQROC are outlined in individual Council Roadmaps in Part 2 based on unique local realities, priorities, and existing initiatives.**

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*'How do we get it across that we have already tried to build local solutions?'* - **Council representative**

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### Case study: Regional councils testing practical energy solutions

In Quilpie Shire, the Council has explored multiple options to provide energy solutions. Over several years, the council has explored how local resources could improve energy security and create new economic activity, focusing on options suited to a small, remote system rather than large external projects.

This included assessing whether naturally heated water from the Great Artesian Basin could support geothermal energy production. However, with temperatures of around 65°C, the heat levels are not high enough to make energy production feasible. Council also examined a high-voltage power loop linking Eromanga and surrounding areas to improve reliability and enable distributed generation, alongside battery and solar options at Eromanga.

None of these proposals progressed, largely due to cost, technical complexity and regulatory barriers. The experience is not unusual. Remote councils have demonstrated sustained leadership and have explored multiple local options but find the infrastructure, vast distance and small population limits their capacity to decarbonise their local energy and fuel use.

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*'Recognising the people who are doing good things – we could do more of that.'* – **Regional natural resource management organisation**

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## Opportunity Area 1: Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households



Windmill in Murweh Shire. Credit: SWQROC

### Good would look like:

- Affordable, reliable and competitive access to energy.
- Adequate energy for future needs.
- Energy infrastructure that enables future energy solutions.

In Australia, renewables, including wind, solar and hydropower now supply an average of 43% of the electricity in the National Electricity Market (NEM), with a peak contribution of more than 78% (AEMO 2025). We lead the world in rooftop solar adoption with over 4.2 million installations across Australian homes and businesses (Clean Energy Council 2025a). However, opportunities for rural and remote areas are restricted by limiting infrastructure, as outlined in the In detail box below.

### In detail: South West Queensland's Energy Network

Ergon Energy manages local distribution to customers through approximately 65,000 km of Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) lines across Queensland. The majority of the SWER network was installed in the 1970s and 80s, as a cost-effective electricity supply in remote areas (Ergon Energy 2026). SWER lines were designed to supply power to small numbers of customers across large areas and cannot redistribute large loads from new generation. SWER networks are also susceptible to flooding, bushfires, lightning strikes, termites and falling vegetation, with line outages causing everyone beyond that point to lose power until the issue is resolved.

The nature of South West Queensland's energy network means that remote communities have limited opportunities to develop reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy. This includes:

- Limited opportunities for large-scale energy developments or feed in options for behind-the-meter generation such as micro-grids, as transmission lines cannot accommodate generation from distributed sources and results in:
- More unreliable power supply, with blackouts and brownouts, increasing costs and downtime and impacting prospective business development.
- Higher energy costs, with a lack of transparency regarding power prices across the region.

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*'Our council electricity bill went up \$1 million in one year, and our household bill has doubled in 4 years.'* – **Council representative**

*'We just put in a diesel generator – we're feeling vulnerable for future blackouts and our reliance on [long distances of vulnerable] power lines.'*  
– **local producer**

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## Opportunities for action

### 1A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, sustainable energy

A mix of energy solutions that are feasible and tailored to specific sites, individual shires, industries, businesses and households are needed. Network limitations, combined with realities of scale, population and remoteness, represent real barriers and constraints to overcome.

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*'For the likes of Thargo and ourselves, even just getting a reliable grid connection would be great - not even at feeding back into the grid. For future development, we are at capacity out far west.'* – **Council representative**

*'We have a lot of existing businesses here where the operational costs of energy, have meant it is just not viable for businesses to operate. If we want to encourage people to stay here, it is cheaper power.'* – **Council representative**

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## 1A: Opportunities to improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised sustainable energy

<p><b>What councils can do</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All councils</b> can support households, businesses and industry to continue to maximise rooftop solar and batteries through access to grants and rebates and running energy efficiency programs. Aggregate demand for roof top solar systems where possible.</li> <li>• <b>All councils</b> can continue to implement recommendations from the previous Energy and Emissions Strategy.</li> <li>• <b>Eastern Councils with access to the NEM</b> can seek to attract large scale renewable developments to generate local employment opportunities. This requires engagement and collaboration to plan for development to ensure community concerns are addressed and benefits are maximised.</li> <li>• <b>Western Councils at the end of SWER lines</b> are less suited to large-scale renewable energy projects, as the grid infrastructure is not designed to redistribute large loads. Opportunities here include microgrid development where power demand and generation can be co-located at the edge of the grid or where grid reliability is inadequate for local needs (see case study).</li> <li>• There are opportunities for Western Councils to advocate for Ergon Energy to improve the resilience of energy infrastructure across the region by trialling future energy supply options in SW Queensland.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How SWQROC can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for ongoing improvements in transmission infrastructure to enable future opportunities, supporting Councils to collaborate and negotiate with Ergon Energy to trial future energy supply options in SW Queensland</li> <li>• Advocate for fair, transparent pricing across the region</li> <li>• Support Councils to access funding/investment for microgrid development where appropriate</li> </ul>
<p><b>How State government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in reliability and capacity improvements in regional and fringe-of-grid networks to improve resilience and support future industry growth</li> <li>• Ensure state planning and assessment frameworks support orderly renewable energy development in regions</li> <li>• Provide clear and proportionate regulatory pathways for site-based bioenergy and industrial decarbonisation projects</li> </ul>
<p><b>How federal government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support investment in infrastructure to improve the reliability and affordability of energy in regional areas, through the continuation of the regional microgrid program run by ARENA.</li> </ul>

## What Councils have already done:

- **Large-scale solar:** Several projects are progressing through planning and development around Paroo, Murweh and Balonne.
- The Queensland Community Renewable Forum held in Balonne in 2024 showed the high level of community interest in understanding the opportunities and risks of solar in the region (see case study).
- Solar thermal was explored near Charleville in Murweh, but the project did not proceed.
- **Large-scale wind:** Several projects exist in the planning and development stage around Maranoa (see case study).
- **Microgrids:** Multiple councils have explored microgrids and standalone systems (Balonne, Bulloo, Quilpie, Murweh). Microgrids face barriers of high costs for microgrid transmission (up to \$300 per m), grid limitations, technical and regulatory hurdles. A proposal for a high-voltage loop in Quilpie was deemed unviable.
- **Geothermal:** Many councils have explored geothermal opportunities, with investigations finding temperatures in Quilpie and Bulloo were not high enough to create viable solutions. Investigations are continuing in Maranoa. Enthusiasm cooled in the region after Winton Council experienced technical difficulties with design and high operational costs anticipated with the geothermal plant (O'Neal 2023).
- **Batteries:** Grid scale batteries have been considered however it is not currently viable. Improvements in technology and cost efficiency may see this change in coming years or decades.
- **Rooftop solar:** The region has a very high capacity for solar energy, as highlighted in several existing regional strategies and investigations. All six councils have developed an Energy and Emissions Strategy to identify priority infrastructure and efficiency upgrades for Council operations. This has seen all Councils install rooftop solar on council facilities,. The uptake of rooftop solar by households, businesses and industry varies across the region, with studies noting further potential in this area.
- **Energy efficiency:** Balonne Council has run five rounds of EcoBiz with 71 businesses, driving solar, battery optimisation and water savings, with strong tourism participation. Some businesses have come for a second round, interested to learn about minimising waste.
- **Anaerobic digestion of manure at feedlots:** Captures manure in sealed tanks where it breaks down without oxygen, producing biogas that can be used for heat or electricity, with residual solids reused as fertiliser. In places such as the Roma Saleyards, this has been considered as a way to manage waste while lowering energy costs and emissions. (Davis 2018)
- **Cotton gin trash combustion to replace LPG:** Beardmore Cotton Gin is exploring ways to reduce gas use for cotton heating by pelletising agricultural waste from the ginning process (known as 'trash') and using it as a biomass fuel. The pellets are burned in a boiler or furnace to generate heat, performing the same drying and heating function currently supplied by LPG, but using a locally sourced by-product instead of purchased gas. Linked work in the region on waste-to-hydrogen further shows how practical, site-based energy solutions can emerge where there is a steady waste stream and the right infrastructure.
- **Recycled wood gasifier:** This is suited near where power demand can be co-located with waste streams. A small, trailer-mounted gasifier could use recycled wood or other local biomass to produce syngas, which then fuels a generator to provide on-site power. The concept is best suited to places where waste wood and steady energy

demand sit together, such as industrial or processing precincts like Thallon. (All Energy Pty Ltd 2024)

- **Sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs) and bioenergy:** Maranoa Council is working with an investor on a bio energy plant in Wallumbilla, and Balonne Council has been exploring projects in sustainable aviation fuels.

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*"We must have had north of \$1 million in electricity savings by now – about 79 businesses participated in Ecobiz energy efficiency programs."*

**Council representative**

*'We have solar, it would be good to get batteries happening because we can't put power back into grid but we really do need power at night for aircon.'* – **Local producer**

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## **Trials to overcome grid limitations**

- Ergon Energy is trialling alternative future supply options across Western Queensland. These have the potential to lower the cost of future supply as redundant powerlines can be removed (Ergon Energy 2026). This includes:
  - Incentivising demand reduction by enabling more rooftop solar and batteries, and providing cash back incentives for supply solutions such as solar pumps.
  - Installing stand-alone power systems (SAPS), typically solar PV and battery storage with diesel backup, for areas with low density and demand. Advances in battery technology and cost reductions mean that SAPS are becoming more economically viable and reliable than remote network supply of poles and wires. Trials are underway on cattle stations near Mount Isa.
  - Microgrid pilots for communities at end of long powerlines to support needs during outages. Current projects are centred on Queensland's east coast.
  - Installing utility scale batteries.

## Case studies

### Improving energy reliability through microgrids

Kalbarri, a town of around 1,500 residents on the central coast of Western Australia, is connected to the electricity network via a 140 km rural feeder line that is highly exposed to weather and environmental disruptions. Frequent and prolonged outages, often during extreme heat, created significant risks for residents and local services.

To improve reliability, Western Power developed a microgrid using existing rooftop solar, wind generation, and a battery energy storage system. The system allows the town to switch between grid-connected and islanded operation, maintaining local supply during network disruptions and reconnecting automatically when the wider network is restored.

The microgrid has already prevented multiple outages and is expected to eliminate around 80 per cent of outage events. This approach is directly relevant for parts of South West Queensland that rely on long, exposed feeder lines, where improving local energy resilience could reduce outage risks without requiring full network duplication. (Western Power 2024)

Microgrids have been used in many other remote communities to improve energy security, including the Marlinja Community Microgrid in the Northern Territory, where extreme heat frequently causes power outages. Community members were actively involved in planning, installation, and skills training, with students participating in solar education activities. The project is an initial step toward a longer-term goal of locally owned solar and battery systems, keeping energy control, skills, and future benefits in community hands.

### Broadening access to renewable energy through community ownership

The Haystacks Community Solar Garden is a 1.5 MW solar project hosted on a working farm near Grong Grong, NSW, enabling people without suitable rooftops to benefit from renewable energy. City and regional residents purchased defined 'plots' in the solar garden, with returns delivered as electricity bill credits through a retail partnership. The host landholder receives a stable lease income alongside ongoing agricultural production.

Designed at a scale that could connect to existing network infrastructure, the project prioritised local decision-making, community ownership, and practical coexistence with farming, while navigating complex regulatory, retail, and tax settings.

To investigate a similar model, councils could assess local network capacity for small-scale solar, identify a willing retail partner or trial pathway to deliver bill credits, and test whether a cooperative or community ownership structure could operate within Queensland's regulatory and tax settings. (Haystacks solar garden 2020)

### Ensuring renewables benefit communities; experience from NSW

In Hay, The Next Economy worked with Hay Shire Council to lead the Hay Region Economic Transition Roadmap. More than 240 community members contributed to building a shared understanding of the local economy, existing pressures, and future priorities. Renewable energy was considered alongside agriculture, services, and climate resilience, rather than in isolation. This process aligned with the Hay and Carrathool Regional Drought Resilience Plan and helped surface practical priorities related to long-term economic resilience.

This early preparation changed how the region engaged with renewable energy development. Rather than focusing on short-term sponsorships, Hay was better positioned to seek contributions

that addressed real constraints, including managing construction-driven housing pressure, supporting local business participation, and creating pathways for young people into regional jobs. It also helped reduce the risk of short-lived benefits that do not leave a lasting legacy. (The Next Economy 2025)

Western Downs Regional Council provides a relevant Queensland example of proactively shaping renewable energy development. With a significant pipeline of wind and solar projects, the council has sought to both encourage investment and manage cumulative impacts. Clear communication of local expectations, structured engagement processes and forward planning have supported more coordinated development outcomes across the region.

Queensland has now embedded some of these principles in legislation. The *Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025* requires certain renewable energy projects, including wind and solar projects of 1MW or more and large-scale batteries of 50MW or more, to:

- Undertake a Social Impact Assessment
- Publicly notify and address social impacts
- Negotiate a Community Benefit Agreement with the relevant local government prior to lodging a development application

This represents a significant shift. Community benefit and social impact are no longer informal or discretionary discussions; they are a required part of project development. The intent is to ensure that renewable energy projects contribute to long-term local outcomes and maintain social licence through transparent processes and state oversight.

However, legislation alone does not determine outcomes. The quality of negotiated agreements still depends on how clearly councils understand their priorities, constraints and long-term vision. Regions that have already articulated their infrastructure gaps, workforce needs, housing pressures and economic aspirations are better placed to use these legislative tools strategically.

A key lesson is that community benefits get shaped early. Legislative reform strengthens the negotiating position of councils, but preparation, clarity and regional coordination determine whether renewable development leaves a durable legacy.

### **Profile: WestWind Energy**

As Australia's electricity system changes, wind generation is playing an increasingly important role in keeping homes and businesses powered, particularly outside daylight hours. For regions like the Maranoa, the question is not simply whether renewable energy is developed, but how it integrates with existing industries, land uses and community priorities.

WestWind Energy Development is progressing Bottle Tree Energy Park, a proposed wind energy project around 16 km north-east of Roma. The project would include up to 50 wind turbines with capacity of up to 400 MW, alongside battery storage. Construction is targeted for late 2027 to early 2028, subject to approvals and grid access.

What distinguishes the project is its location alongside active coal seam gas operations and agricultural production. Coexistence between wind, gas, irrigation and grazing at this scale has not previously occurred in Australia. WestWind has worked with landholders and broader industries to understand operational requirements, identify shared risks and adjust layouts so infrastructure operates alongside, rather than in conflict with, existing businesses.

Quality stakeholder and community engagement has been a central focus since early development began in 2022. Engagement has included door-knocking neighbouring properties, regular briefings with Council, meetings with community members and local businesses, and a

consistent on-the-ground presence through locally based staff. Since early 2025, WestWind has hosted a monthly open office in Roma, with engagement largely focused on local employment and business participation opportunities.

Bottle Tree Energy Park is expected to create approximately 180 construction jobs at peak and around 17 full-time equivalent roles during operations. When operational, the project will establish a Community Benefit Fund to share financial benefits locally. The project has voluntarily agreed to enter into a Community Benefit Agreement with Council in line with Queensland's new legislative framework.

Securing grid access and progressing final design remain key priorities. Transmission capacity and future upgrade pathways continue to evolve, creating uncertainty around timing and connection. WestWind is working through these matters to position the project for successful delivery.

For Maranoa, the project highlights that realising the regional benefits of wind development, including jobs, investment and longer-term economic activity, depends not only on project-level engagement, but also on coordinated regional planning, timely transmission development and clear connection pathways. (WestWind Energy 2026)

### **Using renewables to build sovereign fertiliser capacity in the region**

The proposed green ammonia facility at Moonie River Feedlot, Balonne Shire, explores how renewable energy can support fertiliser security, lower input costs, and build sovereign production capacity for regional agriculture. Fertiliser prices are closely tied to natural gas markets and recent volatility, combined with port closures and long trucking distances, has highlighted the vulnerability of existing supply chains.

The project proposes co-locating a small-scale ammonia plant with an existing feedlot and renewable energy hub, creating operational efficiencies and shared benefits. Renewable electricity would power ammonia production, with waste heat recovered for grain flaking at the feedlot, improving feed conversion efficiency. Locally produced ammonia could reduce fertiliser costs by up to a third in the near term, with further reductions as renewable production credits apply, while also improving nitrogen retention in soils.

The facility would occupy a compact footprint, require a small operational workforce, and use relatively low volumes of water. Structured as a not-for-profit or cooperative model, the intent is for end users to have a stake in ownership and benefit directly from supply security and price stability. Designed as a pilot, the project aims to demonstrate a replicable model that could be rolled out across other agricultural regions as demand grows.

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*'People here are used to large infrastructure ... the conversations are about how to do it well.'* – **WestWind**

*'Can you develop green fertiliser production [anhydrous ammonia] to a scale that you could export? That is the trillion dollar question. Transport is the limiting factor.'* – **Energy sector representative**

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## Opportunity Area 2: A future plan for gas and oil industries



The 'Big Rig' museum in Maranoa Shire.  
Credit: SWQROC

### Good would look like:

- An orderly, planned shift in economic activity and energy production that prioritises domestic energy needs, and supports workers and regional economies to diversify.

External drivers of change are playing a key role in shaping the future of gas and oil industries in South West Queensland.

Globally, the oil and gas sector is increasingly dynamic and unstable. Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to significant price increases for gas and oil that have been exacerbated by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Countries around the world are seeking to secure energy supplies, shifting their energy systems away from fossil fuels to increase energy security and simultaneously meet climate commitments, boost industry competitiveness and create jobs.

Domestically the Australian Government is focussed on maintaining supply of gas for domestic use, through the Domestic Gas Reservation Scheme. The Future Gas Strategy outlines how existing supplies will be optimized as renewable energy and batteries are developed. Long-term demand trends point to fuel switching and electrification where practical. This complex context provides opportunities for South West Queensland in the short term, as the region has strong existing gas reserves.

Gas and oil have supported jobs, investment and local government revenue across South West Queensland for decades. In some LGAs, a substantial share of employment, rates and community funding is tied directly or indirectly to the sector.

- Maranoa has a strong coal seam gas (CSG) industry. Most gas produced in Maranoa and the adjoining Surat Basin flows east to the Gladstone LNG plant on Curtis Island, and is liquefied for export to China, Japan, Korea and Malaysia. Maranoa Council estimates that over 40 per cent of the local workforce is connected to the gas industry,

which also contributes significantly to local scholarships and community funding. Expansion in the Taroom Basin is also expected to create future opportunities. Future supply relies on drilling efficiency, water management, and pipeline capacity, so new gas is generally harder and costlier to bring on than a decade ago.

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*'We see it as steady state there, with 30 years left in the Gladstone LNG plant.'* – **Gas industry representative**

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- Further west in Bulloo and Quilpie, the Cooper-Eromanga basin has been producing conventional gas and liquids for domestic use since the 1960s. Local economies are highly dependent on the gas sector, as it contributes more than 70 per cent of Council rates and significant funding for community initiatives and disaster recovery. The Inland Oil Refinery has sourced crude oil from the Cooper Eromanga Basin to produce diesel for the local community and mining industry and is set to expand with the development of the Taroom Trough.
- Balonne has established gas infrastructure that is currently not utilised, although tenders announced by the Queensland Government may see an increase in gas activity in this area in the short term.

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*'It's early days in Balonne for gas but the conversations and learnings from Maranoa and Western Downs will be of benefit for social licence and coexistence.'* – **Council representative**

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- Paroo and Murweh do not have significant gas or oil activity.

## Opportunities for action

### 2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries



*Roma power station, the site of Australia's first commercial gas project. Credit: The Next Economy*

Whilst the short-term future of gas seems secure, regions reliant on oil and gas need to start planning and preparing now to ensure their economies, jobs and communities can withstand unpredictability, volatility and a likely scale back of these industries over time.

Experience elsewhere shows that heavy reliance on a single industry can leave regions exposed if activity slows or closes quickly. The announcement that Glencore's underground copper mine and concentrator in Mount Isa would close from 2025 gave the region roughly 12 months to adjust after more than a century of mining dominance. The impacts on workers, businesses and confidence were immediate, reinforcing the importance of early and coordinated planning before closure decisions are finalised (Mount Isa City Council and The Next Economy 2025).

Forward planning allows councils to protect local services, support workers and businesses, and diversify gradually rather than respond under pressure. Good transition planning takes time. It relies on clear information about timelines, early workforce planning, coordination between industry and government, and place-based strategies that reflect local strengths and risks.

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*'We want to build sustainability and community – we're here now, what does it look like once we're not? We want to try and forward plan past that and make sure the community has a plan in place.'* – **Gas industry representative**

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## 2A: A future plan for gas and oil industries

<p><b>What councils can do</b></p>	<p><b>Councils with a heavy reliance on gas and oil industries can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with industry operators to understand future plans and initiatives and undertake transition planning. This could include developing a relationship compact with industry operators that sets shared expectations about local jobs, training, community benefits, environmental performance and how information will be shared as activity ramps up or winds down.</li> <li>• Integrate gas and oil transition considerations into Council's economic and resilience planning, to ensure it is being tracked and monitored, and develop a plan for the future of the gas sector in the region.</li> <li>• Diversify economic activity and strengthen other sectors to ensure the local economy is ready to respond to changes in gas and oil industries and support local jobs. This could include setting aside revenue for a future industries and resilience fund whilst gas and oil activity is strong.</li> <li>• Councils that may see gas activity increase in the short term can also work with organisations such as Coexistence Queensland and Councils with experience working with the gas industry to prepare for negotiation of tender agreements and ensure local benefit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How SWQROC can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate information sharing and support between relevant Councils on navigating gas development, industry collaboration, coexistence, benefit-sharing opportunities and future opportunities in the sector (e.g. methane abatement, operational efficiency gains, carbon capture and storage).</li> <li>• Establish a region-wide picture of gas dependency. This could include building a set of transition indicators for the region (e.g. the number and quality of local jobs, diversity of the economic base, participation in training, community wellbeing) and tracking these over time so Councils can adjust their approach if warning signs appear.</li> <li>• Partner with TAFE/industry on short courses that bridge existing oil and gas workforce into other work e.g. civil, utilities.</li> <li>• Implement a process to track company announcements, regulatory changes, shifting production volumes and offtakes across the region to spot emerging risks early.</li> <li>• Explore appetite for a regional community reference group for LGAs with high exposure to gas and oil industries, to shape planning and regional outcomes more proactively than reacting to industry decisions and announcements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How State government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear and forward-looking regulatory signals on resource approvals, environmental standards and decommissioning obligations to improve planning certainty for councils and communities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure resource sector contribution frameworks fairly reflect the infrastructure and service costs borne by local governments.</li> <li>• Support place-based transition planning in regions with high gas and oil dependency, including early workforce and economic diversification support.</li> </ul>
<b>How federal government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide long-term clarity on national emissions, energy and export policy settings that influence future demand for gas and oil.</li> <li>• Support proactive workforce transition measures in fossil fuel-dependent regions, including retraining, career advice and income support pathways.</li> <li>• Align national industry and regional development policy to assist gas-reliant regions to diversify over time.</li> </ul>

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*'We're always keen to work alongside Council if there is an opportunity to support diversification... Could say charge less on rates... and can set that aside for future planning.'* – **Gas industry representative**

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## What have councils been doing?

### Quilpie advocates for fairer resource sector contributions

Quilpie Shire Council has played an active role in advocating for legislative change to ensure resource projects contribute fairly to local government costs. Drawing on direct experience, the Council highlighted gaps in Queensland's rates framework where resource authorities could expand or move into production without mechanisms to recover unpaid rates.

Working through the Local Government Association of Queensland and directly with State Government, Quilpie shared evidence of how these settings shifted financial risk onto councils and communities. This advocacy helped inform proposed amendments to Queensland resource legislation aimed at linking rates payment to resource approvals and renewals. (South Burnett 2024)

The case demonstrates how small regional councils can influence state policy by clearly articulating on-the-ground impacts and engaging constructively in reform processes.

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*'Conventional gas fields are mid-way and waning towards end of life. Conventional targets might be stranded, which will impact development.'*  
– **Representative from a Queensland landholder engagement body**

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## Case studies

### Planning for phase down so communities don't get caught out

Gas and oil have supported jobs, investment, and local revenue across South West Queensland for decades, but experience elsewhere shows these industries can wind down quickly, often leaving communities little time to adjust.

One lesson comes from Mount Isa, where Glencore's announcement that the underground copper mine and concentrator would close from 2025 landed suddenly, giving the region 12 months to diversify a regional economy that had been synonymous with copper mining for 100 years. The decision had immediate impacts on workers, local businesses, and confidence in the regional economy, highlighting the risks of heavy reliance on a single employer and commodity. In response, Mount Isa City Council moved quickly to engage with industry, residents, businesses, institutions and entrepreneurs to identify pathways to a more future-ready economy. Early, transparent and collaborative planning with major employers is critical for Council planning, workforce transition, economic diversification, and advocating for changing regional needs before closure decisions were finalised (Mount Isa City Council and The Next Economy 2025).

For gas-producing regions, the question is not whether activity will change, but whether communities are ready when it does. Careful, forward-looking planning can help manage this transition in a way that protects workers, maintains local services, and builds alternative sources of economic activity over time.

Predictions suggest gas reserves could last up to 30 years in some parts of the region, however, market volatility may impact these timeframes, especially as renewables are now the most cost competitive option for new electricity generation. Political decisions (such as establishing a domestic gas reserve) can also significantly impact commodity prices and industry viability, and these kind of political decisions are likely as governments look to ease cost of living pressures and deliver on energy bill relief (Macdonald-Smith and Cropp 2025).

The need to support transition in fossil fuel industries was highlighted by the landmark ruling of the Workplace Relations Tribunal in November 2025, ordering the energy company AGL to support workers set to lose their jobs when South Australia's Torrens Island gas-fired power station closes in 2028 (Donovan 2025). This sets a precedent for the treatment of workers as coal and gas-fired power stations close, which may become relevant to the sector as a whole in the future.

Good transition planning takes many years, and it needs certainty and clear information about timelines and next steps, including good career advice to younger workers and workers looking to reskill, about where the genuine future opportunities are.

A useful starting point is to consider what 'good' looks like if a region decides to plan ahead. Guidance from the Net Zero Economy Authority emphasises (Net Zero Economy Authority 2025):

- Early workforce planning to support retraining and redeployment,
- Proactive support for affected local businesses and supply chains,
- Coordination between industry, unions, councils, and governments,

- Place-based transition planning that reflects local strengths and risks.

The Next Economy's work in places like Gladstone and the Latrobe Valley reinforces that early planning works best when it brings together industry, workers, councils, and communities, rather than relying on any single actor. Regular engagement, shared data, and honest conversations about future change create the conditions for regions to respond deliberately over time, instead of being forced into rapid decisions when circumstances shift. (Gladstone Regional Council and The Next Economy 2022; The Next Economy 2023)

### **The gas industry is looking to play an active role in decarbonisation**

Santos has commenced commercial-scale carbon capture and storage (CCS) operations at Moomba in the Cooper Basin (South Australia), injecting carbon dioxide into depleted gas reservoirs. The Cooper Basin is connected to the same broader basin and pipeline system that extends into South West Queensland, making it the closest established CCS hub to operations around Bulloo and Quilpie.

However, CCS proposals are highly site-specific and can be sensitive where groundwater systems are involved. Concerns about impacts on aquifers that sustain remote communities and industries mean projects face detailed environmental assessment and approval processes. This suggests CCS may be technically feasible for some western conventional assets but remains uncertain in areas such as the Surat Basin or near significant groundwater resources.

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*'We know that this is going to happen within the next couple of years. And, you know, with that knowledge, it's our duty to ensure that we're supporting the workers in this process. Well, they certainly need clear information about all the timelines and the next steps. They need career advice on what options they could have, and they need training options and financial assistance to do those particular training options too.'* – **David Shankey, CEO of the Net Zero Economy Authority (Donovan 2025)**

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## Opportunity Area 3: Future ready agriculture and grazing



Wheat harvesting in South West Queensland. Credit: SWQROC

### Good would look like

- South West Queensland continues to play a key role in producing food and fibre for Australian and international markets.
- Agriculture continues to contribute significantly to local identity, community and future opportunity.
- Producers and wider agriculture and grazing supply chains are supported to adopt future ready practices to enhance economic viability, resilience to weather extremes, access to high value markets, and ecosystem health.
- Diversity at many levels, from regional production industries to on-farm revenue streams, increases regional and individual resilience.
- Innovative investment strategies close the gap across the South West.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of local economies and communities across South West Queensland. The large and diversified agricultural sector produces about one third of Queensland's agricultural output, including half of Queensland's wool, sheep and lambs and a fifth of Queensland's cereal crops (SWQROC 2025a). This represents regional agricultural output of over \$1.2 billion annually, and over \$500 million in regional agriculture value-add (SWQROC 2021).

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*'The ag industry will be here forever – tourism may rise and fall, the gas industry may disappear but ag will remain and this needs to be front and central. Ag provides food and if we cannot do this effectively the entire population of Australia will feel the effects.'* – **Council representative**

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**The sector is facing a number of challenges in the region, all of which have flow on implications for communities and transition:**

- Queensland is the most disaster impacted state in Australia (State of Queensland 2021), and the strong reliance on agriculture-based industries exposes the region's economy and communities to significant seasonal fluctuations driven by weather extremes.
- Increasing corporatisation is changing the nature of production in rural areas, requiring operations to scale to remain viable and making it difficult for small family businesses and new entrants.

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*'With corporatisation you have to be big - you need at least 2,000-3,000 sheep if you want to make money. It's hard to get into – land value and water costs have increased fourfold.'* – **Sheep grazier**

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- Attracting labour with the right skills at the right time is an evolving challenge and a balancing act. Innovation and new technology are unlocking improvements in efficiency, productivity and sustainability for producers, but also require new skills while reducing the number of local jobs.
- The region has a long history of coexistence of agricultural production and gas, a relationship that is evolving as new types of energy projects enter the region (such as solar, wind, bioenergy and carbon sequestration). This can offer benefits such as diversified on-farm income and drought resilience, investment, professional services, and employment; while bringing new complexities and challenges.
- Carbon farming has had mixed results in South West Queensland, with impacts on rural population and landscape management (see In detail box).
- Water is a precious and limiting factor for the region, sourced from a combination of surface and artesian infrastructure (see In detail box).

Producers have a long history of responding to markets and weather conditions and adapting production and practices accordingly. Many local producers are already engaging in the adaptive and creative thinking this Strategy proposes because their bottom lines depend on it, many of which are featured as case studies throughout this section.

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*'The next generation is really progressive. They say to me: We're not going to get any more land, so we'd better look after it. And they're right.'* – **Regional natural resource management organisation**

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**Water as central to agriculture in South West Queensland**

In South West Queensland, water can limit what is economically and ecologically feasible. Government water buyback schemes under the national Basin Plan have been controversial because they can take water out of production at prices many producers find unsustainable, raising concerns about jobs and regional town viability in farming areas. (ABC News 2023)

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*'Water is the biggest limiter.'* – **Sheep grazier**

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At the same time, proposals to use the Great Artesian Basin for carbon sequestration have been met with strong opposition, and were rejected by Queensland authorities due to risks to groundwater, reflecting deep local concern about protecting this vital water source for agriculture and communities (Chen 2024).

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*'Farmers will grow the most efficient crop that offers best return per ML of water, whether that's cotton, corn, sorghum, mung beans in rotation – it depends on price. I don't agree with the argument that we shouldn't grow cotton because of water – farmers will use the water they're given to grow best crop possible.'* – **Cotton industry worker**

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## Opportunities for action

### 3A: Support agricultural productivity and diversification



Balonne Shire broccoli field workers. Credit: SWQROC

Agriculture is the backbone of South West Queensland's economy, but it operates within a landscape shaped by climatic variability, market fluctuations and rising input costs. Many producers are already adapting through improved land management, technology and efficiency. The next step for some is exploring how to diversify income streams alongside core production. Land holders are looking for ways to capture more value locally to address high freight costs, and make better use of existing land, energy and by-products. In a region where distance and scale can constrain opportunity, on-farm innovation can play a practical role in sustaining both businesses and communities over time.

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*'In terms of diversifying, we have a resource base we can do all sorts of things with, we're limited only by our imaginations.'* – **Sustainable land management professional**

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### 3A: Support agricultural productivity and diversification

<p><b>What councils can do</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for future conditions and build resilience, including through implementing actions in the South West Queensland Regional Disaster Resilience Strategy, the South West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan, infrastructure upgrades and pest management projects.</li> </ul> <p>‘Support biodiversity and natural capital investment in the region, sharing lessons from what hasn’t worked well from carbon farming in the region. This should include consideration of how changes to the EPBC nature laws will impact management practices and vegetation clearing.</p>
<p><b>How SWQROC can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development of a future-facing workforce with agri-skills, including regenerative farming, AgTech use, data collection, and low-emissions operations. This could include working with agricultural industries and training providers to provide accredited courses and peer to peer education and training in the region.</li> <li>• Advocate for investment in key enabling infrastructure, that supports productivity and business growth, including mobile and internet services and weather radar systems.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How State government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear and timely guidance on water policy, vegetation management and nature repair settings so producers can plan with confidence.</li> <li>• Support extension, innovation and skills development programs that improve productivity, drought resilience and emissions performance across agricultural production.</li> <li>• Invest in enabling infrastructure such as digital connectivity and regional weather monitoring that underpins adoption of AgTech and data-driven management.</li> <li>• Ensure regulatory and accreditation frameworks are fit-for-purpose in arid and remote production systems, reducing unnecessary compliance burden while maintaining environmental standards.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How federal government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design national climate, biodiversity and carbon market frameworks that reflect landscape-scale realities and avoid unintended impacts on rural communities.</li> <li>• Ensure disaster recovery and resilience funding supports long-term preparedness, not just post-event recovery.</li> <li>• Ensure workforce policies including overseas labour supports agricultural workforce needs.</li> </ul>

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*We need business models that can handle the weather, no matter whether it's getting worse, to make business more resilient. We can't stop droughts, but we can stop the damage. You're not just a victim, it's all to do with management, and you can improve it.'* – **Local grazier**

*'I take 50 calls a day as farm manager, but they cut out unless I'm at the top of the dam or in the office in city. It really impacts efficiency.'* – **Cotton producer**

*'We need another weather radar – there's nothing between Alice Springs and Quilpie so the weather hits channel country and 'fades out' because there's no data, so we get no warning. This led to issues earlier in the year. We have \$10 million in funding, but the last radar-built cost \$28 million - we need more.'* – **Regional development body**

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## What has the region already done?

- **Producer support:** Many land management organisations and industry bodies are active in the region, supporting producers to trial and implement future ready practices. For example, Southern Queensland Landscapes and Maranoa Council held the inaugural Maranoa Agricultural Innovation Expo in April 2024.
- **Exclusion (single property) and cluster (multiple neighbouring properties) fencing programs:** Protects sheep, goat and cattle enterprises from predation from wild dogs, feral pig impacts, and reduces total grazing pressure by excluding feral herbivores. There has been significant uptake in Balonne, Murweh, Quilpie and Paroo. The scheme has been running for 10 years, with collaboration between NRM groups, local Councils, and funding from State and Federal government and producer funds.
- **Regenerative practices:** Many local producers have been implementing regenerative practices for many years:
  - Local graziers report improvements in pasture production and drought resilience by focusing on rewatering landscapes using furrows and small banks to slow down water and increase infiltration, and centring management around improving soil health.
  - "Cotton producers have seen benefits to crops and reduced insecticide use through integrated pest management.
  - Horticultural producers have seen less disease, increased water retention, increased organic matter and soil carbon, significantly reduced insecticide use, and higher quality crops through multi species cover crops, crop rotation and focusing on improving soil health (see case study).
- **AgTech:** Local producers are beginning to trial new technologies such as drones, and Maranoa Council is engaging with the Queensland Government's AgTech Roadmap, which aims to accelerate AgTech skills and adoption to enhance sustainability and productivity through the use of drones, sensors, robotics and improved data sharing (State of Queensland 2023). The Wandhala (Eagle) Drone Project also explored how First Nations businesses can use drone technology for land management, cultural heritage monitoring and new economic opportunities (see case study). Councils have

been working to support the uptake of AgTech through improving digital connectivity and AgTech compatibility in many Councils, and this is a current focus of the Queensland Government (see Opportunity Area 6: Infrastructure to meet future needs).

- **Replacing open bore drains with tanks and troughs to water stock:** Allows for more efficient use of water and attracts less pests.

- **Hands on experience provide pathways into agriculture**

Collaboration and partnerships between Balonne Shire Council and St George High School's Agriculture, Water and Environment (AWE) Program. The Program is designed to support local career pathways into the agricultural sector through hands-on experience across diverse parts of the local agricultural sector, short course accreditations, immersive camps with farm visits, and networking with industry partners and stakeholders.

- **Diversification opportunities ranging from:**

tourism and training: The Roma Saleyards is open to tourists and hosts events, including welcoming 100 producers for the Young Beef Producers Forum, to

new industries such as timber production, explorations to rebuild a local timber industry in Maranoa (see case study).

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*'South West has been early adopters in AgTech – trailblazers in installing private networks or getting Starlink to support AgTech, and there's been a lot of AgTech developed in the South West.'* – **Queensland Government representative**

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## Case studies

### Exploring on-site uses for energy and by-products at Beardmore Cotton Gin

In Balonne, Beardmore Cotton Gin is one of the largest electricity users in the region and is exploring how to better match energy supply with local use. The business is investigating a 3 MW solar and battery system, estimated at around \$3.4 million, to support ginning operations into the evening during the April to September season. However, ginning runs for only half the year, raising a practical question about how to use excess power over summer, particularly given limited ability to export to the grid.

In response, the gin is considering on-site diversification that could absorb demand and add value locally, including fertiliser production, cotton spinning, or other uses for currently idle land.

The business is also examining value streams from cotton by-products. Cotton seed is partly exported and partly sold locally for feed, while trash is composted and returned to paddocks. Together, these efforts reflect a broader push to capture more value from existing operations and reduce reliance on single revenue sources.

*'We're keen for ideas!' – Beardmore cotton gin representative*

### Cypress pine as a regional timber opportunity

Cypress pine has long been part of the working landscape in parts of South West Queensland, particularly in the Maranoa, where selective thinning has supported both grazing and small-scale timber recovery. Recent discussions suggest there may be renewed potential if the resource is actively managed rather than treated as incidental. Estimates indicate there is significantly more cypress available than previously recognised, and with management it can operate on roughly a 20-year cycle.

Interest is growing in using cypress for local construction and housing, both to retain more value in region and as a lower-emissions alternative to other materials. Wandoan's existing mill and recent local economic development work point to practical foundations already in place.

However, producers note that regulatory settings and costs have made on-farm management and recovery difficult, limiting what is currently viable. The experience suggests that clearer rules and support for sustainable harvesting could help turn an underused resource into jobs, materials and diversification for the region.

### The pros and cons of carbon farming in South West Queensland

Feedback on carbon farming in South West Queensland was predominantly negative, with stakeholders pointing to how projects were rolled out and managed, rather than the concept itself, as the core problem. Carbon farming was introduced to parts of South West Queensland with limited local planning and poor integration into existing land and community systems. While some landholders participated in good faith, projects were often designed at a property-by-property level, without sufficient consideration of how landscapes are managed collectively or how changes would affect neighbours and communities. (SWQROC 2024)

Common concerns included land being effectively locked out of production, reduced on-ground management, and fewer people living and working across the landscape. In arid systems, stakeholders argued that removing livestock and active management can increase fire risk, erosion, and feral animal pressure.

There were also concerns about lost future options. In Quilpie, widespread uptake of carbon schemes has meant fewer opportunities to retain offsets locally as emissions requirements approach. A council representative reflected:

*'If we'd known that was coming, we would have held onto that.'* – **Council representative**

Some benefits were acknowledged, including improved land values and off-farm income. However, the dominant view was that without active management, monitoring, and people remaining on the land, carbon farming is unlikely to deliver long-term landscape or community outcomes.

This experience shows what transition can look like when it is not well planned. As new opportunities such as nature repair and biodiversity markets emerge, there is a clear need to apply these lessons early by designing approaches that work across landscapes and communities, involve communities from the outset, and support both environmental outcomes and the people managing the land.

*'It's not a good thing for our region. It has improved land values but has taken a lot of people away. Then they're not doing anything about erosion, feral animals et cetera – if you live there and you see something, you do something about it.'* – **Land manager**

#### **AgTech unlocks First Nations business opportunity in land management**

Across South West Queensland, land and cultural management work is often seasonal and contract-based, with limited pathways into skilled, locally owned businesses. The Southern Queensland Landscapes' Wandhala (Eagle) Drone Project takes a practical approach to this gap (Southern Queensland Landscapes 2026).

Funded through the Regional Economic Futures Fund, the project supported around 40 First Nations participants to complete drone training alongside business skills development. The focus was on applying drone technology to real tasks such as land management, cultural heritage monitoring, environmental assessment and agricultural services. Participants built both technical capability and the foundations to deliver services as contractors or small businesses.

Rather than creating a one-off program, the project aimed to equip people with tools that can be used across industries, including conservation, agriculture and renewable energy projects.

For councils, this highlights how targeted training and procurement can support First Nations-led enterprises that keep skills, income and decision-making local.

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*'We need to be diversifying the economy to provide some consistency during the peaks and troughs experienced by changes in weather.'* –  
**Council representative**

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## Opportunity Area 4: Diverse enterprise and tourism



Charleville cosmos centre, Murweh Shire. Credit: SWQROC

### Good would look like

- A diverse mix of small and medium businesses that are viable year-round and less exposed to seasonal downturns.
- More visitors staying longer and spending locally, supported by stronger tourism products, events and experiences.
- Local enterprises able to access the workforce, premises and services they need to operate and grow.
- Greater participation in business and tourism from First Nations and locally led ventures, keeping more value in the region.

Many locals run multiple roles or enterprises at once, combining farming, contracting, retail, tourism or service work to make a living. These businesses do more than generate income, they keep towns functioning, provide essential goods and services, and often underpin community life.

At the same time, operating conditions are tough. Seasonal demand, climate variability, drought and natural disasters create uneven trading conditions, with some towns experiencing very low footfall through the summer months. For many operators, the basics, finding staff, securing accommodation, managing maintenance delays or upgrading ageing premises, can be just as challenging as attracting customers. These pressures limit the capacity of small businesses to grow or diversify, even where opportunities clearly exist.

In this context, strengthening enterprise and tourism is less about attracting entirely new industries and more about backing local operators, smoothing practical barriers and helping existing strengths translate into year-round economic activity.

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*'The tourism side of things has been growing for quite a while and it is something that people really rely on. Need to get people to travel on road infrastructure and be safe doing so.'* – **Council representative**

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## Opportunities for action

### 4A: Building on the strengths of small business



Campfire at Dig tree in Bulloo Shire. Credit: SWQROC

Small businesses and local producers are central to the economic and social fabric of South West Queensland. In many towns, a handful of enterprises underpin employment, essential services and visitor activity. However, distance, small markets, workforce shortages and infrastructure gaps mean that starting or expanding a business can involve higher risk than in larger centres.

Councils often play a practical enabling role, whether by addressing accommodation constraints, supporting tourism collaboration or helping proponents navigate approvals and infrastructure needs. Strengthening enterprise is therefore not only about growth, it is also about maintaining essential services, stabilising town centres and ensuring that local ideas have a realistic pathway to succeed.

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*"There are some very entrepreneurial people out here, but council often has to bear the risk - how can we support councils to not always have to take on that first risk."* – **Council representative**

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#### 4A: Building on the strengths of small business

<p><b>What councils can do</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local businesses and industry bodies to address practical barriers to growth, such as accommodation, workforce and infrastructure gaps, for example through regular tourism or business roundtables (as seen with the Roma Commerce and Tourism Association)</li> <li>• Package events, food, cultural and nature-based experiences to extend visit duration and local spend</li> <li>• Support locally led enterprise, including First Nations ventures, by connecting proponents to sites, facilities and early-stage support, building on initiatives such as Kooma PBC's land management and eco-tourism aspirations</li> <li>• Collaborate regionally on niche strengths, such as eco, cultural, heritage or science-based tourism, where coordination across shires improves viability and visitor appeal</li> </ul>
<p><b>How SWQROC can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support regional coordination between councils and industry groups, including regional packaging and promotion</li> <li>• Package local products, services and experiences to position the region for major events and supply chain opportunities linked to Brisbane 2032</li> <li>• Advocate collectively for infrastructure and investment that unlocks local business growth</li> </ul>
<p><b>How State government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in enabling infrastructure that underpins enterprise viability, including roads, aviation access and reliable digital connectivity</li> <li>• Ensure planning, licensing and compliance processes for tourism, events and small enterprises are proportionate and workable in remote settings</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design regional development and small business programs so they are accessible to remote councils and SMEs with limited administrative capacity</li> <li>• Support regional workforce and training pathways aligned to hospitality, trades and small business management</li> <li>• Recognise the cumulative impacts of seasonal workforce and visitor surges in infrastructure and service funding decisions</li> </ul>
<b>How federal government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support digital connectivity and regional air services that enable tourism growth, remote work and diversified income streams</li> </ul>

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*'There are opportunities we don't currently maximise: for improved dual incomes for farming families that have some highly educated members with capacity to earn more income if companies could accept remoteness, or telehealth... gets money from outside the region paying some salaries. We need digital connectivity for this; it's slightly better now with Starlink. We also need physical connectivity with that – airline connectivity is abysmal.'* – **Regional development body**

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### What has the region already done?

- Councils continue to support local businesses and industry through day-to-day economic development, promotion and problem-solving.
- Tourism growth and diversification is a clear priority across LGAs, with investment in infrastructure, events and local attractions that draw visitors and support town centres.
- Councils are working directly with local businesses and industry bodies, including Chambers of Commerce, to identify practical barriers such as accommodation capacity and seasonal slow periods.
- Local campaigns, events and packaging of regional assets, including nature, heritage and cultural experiences, are being used to spread visitation across the year.
- In some towns, councils and private operators are exploring or scoping additional short-term accommodation and facilities to respond to peak demand and workforce needs.
- Councils are actively scanning for new industries that align with local strengths, including land availability, renewable energy, freight routes and technical skills.
- Early feasibility and partnership work is underway in some areas, such as sustainable aviation fuel and bio feedstock opportunities linked to local crops and processing.
- Industrial and mixed-use precincts are being planned or progressed in several towns to create space for new businesses and light industry.

- Interest has emerged in opportunities such as data centres and logistics, with councils sharing information and assessing suitability and impacts.
- First Nations organisations and communities are pursuing self-determined enterprise initiatives, including tourism and land-based ventures, supported by local partnerships and traineeships.
- Regional coordination is occurring around the Brisbane 2032 Olympics to understand local business capability and position the region for supply and visitation opportunities.

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*'Tourism is an important part of being able to diversify our economy. Many businesses would not be able to stay viable from local spend alone, tourists coming through the door keep them open.'* – **Council representative**

*'It's hard to justify capital outlay with the business open only 6 months of the year.'* – **Small business owner**

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## Case studies

### **Dirranbandi Caravan Park driving local value through tourism and collaboration**

The Dirranbandi Caravan Park shows how entrepreneurial local leadership can create new sources of value for the region. By collaborating with the owners of Cubbie Station, the park has developed paid tours that share positive stories about local history, agricultural production, and innovation, attracting visitors who might otherwise pass through town.

The park has also focused on encouraging longer stays. Simple initiatives such as a worm farm providing free bait for fishing and low-cost bike hire help visitors spend more time locally, supporting nearby businesses. These efforts sit alongside a broader beautification approach aimed at getting people to stop, stay, and spend in Dirranbandi.

Weather remains an important factor. In 2025, access constraints following rain meant only 17 of 70 planned Cubbie Station tours could run, highlighting how climate variability can affect tourism operations. Even so, the model illustrates how local collaboration and flexible, place-based ideas can build economic resilience while adapting to changing conditions.

### **Tourism that anchors visitors in place**

In Longreach, tourism plays a steady role in supporting local jobs and services in a remote setting. Outback Pioneers is a family-run business that has built its offer around working outback life, river systems, and regional history, rather than a single attraction. Experiences range from station visits and river cruises to heritage transport and storytelling, encouraging visitors to stay longer and engage more deeply with the region.

The business operates as part of a wider local ecosystem. Experiences are seasonal, rely on local knowledge and labour, and link visitors onward to nearby towns and attractions, including

Winton. Accommodation, dining, transport, and tour products are treated as complementary rather than competing (Outback Pioneers 2026).

This points to the value of supporting tourism as a connected system. Coordinating event calendars, aligning destination marketing across council boundaries, and supporting local operators to package experiences can help spread visitor spend, smooth seasonal peaks, and reinforce tourism as a reliable part of the regional economy.

### **Bollon Rural Supplies and the role of local services in regional resilience**

In small towns, the loss of a single piece of infrastructure can have wide ripple effects. In Bollon, a fire destroying the local pub removed a key social and economic hub, reducing foot traffic and activity across the town. Since then, Patrick, who operates the local rural supplies store and service station, has been working to rebuild a new pub alongside his existing businesses.

The town retains important assets, including a popular caravan park that regularly hosts up to 90 caravans, but practical challenges remain. There is a shortage of skilled trades such as mechanics and limited pedestrian connectivity between key sites. Small, practical fixes, such as safer walking routes and public transport such as bicycles between town facilities, could make a noticeable difference to how long visitors stay and where they spend money.

### **A local business built around town needs**

In Yackandandah in north-east Victoria, the possible closure of the town's only petrol station prompted seven locals to act. In 2002 they established the Yackandandah Community Development Company (YCDCo) to secure fuel supply for the long term. The service station became the foundation for a broader local business, later expanding into rural supplies, hardware and gardening as demand grew.

YCDCo operates on a commercial footing, but with clear rules about what success looks like. Profits are split between dividends for more than 650 local shareholders and reinvestment in community initiatives, with up to half directed back into the town. Employment, local sponsorships and a bi-monthly newspaper are treated as part of the company's role, not add-ons (YCDCO 2026).

For councils, this shows how locally anchored enterprises can stabilise essential services. Practical support can include access to land or premises, patient approvals, early procurement commitments, and backing feasibility work when a service is at risk of leaving town.

## Opportunity Area 5: Value from waste, recycling and circular economy



*Recycling campaign in Maranoa Shire. Credit: SWQROC*

### Good would look like

- Councils, industries and businesses are supported to develop and implement waste solutions appropriate to their region.
- The value of waste streams is maximised for local benefit as much as possible.
- Waste sent to landfill is minimised by standards and good design that prioritise recovery.

Waste management is a growing cost pressure for councils across South West Queensland. Long distances, small volumes and strict compliance settings mean that transporting, processing and disposing of waste can be expensive and complex. For many councils, the priority is about managing landfill space, reducing risk and keeping costs stable for ratepayers.

At the same time, there is interest in whether some waste streams could generate local value or reduce transport costs if handled differently. Because volumes are small and markets are limited, collaboration across councils is often the only way these options become viable. The challenge is to balance environmental responsibility with economic reality in a remote context.

Together with the SWQROC the Councils have contributed to the development of the Energy and Emissions Strategy and The Regional Waste and Resource Recovery Plan. Whilst many Councils have explored innovative options for recycling, including tyre recycling for bitumen, the low population and vast distance means there are limited opportunities to ensure these are viable ongoing solutions.

To coordinate initiatives across the region and support Councils to collaborate where appropriate, a waste officer position has been created for the region.

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*'We speak recycling, but don't act it. There's a real care or cost factor, but really it should just be part of liveability'. – Council representative*

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## Opportunities for action

### 5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value



*Recycling at Dirranbandi Caravan park, Balonne Shire. Credit: The Next Economy*

Waste management is a growing cost pressure for councils across South West Queensland. Long distances, small volumes and strict compliance settings mean that transporting, processing and disposing of waste can be expensive and complex. For many councils, the priority is about managing landfill airspace, reducing risk and keeping costs stable for ratepayers.

At the same time, there is interest in whether some waste streams could generate local value or reduce transport costs if handled differently. The challenge is to balance environmental responsibility with economic reality in a remote context.

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*'You have to have a longer term strategy to work towards, otherwise you fall victim to the whims of the political cycles.' – Council representative*

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## 5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value

<p><b>What councils can do</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with SWQROC Regional Waste Officer on waste streams for regional collaboration, where volumes and costs justify a shared approach (see case study). For example, Murweh and Maranoa Councils have expressed interest in small-scale plastics recycling plants, which would require strategic location and regional collaboration to achieve waste volumes, logistics solutions and economies of scale.</li> <li>• Explore improved transport and logistics solutions to enable cost effective transport and processing of waste streams, including new opportunities enabled by proposed intermodal rail facilities and new hub and spoke logistics models and back haulage (see Opportunity Area 6: Infrastructure to meet future needs)</li> <li>• Identify modular recycling solutions that can support localised small volume recycling for particular waste streams</li> </ul>
<p><b>How SWQROC can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for regulatory settings that are fit for purpose for remote areas and small volumes and allow flexibility for rural and remote councils to trial low-volume or decentralised circular economy initiatives and value from waste solutions</li> <li>• Supporting collaboration and dialogue between Councils and logistics providers on improved transport and logistics solutions to enable cost effective transport and processing of waste</li> </ul>
<p><b>How State government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure waste levy, stockpiling and compliance settings reflect the realities of low-volume, long-distance and remote conditions, while maintaining environmental standards</li> <li>• Provide regulatory flexibility to enable pilot and small-scale circular economy initiatives where volumes do not meet metropolitan thresholds</li> <li>• Support regional-scale coordination of resource recovery infrastructure where collaboration across councils improves viability</li> <li>• Deliver consistent, statewide community education on waste and recycling to reduce the burden on individual councils</li> </ul>
<p><b>How federal government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design national product stewardship and packaging frameworks that reduce waste at source and improve recoverability in regional areas</li> <li>• Support innovation, research and demonstration of decentralised or modular recycling solutions suited to remote contexts</li> </ul>

## What has the region already done?

- **Regional collaboration:** SWQROC has established a Waste and Resource Recovery Working Group to coordinate regional waste and resource recovery across the region through the support of a Regional Waste Coordinator funded by the Queensland Government. The Coordinator will work collaboratively with councils across the region to improve the economics of resource recovery and help achieve the region's waste and resource recovery targets.
- **Waste to energy:** Several opportunities to reduce landfill emissions and generate energy from waste were identified in the SWQROC Energy and Emissions Strategy (Forde and Barnes 2024). A business case assessment of waste to energy using clean wood and mixed waste streams deemed these options to be currently not feasible for the region, due to significant costs to pre-process and transport waste feedstock, establishment and operational risks, and financial disincentives through the Waste Levy Rebate that applies to Maranoa (AEC 2025). However, the Queensland Government has signalled that the Waste Levy Rebate will be reduced and phased out over time, which may change the economics of waste disposal and viability of these options in the future.
- **Recycling:** Balonne has a successful Containers for Change initiative, with an operator who is interested in expanding recycling services on offer.
- **Tyre shredding:** Murweh Council successfully acquired a grant to bring out a mobile tyre shredder, however the cost of transporting the tyre crumb made this an economically unviable option for ongoing recycling. Tyre recycling was also explored Quilpie Council, but found to be unviable due to distance, cost and small waste volumes.
- **Concrete:** Several Councils have explored options for concrete crushing and recycling. Paroo Council has applied for a grant for a mobile concrete crusher, with letters of support from Murweh and Balonne, to reduce this waste stream across the region. Balonne Council offered concrete to cotton farmers for irrigation channels to reduce water seepage, but there was low uptake. Maranoa is also exploring concrete crushing under the new Queensland Government Resource Recovery Boost fund.
- **Organic waste:** Many Councils have explored opportunities to divert and reuse organic waste, but often face challenges of limited waste volumes, contamination, regulatory hurdles, biosecurity risk and weather extremes. Maranoa Council explored opportunities in composting but faced barriers with extreme temperatures, and exploration of opportunities in biochar were ultimately unsuccessful due to lengthy approval timelines of 3-5 years.
- **Infrastructure upgrades:** Many Councils have applied for grant funding for upgrades to improve waste management, including a waste transfer station in Balonne, a redesign of the dump in Murweh, and in Paroo a waste transfer station in Cunnamulla in addition to facilities to divert concrete and metal waste from landfill in surrounding townships to extend the lives of landfills. Explorations of intermodal rail upgrades between Roma and Charleville may also enable new waste management options through better options for transport and logistics.
- **Community education:** Most Councils have articulated that community education is needed to support recycling behaviours and reduce contamination and illegal dumping. Paroo has sought funding and support to prepare communities for recycling through programs such as Waste Mates, although Balonne Council found that a \$20,000 grant for community education didn't shift contamination rates, and believes a state run education program is needed.

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*'We get hammered by compliance: most people are good, but 20 per cent of the community struggle with compliance and care. Council gets huge pushback when enforcing - compliance doesn't pass the pub test.'*

**– Council representative**

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## Case studies

### Making waste work in remote and low-volume contexts

Across South West Queensland, councils are managing waste in a context of long distances, small volumes, and high transport costs. Balonne Shire Council illustrates how local governments are navigating these constraints while trying to improve outcomes over time.

Balonne has around 50 years of landfill capacity remaining and is focused on *"looking after the airspace"* by reducing what goes to landfill where possible. The council has recycled for more than 20 years and remains the only shire outside the waste levy to do so, despite recycling needing to be trucked long distances. Targeted grants have enabled tyre recycling at scale, while other waste streams such as mattresses, e-waste, and construction materials remain costly and difficult to manage.

Similar challenges and thinking are evident across the region. In Quilpie, council explored options such as back-freighting waste on trucks that already receive subsidised freight into town, but identified regulatory barriers that prevent stockpiling waste at a scale that would make recycling viable. Tyre shredding has also been examined multiple times and found unworkable on an ongoing basis due to distance, cost, and low volumes. In Maranoa, fines for excess stockpiling of materials in landfills has been identified as a barrier to achieving the volumes of waste needed to make management economically viable.

As one council officer put it, *"We can't afford not to care...We're trying to leave a legacy."* The experience highlights the need for policy and funding settings that better reflect remote and low-volume conditions.

### Regional cooperation to improve waste and resource outcomes

Managing waste and recycling in regional areas is shaped by distance, scale and limited local markets. In neighbouring New South Wales, NetWaste provides an example of how councils have responded by working together rather than acting alone.

NetWaste is a voluntary group of member councils that coordinates approaches to waste and sustainable materials management across the region. It supports councils to jointly plan services, share technical knowledge, and collaborate on procurement and contracting for kerbside and operational services. By aggregating demand and aligning standards, member councils are better placed to secure services that would be difficult or costly to achieve individually.

The group also provides a platform for shared investment and planning around infrastructure, helping councils explore options for recycling and resource recovery that rely on regional scale rather than single local facilities. (NetWaste 2023)

For South West Queensland, where similar distance and scale challenges apply, the case shows how voluntary regional collaboration can strengthen service delivery, reduce costs, and open up pathways for local recycling and resource recovery that support long-term resilience.

## Opportunity Area 6: Infrastructure to meet future needs



*Flooding in Maranoa Shire. Credit: SWQROC*

### Good would look like

- Transport solutions that are accessible, efficient and effective and minimise costs for all users. Low carbon transport options are available and support efforts across the region to decarbonise supply chains.
- Key infrastructure for digital connectivity and water security support liveability and enable future opportunities.
- A variety of quality housing options are available, and can be maintained, to support populations and attract skilled workers to remote and regional communities. The design and construction of buildings incorporate circular design principles to minimise waste and maximise resource recovery at end of life.

Across South West Queensland, infrastructure is less about large new assets and more about whether everyday systems work reliably. Transport, digital connectivity, water and housing all shape whether people can live well, businesses can operate efficiently, and new opportunities can take root. When these foundations are strong, the region is more resilient and competitive. When they fall short, the impacts are felt quickly in higher costs, workforce shortages and missed investment.

Distance, small populations and exposure to climate variability make delivery more complex and expensive than in metropolitan areas. Councils often step in to coordinate practical solutions, where there is a lack of private market interest, advocating for funding and making the most of existing assets. The focus is therefore on strengthening and better using what is already in place, improving reliability, and targeting upgrades that unlock broader benefits across sectors.

## Opportunities for action

### 6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options



Train in Quilpie Shire. Credit: SWQROC

The transport sector is a key enabler for remote regions such as South West Queensland. Remoteness and the associated high cost of freight and transport create barriers to liveability and business viability. Strengthening this sector can therefore unlock opportunities across a number of other sectors.

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*'The cost of regional postage and freight is prohibitive for apparel. For local businesses to grow, we heard they would have to relocate to Toowoomba or Brisbane.'* – **Regional Development Australia, Darling Downs South West (RDA DDSW)**

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There is significant interest across the region in reviving the role of rail, which aligns with federal ambitions to increase the share of freight moved on rail to decarbonise the transport sector, and the Queensland Government's review of the Queensland Freight Delivery Plan which seeks to encourage freight system innovation and improvements that drive regional economic growth and productivity (State of Queensland 2025). Strengthening rail has a number of benefits including reducing freight cost and improving industry viability and alleviating the impact of heavy freight on roads during wet periods in particular, a concern often expressed by local Councils and residents.

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*'We also need physical connectivity [to enable remote work] – airline connectivity is abysmal. From an economic development point of view, you can't overstate how important that is.'* – **RDA DDSW**

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## 6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options

<p><b>What councils can do</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local businesses and transport providers to maximise transport efficiency and explore back haulage opportunities. (see case study).</li> <li>• Identify where EV charging are needed to support tourism and future transport ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How SWQROC can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities to maximise the use of rail, including supporting and utilising proposed intermodal freight and rail facilities between Roma and Charleville.</li> <li>• Advocating for the Queensland Government to expand funding for key EV charging points in remote councils that aren't currently included.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How State government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in resilient freight and passenger corridors, including upgrades that reduce wet-season disruptions and safety risks on priority routes.</li> <li>• Work with councils and industry to assess where rail and intermodal options are realistically viable, and where targeted upgrades could unlock shared benefit.</li> <li>• Expand funding to support regional charging and alternative fuel infrastructure in regional areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How federal government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-invest in nationally significant regional freight corridors and intermodal infrastructure where it improves supply chain reliability and reduces costs.</li> <li>• Support low emissions freight transition in a way that supports long-distance and remote operating conditions and does not add to existing costs</li> </ul>

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*'Back freight is such an obvious solution, why would you not explore it more?'* – **Council representative**

*'We would find a way to use it [rail] if it happened.'* – **Cotton Gin Worker**

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## What has the region already done?

- **Encouraging rail:** Murweh and Maranoa Councils are collaborating on a transport study exploring strengthening rail and intermodal freight between Roma and Charleville. The study includes collaboration with CSIRO to establish a baseline analysis of regional freight to provide insights into current freight emissions, and identify opportunities to shift freight to rail.
- **EV charging:** Balonne Council has installed two EV charging Stations in St George, although range anxiety remains a concern for EV use in the region. The Queensland Energy Roadmap outlines funding for EV charging points across Queensland, although many remote areas of South West Queensland aren't currently included.

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*'The shift is about compliance and staying competitive in a carbon-conscious world. By aligning with these evolving standards, Australian businesses are better positioned to compete and collaborate on the global stage. The sooner businesses adapt, the better positioned they'll be for what's next.'* – **Freight logistics company**

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## Case studies

### Rail as overlooked infrastructure with future potential

Rail used to be a normal part of everyday life in South West Queensland. The South Western line reached Dirranbandi in 1913 and for decades carried livestock, grain, mail and passengers between towns and larger centres. The Dirranbandi Mail, which stopped in 1993, was the last mail train in Australia.

Over time, road freight took over and services reduced. Some sections closed, including Thallon to Dirranbandi after flood damage in 2010. But much of the corridor still exists. Queensland Rail continues to own and maintain the track, and freight operators can run services under access agreements. In other words, the bones of the system are still there. (Queensland Rail 2025)

Councils are now looking again at what rail could realistically do. Not as a replacement for trucks, but as a complement. For bulk goods and longer distances, it could lower costs, reduce heavy vehicle traffic on roads and provide a more resilient option during wet periods.

Work already underway between Roma and Charleville shows how existing infrastructure could be used more effectively, rather than starting from scratch. The opportunity is less about rebuilding the past and more about making better use of infrastructure that is already in place.

### Regional logistics solutions in Queensland

Freight is a quiet but critical part of keeping towns supplied and affordable in South West Queensland. Truckit delivers subsidised freight under contract with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, running regular services along the Warrego and Balonne highways. Retailers and supermarkets, particularly food and grocery suppliers, provide the steady weekly volumes that underpin the service.

*'Reducing waste in the industry is fundamental to what we do... We're excited to find solutions, there might just be more conversations that need to be had.'* – **Truckit**

To keep costs down, Truckit plans routes to run close to full capacity and actively fills spare space, coordinating with councils and local businesses to utilise any spare capacity. This helps reduce empty kms and stabilise freight costs for smaller towns. There is growing interest in using return routes to move goods west to east or transport materials such as waste to processing facilities.

Together, these approaches show how smarter use of existing logistics networks can lower costs, reduce emissions and open up new regional services. (Truckit 2025)

*'This is the best way to keep freight and cost of goods down in those supermarkets – we want to see these regional towns prosper, we don't want to see people leaving these areas.'* – **Truckit**

## 6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities



Balonne Shire mobile towers. Credit: SWQROC.

Digital connectivity is a core element of almost every part of regional life and work. In South West Queensland, distance makes this even more pronounced. Reliable internet and mobile coverage affect connectivity, how businesses trade, how students study, how health services are delivered, how producers manage operations, and how communities stay connected during disasters.

Despite significant national investment in regional communications, gaps remain in coverage, backhaul capacity, redundancy and digital capability across parts of South West Queensland. These gaps do not only affect convenience but also affect safety, competitiveness and long-term economic resilience. (Commonwealth of Australia 2022)

### 6B. Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities

#### What councils can do

- Implement recommendations of the Queensland Government's connectivity study (forthcoming).
- Support digital skills and inclusion, for example, building on existing initiatives in collaboration with regional stakeholders and telecommunication companies to:
  - Promote or co-host basic digital skills workshops and cyber-safety sessions, especially for small businesses, older residents and community groups.
  - Support skills, access and offerings for tele-health services.

*'Stakeholders are doing work in this space already, it's about doing the work better together and pooling available resources for community outreach through tech hubs, Telstra et cetera.'* – **Queensland government representative**

<b>How SWQROC can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities and collect evidence of existing connectivity gaps that limit the regions safety, resilience, connection and growth to strengthen advocacy with state, federal and telecommunications providers.</li> <li>• Integrate digital resilience into disaster planning, including identifying critical sites where power continuity and connectivity are essential.</li> </ul>
<b>How State government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in areas identified by the region where connectivity constraints are limiting productivity, safety or service access.</li> <li>• Support digital inclusion and capability initiatives that help small businesses and communities make practical use of improved connectivity.</li> <li>• Support resilience upgrades, including backup power and redundancy, in remote and disaster-prone communities.</li> </ul>
<b>How federal government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise remote coverage, reliability and disaster resilience in national communications investment and regulatory settings.</li> <li>• Ensure funding programs are accessible to small and remote councils without disproportionate administrative burden.</li> </ul>

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*'Connectivity can impact investment in community – when looking to set up a business, one of first questions is does it have good connectivity? If not, it's a huge roadblock.'* – **Government representative**

*'Connectivity is so closely linked to livability – connectivity attracts younger people to the area to work or businesses to the area to invest, it attracts visitors who can post stories and experiences along the way.'* – **Queensland Government representative**

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## What has the region already done?

- **Understanding challenges and key priorities:** The Queensland Government is currently undertaking a review of the current state of digital connectivity and key priorities for investment across South West Queensland. These will be outlined in a forthcoming report “Digital Connectivity in South West Queensland”.

*‘When power goes down connectivity goes down, and people can be without communication during disasters, which isn’t a great outcome. It was an issue in the recent floods.’ – Government representative*

- **Infrastructure upgrades:** Many Councils have been advocating and seeking funding to improve digital connectivity in their area. For example, Balonne Council has been working with NBN, as well as agricultural peak bodies to improve connectivity within townships and on on-farm. Additionally, backhaul capacity and redundancy constraints have been identified in several LGAs, limiting competition, speed upgrades and disaster resilience.
- **Digital literacy:** Many Councils and regional stakeholders are working to strengthen digital literacy, for example Paroo Council has received two grants for the Cunnamulla and Yowah libraries to build digital confidence and provide valuable digital skill development for community members. Balonne Council has held cybersecurity and digital connectivity workshops with partners, with more planned. The Balonne Workforce Development program has also secured funding until November 2026 to support the development of digital skillsets for employers and job seekers.

*‘A lack of connectivity literacy means not understanding options, being signed up to plans that aren’t fit for purpose, relying on outdated equipment etc. For example, getting a new modem can make a big difference.’ – Government representative*

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*‘We need to invest in digital connectivity upfront to attract and ensure good quality of life... Rather than looking at population to drive investment, look at diversification and future opportunities.’ – Queensland Government representative*

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## 6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities



*Balonne river at sunset. Credit: SWQROC*

Water underpins every part of South West Queensland's economy and daily life. It shapes what can be grown, processed and transported, where people can live, and which industries are viable over the long term. While the region benefits from significant surface and artesian resources, these systems operate within a climate defined by high evaporation, long dry periods and increasing variability. Drought is not an exception but a recurring condition that communities have learned to plan around (SWQROC 2025).

Local councils, producers and landholders have spent decades adapting to these realities through practical measures, from on-farm storage and bore upgrades to careful town supply management and staged infrastructure investment. The challenge now is to build on this foundation. As new industries emerge and temperatures rise, water security will increasingly shape which opportunities are possible and which are not. Managing water well is therefore not just about resilience, but about enabling future growth and diversification (State of Queensland 2022).

### 6C. Ensure water security enables future opportunities

#### What councils can do

- Align water planning with economic development so new housing, industry and services match realistic supply capacity.
- Prioritise low-cost efficiency upgrades first, including leak reduction, metering, reuse and smarter irrigation.
- Support producers and businesses to adopt proven water-saving technologies and drought-resilient practices.
- Stage modular infrastructure upgrades rather than large one-off builds, to suit scale and funding realities.
- Integrate water considerations early into land use, energy and industry proposals to avoid future constraints.

<b>How SWQROC can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a regional picture of future water demand and constraints to strengthen the case for state and federal investment.</li> <li>• Advocate for funding models that recognise higher service delivery costs in remote and drought-prone areas.</li> <li>• Support the establishment of a Regional Infrastructure Delivery Office (as recommended by SWQWSA) to coordinate delivery, build operator capability, strengthen environmental compliance and provide shared procurement and project management across councils.</li> </ul>
<b>How State government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a long-term, multi-year funding allocation aligned with the SWQWSA 10-year Program of Works.</li> <li>• Support establishment of a Regional Infrastructure Delivery Office to coordinate procurement, compliance, capability building and staged delivery across councils.</li> <li>• Ensure water and sewerage renewal is treated as enabling economic infrastructure, not only as asset maintenance.</li> <li>• Support landscape and catchment programs that improve infiltration, reduce losses and strengthen drought resilience.</li> </ul>
<b>How federal government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align national resilience and regional development funding with staged water and sewerage renewal in remote regions.</li> <li>• Support pilot models such as the proposed Regional Infrastructure Delivery Office where they demonstrate scalable reform.</li> </ul>

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*'Queensland has been rehydrating the landscape, putting in furrows and small banks to slow down flow of water and encourage growth of pastures/ground cover. People are caring for country. If you look at the history of this place, used to run huge numbers of sheep and did not allow the country to recover after dry times but now really caring for the land and making sure it has time to recover, fencing waterways et cetera.'*

**– Regional natural resource management body**

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## What has the region already done?

- Modelling undertaken by South West Queensland Water and Sewerage Alliance shows that reactive water carting following bore failure would cost significantly more than proactive replacement and upgrade. Investing early in renewal is materially more cost-effective than emergency supply responses. (SWQWSA 2025)
- Water security and waste minimisation are identified as a formal regional priority in the SWQROC Strategic Plan, signalling coordinated action across councils.
- The region benefits from established surface and artesian infrastructure, including Beardmore Dam, town weirs and extensive bore networks, providing relatively strong drought resilience compared to many remote areas.
- Councils and producers have long invested in on-farm storage, bore capping and piping, solar pumps and reticulation to improve reliability and reduce losses.
- Towns such as Thargomindah are piloting practical innovations, including renewable-powered water cooling and solar upgrades across public assets to lower operating costs.
- Councils continue staged upgrades to town supply, storage and treatment systems, alongside conservative demand management and contingency planning.
- Natural resource management programs led by Southern Queensland Landscapes are supporting producers to improve soil infiltration and water retention through practices such as rehydration works and ponding. On some properties, up to 30 per cent of previously scalded land has been returned to production, improving pasture availability and drought resilience.

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*“You can't see the answer to a problem, unless you recognise you have a problem. Happy to blame drought, gov, cattle prices, weeds ... All the things you can't change. Change focus to what you can control: when we get rain, I want 'this' to happen.”* – **Sustainable land management professional**

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## 6D: Improve local housing availability and quality



*Credit: Elders Roma*

Housing availability and quality remain a structural barrier to economic and social development across Western Queensland. The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC), representing 24 rural and remote LGAs covering 64 per cent of Queensland, has identified housing as a critical constraint on regional growth since 2020 (WQAC 2025).

Many LGAs are experiencing very low rental vacancy, limited new construction and ageing or under-diversified housing stock, while at the same time trying to attract and retain workers in health, education, agriculture, energy and local services. In several towns, employers and government agencies are leasing homes directly or using motels to accommodate staff, highlighting the gap between workforce needs and available supply.

Recent local housing action plans and the region-wide audit led by RDA DDSW show that the challenge is less about land and more about feasibility, construction capacity and the cost of development in small markets. Councils are responding with practical measures such as fee waivers, streamlined approvals, releasing council land and partnering with community housing providers. The next step is to build on these efforts and move from planning and incentives to delivery, so that housing keeps pace with the region's workforce and economic ambitions. (Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West 2025)

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*'Adequate housing is one of the big stumbling blocks for economic growth and essential projects. It comes down to two things: attracting talent and housing them at a quality they would expect for that type of role, for example a doctor.'* – **Regional Development Body**

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## 6D. Improve local housing availability and quality

<b>What councils can do</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bring forward a small number of serviced, ready-to-build sites.</li><li>• Enable smaller and more flexible housing types to suit workers, singles and older residents, including units, secondary dwellings and small multi-unit builds.</li><li>• Partner with employers and community housing providers to secure key-worker and affordable housing, building on locally led approaches already emerging in the region such as council-supported housing offers, grant-funded home purchases and small-scale private builds.</li></ul>
<b>How SWQROC can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinate regional housing advocacy using shared evidence</li><li>• Support councils to adopt proven delivery models</li><li>• Develop a partnership model between State Government, housing providers, employers and Councils to develop local housing options.</li></ul>
<b>How State government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner with WQAC to implement and scale the Council Employee Housing Provider model.</li><li>• Provide long-term, predictable investment aligned with identified housing gaps rather than short-term competitive grant programs.</li><li>• Support delivery of worker and social housing in small towns where market feasibility is weak, including through partnerships that reduce delivery time and cost.</li></ul>
<b>How federal government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensuring national housing programs work for remote construction realities, including higher costs, smaller builders and supply chain constraints.</li></ul>

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*'You need your rural, state and federal need to invest in rural areas to make them viable and attractive; that is about your housing and your transport and your connectivity. Looking at industries and funding industries that help bring a population back here, once you start increasing diversity of people that brings its own richness.'*

**– Council representative**

*'We're doing ourselves an injustice by continually applying for grant funding – need local philanthropic reinvestment in community, and create tax breaks for leveraging funding.'* – **Council representative**

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## What has the region already done?

- Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC) has undertaken a coordinated, region-wide approach over several years, including: Commissioning the Western Queensland Housing Solutions Study through the Regional Australia Institute; Delivering Local Housing Action Plans across member councils; and partnering with Queensland Treasury Corporation to analyse housing gaps.
- In 2024, WQAC recommended the Council Employee Housing Provider (CEHP), a not-for-profit structure with Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC) and BlueCHP shareholding focused on council and essential worker affordable housing supply. The model is designed to preserve assets within a not-for-profit structure, secure tax concessions, achieve economies of scale and provide a single coordinating entity to access government funding.
- A whole-of-region housing audit has been completed by Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West (RDA DDSW), consolidating local data, council action plans and shared priorities to strengthen joint advocacy and coordination
- Most councils have developed Local Housing Action Plans, creating a clearer picture of demand, constraints and priority sites at the LGA level
- Councils are trialling practical incentives to reduce development costs, including discounted or waived infrastructure charges, fast-tracked approvals and fee reductions for new dwellings and multi-unit housing
- Several councils are releasing or optimising council-owned land to stimulate local housing supply and enable new residential development
- Partnerships with community housing providers are underway to accelerate delivery of social and affordable housing on suitable sites
- Locally led solutions are emerging where markets are tight, including employer-supported housing, short-term worker accommodation and small-scale builds to attract and retain essential staff

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*'We got a grant to buy staff houses from the department of health, but trying to attract staff without housing was very difficult.'*

**– Healthcare worker**

*'It's much more powerful to advocate for councils together, we get a better response from federal government that way.'*

**– Regional development body**

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## Case studies

### Alternative housing models

Across South West Queensland, housing is scarce and expensive enough that vacancies for essential roles can turn into gaps in services.

In Melbourne, Nightingale Housing uses ownership rules to keep homes for residents. Apartments are sold to owner-occupiers and housing providers, not investors, with resale price caps to limit price jumps. One fifth are allocated by ballot to priority groups, including key workers, First Nations people, people with disabilities, and single women. Shared laundries and communal areas are built in to make everyday neighbour contact more likely (Nightingale 2026).

By contrast, QBuild's Modern Methods of Construction program focuses on delivery in places where time, trades and weather all work against traditional builds. Homes are manufactured offsite, then placed on prepared blocks, which has allowed government worker housing to be delivered across remote and regional locations in shorter timeframes than standard construction (Department of Housing and Public Works 2025).

For South West Queensland, the direct lesson is not apartment living. It is that councils and agencies can treat affordability protections and transparent allocation as core housing infrastructure, alongside new builds, to support workforce stability and liveability in small towns.

## Opportunity Area 7: Liveability, services and workforce



Cunnamulla fella Credit: The Next Economy

### Good would look like

- Safe, welcoming towns with active public spaces, strong community programs and services that respond to local needs.
- Councils and regional partners working together so liveability improvements are planned and delivered at a scale that matches the region.
- Access to essential infrastructure and services, including housing, healthcare, education and childcare, to support people to live and work locally .
- A steady pipeline of locally trained and supported workers across key sectors, with clear pathways for young people and newcomers.

Liveability in South West Queensland is shaped by both strong community ties and practical constraints. Residents consistently describe a deep connection to place, to local rivers and landscapes, and to the sense that people look out for one another. Local events, clubs and informal networks play an important role in keeping towns connected and resilient.

At the same time, distance, small populations and limited scale make it harder to sustain essential services locally. Access to healthcare, education, housing and childcare can be uneven, and many residents still travel to larger centres or Brisbane for specialist care, childbirth or further study. Workforce shortages are common across councils, trades, hospitality, health and small business, placing pressure on both services and day-to-day operations. Housing is comparatively affordable, but low rental supply and limited available stock make it difficult to attract and retain staff.

In practice, councils often become the default problem solvers. Beyond their formal responsibilities, they are hosting visiting services, supporting housing delivery, stepping into childcare gaps and coordinating local responses to safety and social challenges. While state workforce and service strategies set an overall direction, their success in the south west depends on approaches that reflect local scale and capacity (Queensland Government 2025). Without region-led coordination and flexible delivery, remote communities risk being overlooked despite clear need.

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*'A lot falls back to council. These councils go above and beyond, but are under resourced and it's hard to recruit. Anyone wanting to engage goes straight to Council – there are minimal independent organisations to go to. For example, in emergencies the Mayor is refuelling at the airport, or councils have to be housing developers also as much as they would love private actors to do this, or councils are involved in childcare just so people can put kids somewhere and go to work.*

*There's a lack of understanding at higher levels of government about this. We really need unique solutions out here. It would be a valuable outcome of this project to get advocacy messaging on how much we rely on councils, and how under resourced they are to deliver all this.'*

**– Regional Development Body**

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## **Opportunities for action 7A: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities**



*Country University Centre Balonne Shire Council Credit: The Next Economy*

Across South West Queensland, the issue is rarely a lack of jobs but rather finding the right people with the right skills, and keeping them in town. Small populations, distance and patchy training delivery make it harder for standard programs to land well, particularly in the western shires.

In practice, this means councils, employers and community organisations are already doing what they can with the tools they have, connecting people to local work, supporting students to study and return, and filling gaps through seasonal, shared or visiting workers. The focus is practical and local rather than program heavy.

'Turn the realities of distance, saying that we have really good connectivity and cheaper housing – so you can do your job from here. It is important for young people to see opportunities for themselves here.' –

**Council representative**

### 7A: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities

<p><b>What councils can do</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to tertiary and vocational study locally by supporting Country Universities Centres and outreach in smaller towns</li> <li>• Consider workforce needs alongside housing, childcare, health care and education to ensure workers have access to the services they need</li> <li>• Trial practical solutions to shortages, such as seasonal or migrant workers, different service delivery models, workforce pools, fly in fly out and drive in and drive out options</li> <li>• Work with core businesses on workforce attraction and retention strategies</li> </ul> <p>Build communities where people want to live and work, by maintaining community infrastructure and supporting community events and organisations.</p>
<p><b>How SWQROC can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support CUC and local training programs</li> <li>• Coordinate regional attraction and retention efforts</li> <li>• Advocate for targeted tools, such as migration pathways or workforce programs, where local supply is limited</li> </ul>
<p><b>How State government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support regional workforce attraction and retention settings</li> <li>• Support regional training and tertiary access models, including learning hubs and placement pathways, that reduce the need for people to leave the region to study</li> <li>• Fund essential services including childcare and health care in the region</li> </ul>
<p><b>How federal government can support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure migration and workforce settings can be used where local supply is genuinely limited, and are responsive to the occupations remote communities struggle to fill</li> </ul>

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*'Establishing state DAMA (designated area migration scheme) for skilled workers to migrate – that's being investigated by state. Keen to see critical roles region needs on list: healthcare, aged care, childcare, fabrication, truck drivers ... A DAMA would help tell people these jobs will be available in region, this is the training, this is the pathway to follow.'* –  
**Regional development body**

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### What has the region already done?

- South West Queensland councils have consistently advocated for improved access to tertiary and vocational education, including through expansion of the Country Universities Centre network, Regional University Study Hubs and outreach delivery into smaller communities.
- Councils and regional partners are strengthening pathways between education and employment, including through:
  - School-based traineeship
  - Local jobs and training expos
  - Work experience programs
  - Site visits to employers
  - Bursaries
  - Mentoring and youth engagement initiatives
  - Youth summits and immersion programs linked to local industries.
- Workforce planning is being built into council and regional strategies, with some roles and recruitment coordinated across sectors where scale is limited.
- Local capacity has been added in some places, such as dedicated workforce or economic development roles, supported by RDA DDSW's attraction and retention work.
- Employment service providers and councils are working directly with long-term unemployed residents to connect them to local jobs and training opportunities.
- Multi-agency initiatives, such as local jobs programs and ID Connect events, are bringing government departments and services into regional towns to align support with local employers.
- Community and industry-led pathways are in place, including seasonal workforce models and programs that support young people to study, train and return to work locally.

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*'That's the crux of sustainability: if we're not attracting young, vibrant people back into these towns, then we're not sustainable.'* – **local resident**

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## Case studies

### Country Universities Centres build community through learning

The Country Universities Centre Balonne shows how locally embedded learning hubs can strengthen education, workforce pathways, and community confidence in South West Queensland. In four years, the centre has supported around 400 students, as one staff member put it, “we’re getting more people than we expected”.

CUCs support learning across life stages, including high school and distance education students who don’t have a quiet place to study, alongside university students balancing full-time work and study. Community health placements, agricultural pathways, and youth programs all sit side by side, creating what staff describe as “cross-pollination of learners”. The aim is simple but ambitious: “shift culture around learning and knowing what’s possible”.

Strong partnerships with nearby CUCs, industry, and community organisations help deliver bursaries, placements, and early engagement programs. While funding pressures remain, the experience highlights how place-based learning infrastructure can keep people local, reduce education costs, and build long-term capability across South West Queensland.

### Childcare as core infrastructure

In Castlemaine in central Victoria, access to childcare has long been treated as a community service rather than a commercial add-on. The Castlemaine Childcare Co-operative has operated since 1982 and now provides long day care for up to 65 children a day, alongside a family day care scheme used by around 150 families each week. Many parents using the service today attended as children themselves.

The centre was established by parents and operates on a cooperative basis, with membership through shareholding and any surplus reinvested into service quality rather than extracted. It supports working and studying parents, while also providing socialisation and early learning for children who attend part time. Over time, the service has become part of what makes Castlemaine workable for families (Castlemaine Childcare Co-operative 2025).

For councils, this points to childcare as a liveability lever. Supporting community-led childcare through access to land, planning approvals, and small grants can help stabilise the workforce and make towns easier places to stay.

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*‘Generally in the south west, you will find that people are very disadvantaged in remote, rural communities...We [First Nations] are not part of the economy at all.’ – Prescribed Body Corporate representative*

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## 7B: Improve local access to healthcare



*Kerry Crumblin, CEO of Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health. Credit: The Next Economy*

Access to healthcare in South West Queensland is shaped as much by distance and scale as by service availability. Many residents travel long distances for routine or specialist care, which adds cost, time and pressure on families. Smaller populations can also make it harder to sustain permanent services locally, particularly for specialist or allied health.

While councils are not direct health providers, they often play a practical supporting role by hosting facilities, coordinating visiting services and advocating for solutions that fit local needs. In this context, improving access is less about building new services from scratch and more about making it easier for outreach, mobile and place-based models to work well in small and remote communities.

### 7B: Improve local access to healthcare

#### What councils can do

- Back locally led solutions that reduce travel, including mobile clinics, visiting specialists and shared outreach schedules across neighbouring shires
- Build on trusted, culturally safe local responses to issues such as safety, domestic violence and drug use by partnering with existing health and community organisations rather than creating new programs
- Provide practical support for outreach services, such as premises, basic infrastructure, promotion and coordination
- Improve access to telehealth by ensuring suitable spaces, connectivity and local assistance for patients
- Advocate for flexible, place-based funding and workforce models that reflect distance, small populations and high First Nations health needs
- Identify models for aged care service provision

#### How SWQROC can support

- Coordinate a regional picture of health access gaps, work with local providers and communities to identify the most critical access gaps, such as renal, maternity, mental health, aged care and allied health, and use this evidence to advocate for services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support regional health programs</li> <li>• Lead collective advocacy with Hospital and Health Services and PHNs for more flexible outreach and funding arrangements</li> </ul>
<b>How State government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund outreach and visiting services so schedules are predictable, travel is supported, and services can be shared across neighbouring shires</li> <li>• Support workforce models that improve continuity, including accommodation support, regional rotations and stronger pathways for locally trained health workers</li> <li>• Back infrastructure that makes care workable in small towns, including suitable spaces for visiting services and reliable connectivity for telehealth</li> </ul>
<b>How federal government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen Medicare and primary care settings so remote and outreach models remain viable, including incentives that reflect distance and workforce shortages</li> <li>• Support telehealth access in remote communities, including affordability and digital inclusion where it affects clinical access</li> </ul>

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*'If we want to get an MRI, we have to go 400km to it. If we want chemo, they have to go hundreds of kms away to get treatment.'* – **Local resident**

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### What has the region already done?

- Councils support local health services through facilities, basic infrastructure and practical assistance for visiting and outreach providers.
- Locally driven models are operating in some communities, including mobile and visiting specialist services that reduce the need for long-distance travel.
- Partnerships are in place with the South West Hospital and Health Service, Primary Health Networks, GPs and community organisations to identify gaps and coordinate responses.
- Some councils are providing targeted support to grow the local health workforce, such as bursaries for nursing and medical students.
- Southern Queensland Rural Health support the Clinical Training Facility at the Charleville Hospital. This allows students to do an end to end degree program through the University of Southern Queensland, including course work, laboratory sessions and clinical placements in the region.
- Regional towns such as Roma continue to function as service hubs, hosting a broader range of diagnostic and allied health services for surrounding communities.

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*'We also have dedicated programmes aimed at indigenous communities e.g. the chronic disease management programme, coordinates with GPs to make sure they are... if they need to go away we will help them with accommodation, fuel vouchers, taxi vouchers – otherwise they would not go, it is about improving access.'* – **Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health (CACH) representative**

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## Case studies

### Delivering healthcare where distance is a barrier

Access to healthcare in South West Queensland is shaped by distance, cost, and workforce availability. The Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health (CACH) demonstrates how locally led models can respond by bringing services to people rather than expecting people to travel.

CACH delivers primary healthcare and coordinates 33 visiting services, including allied health and specialist outreach. It reduces access barriers by covering travel costs, supporting bulk billing, and providing fuel vouchers, with people regularly travelling from Thargomindah and Quilpie to access care. Strong specialist relationships, including visiting cardiology support from Brisbane, help maintain continuity of treatment.

CACH has also invested in system-level improvements. Early collaboration with Hospital and Health Services led to a shared clinical records database, replacing fragmented systems and enabling data-led advocacy. Services continue to expand, including nursing, domestic violence, chronic disease, and new cancer and immunisation programs, alongside plans for a local renal service to reduce the need for travel to Brisbane.

This experience highlights the importance of locally led, outreach-based health services in remote regions, while also pointing to the need for sustained coordination and funding to address ongoing gaps in access across South West Queensland.



Services Australia Office, Cunnamulla. Credit: The Next Economy

## 7C. Support government and professional service delivery

Larger towns such as Charleville and Roma act as service hubs, with professional services, including banking, accounting, engineering and legal services delivered alongside government services. For smaller townships, local government provides a vital link to essential government and professional services across the region. In some areas government services have moved from hubs to provide mobile services that can travel to smaller locations and support residents with Medicare, Centrelink and other government services which have now moved online.

7C. Support government and professional service delivery	
<b>What councils can do</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support government service hubs and mobile service centres providing appropriate spaces, connecting local community services/ organisations, advertising services in local newsletters, and community social media pages</li> <li>• Identify local organisations to provide appropriate ongoing access and support for residents for legal services, banking services, financial services etc</li> <li>• Support innovative models for professional service delivery including, providing spaces for visiting professionals to meet with clients; spaces with reliable internet services for meetings/ video conferencing</li> <li>• Support digital literacy programs to assist residents with online services.</li> </ul>
<b>How SWQROC can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide justification for service provision over and above the use of population figures</li> <li>• Advocate for service delivery that supports economic activity and community wellbeing</li> </ul>
<b>How State government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in digital infrastructure that supports greater connectivity to online services</li> <li>• Support regional service delivery models</li> </ul>
<b>How federal government can support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at effective models to provide government services in areas with low populations</li> </ul>

## What has the region already done linked to opportunity area 7C?

- Mobile service units are being used by the Queensland and Australian Governments to deliver essential licensing, registration, Medicare and Centrelink services, servicing towns one day every three months. Whilst most services can be accessed online, reliable internet services and digital literacy are needed.
- The State Library supports programs such as The Digital and You series which provides one to one technology assistance and small group sessions to build digital literacy and support residents navigate MyGov, use the internet and AI safely.

## Case studies

### Free and practical digital literacy

In many parts of Queensland, people continue to face challenges accessing new technology and developing the confidence and skills to use it effectively. Whether it's connecting to health services, managing finances, or simply staying in touch with family, digital tools are essential.

Based in Thargomindah Daniel Morgan is employed by the State Library as a Regional Digital Development Officer to strengthen digital inclusion across regional remote Queensland.

State Library RDDOs work in partnership with councils to deliver free and practical digital literacy activities tailored to local needs.

'Communities like Thargomindah rely heavily on digital systems, but many people don't yet understand how to use these tools to their full potential,' Daniel said.

'Programs focused on digital inclusion are so important and what I'm most looking forward to is helping communities connect with digital tools and environments that support their local needs.'

## Enabling conditions and factors required



*View from the Cunnamulla hot spring. Credit: The Next Economy*

Councils cannot deliver this transition alone.

Local councils in South West Queensland are central to shaping the region's future. They convene, coordinate, advocate, maintain infrastructure, support local enterprise and often step in where services fall short.

But many of the actions outlined in this Strategy sit beyond the fiscal, legislative and delivery powers of councils alone. To move from aspiration to implementation, a broader enabling environment is required.

### 1. Stable and fit-for-purpose policy settings

Councils operate within state and federal regulatory frameworks. These shape what is possible in housing, waste, water, energy, land use, workforce and environmental management.

#### **Enabling conditions include:**

- Planning and land use settings that support diversification, co-location and new housing types in small markets.
- Waste, stockpiling and levy rules that reflect low volumes and long transport distances.
- Training and migration settings aligned with regional workforce gaps.
- Environmental and water rules that are robust but workable in arid, remote contexts.

Without policy alignment, councils spend time navigating constraints rather than delivering solutions.

## 2. Sustainable funding models

Many regional initiatives rely on short-term grant cycles. **This makes it difficult to:**

- Retain skilled staff.
- Build regional capability.
- Plan long-term infrastructure.
- Trial and refine new approaches.
- Effective transition requires:
  - Multi-year funding horizons.
  - Operational funding, not only capital grants.
  - Pooled regional funding mechanisms where collaboration improves viability.
  - Recognition of higher per-capita service costs in remote areas.

Predictability enables councils to plan instead of being stuck in cycles of reaction.

## 3. Industry partnership and transparency

Gas, agriculture, tourism, freight and emerging industries are private-sector led. Councils cannot plan for workforce, housing, roads or services without visibility of industry intentions.

**Enabling conditions include:**

- Early information sharing about expansion, contraction or closure timelines.
- Clear commitments around local employment, training and procurement.
- Willingness to collaborate on diversification and transition planning.

Transition works best when industry is at the table before decisions are finalised.

## 4. Regional coordination at scale

Many opportunities, including waste recovery, rail freight, skills delivery and housing supply, only become viable at regional scale.

**This requires:**

- Formal coordination mechanisms.
- Data sharing across councils.
- Regional workforce and infrastructure mapping.
- Joint advocacy to state and federal governments.

Individual councils acting alone cannot achieve economies of scale.

## 5. Workforce and service delivery reform

In small and remote communities, standard metropolitan delivery models often do not fit.

### Support is needed for:

- Mobile and outreach service models.
- Blended and flexible training delivery.
- Regional workforce rotations.
- Shared service arrangements across LGAs.

Where systems are rigid, councils fill gaps informally, often without adequate resourcing.

## 6. Infrastructure investment that unlocks multiple sectors

Transport, digital connectivity, water and housing are cross-cutting enablers. They underpin agriculture, tourism, health, education and new industries.

### Investment needs to:

- Prioritise reliability and resilience, not just expansion.
- Reflect long distances and climate exposure.
- Recognise infrastructure as a precondition for economic participation.

Without foundational infrastructure, diversification is constrained.

## 7. Community participation

Transition cannot be delivered through technical planning alone.

### Long-term success depends on:

- Trust between communities, councils and industry.
- Transparent communication about change.
- Local involvement in shaping solutions.
- Cultural safety and inclusion, particularly for First Nations communities.

This requires time, facilitation and resourcing. Councils are critical convenors and implementers, but they are not sovereign actors.

Delivering a future-ready South West Queensland requires coordinated action across:

- Local government
- Regional bodies
- State and federal governments

- Industry
- Community organisations
- Training providers
- Health and service agencies

The actions in this Strategy are achievable, but only if enabling conditions are aligned and responsibilities are shared.

## Funding and finance considerations



Thallon grain silo art. Credit: SWQROC.

Delivering the actions in this Strategy is less about finding a single funding source and more about matching the right type of finance to the right type of project. In remote and small-population regions like South West Queensland, many initiatives are modest in scale, have limited direct revenue, and deliver broad public benefits. This means they often do not fit standard commercial investment models and may struggle to compete in large, one-off grant rounds.

### A mix of funding approaches

**Different types of finance suit different purposes:**

- **Grants** tend to work best for public goods and early stages such as planning, feasibility studies, community facilities, enabling infrastructure and pilots, where there is limited or no direct revenue stream
- **Concessional or low-interest loans** suit projects that create long-term savings or predictable income, such as energy efficiency upgrades, solar on council facilities, water and waste infrastructure, or housing that generates rent
- **User charges or service fees** can help sustain ongoing operations where beneficiaries are clear, for example waste services, freight facilities or industrial land
- **Private or impact investment** can be appropriate where projects have a clear revenue model and measurable outcomes, such as community housing, renewable energy assets, or social infrastructure delivered with partners
- **Environmental market income** such as carbon or biodiversity credits can provide supplementary revenue for land management or restoration activities, rather than acting as the sole funding source

## Practical approaches to suit regional councils:

- **Bundle projects together:** combining several similar projects, across sites or councils, can make them large enough to be worth the time and cost of seeking finance or grants.
- **Stage the work:** use grants for early design and risk reduction, then bring in loans or partners once costs and savings are clearer.
- **Mix funding sources:** many successful projects draw on more than one source, for example a grant for part of the cost, council funds, and a loan or partner contribution for the rest.
- **Use savings to pay back investment:** where upgrades lower running costs, those savings can help cover repayments. This is often how councils fund building efficiency or energy projects.
- **Work regionally where it helps:** joint procurement or shared business cases can reduce costs and improve bargaining power with suppliers and funders.
- **Keep ownership and benefits local where possible:** ownership and procurement structures matter. Community or council-linked ownership, local contractors and reinvestment of surpluses can keep more benefits circulating in the region, rather than flowing out.
- **Keep a short list of priority projects scoped and costed:** having a few ideas well thought through, with rough costs, partners and delivery options mapped out, makes it easier to respond quickly when funding opportunities open.

## Examples of finance options by Opportunity Area

Opportunity Area	Types of finance that are typical	Example funding sources or mechanisms
<b>Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital grants for pilots and infrastructure</li> <li>• Concessional loans or green finance</li> <li>• Aggregated procurement</li> <li>• Community co-investment models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARENA demonstration grants (varies by round)</li> <li>• CEFC concessional loans (e.g. Local Government Finance Program)</li> <li>• Queensland Treasury Corporation green/sustainable bonds</li> <li>• Bulk-buy or shared procurement across councils (e.g. Local Buy)</li> <li>• Community energy co-ops</li> </ul>
<b>A future plan for gas and oil industries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and transition grants</li> <li>• Workforce and skills funding</li> <li>• Industry co-funding</li> <li>• Regional diversification funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional planning or precinct grants (e.g. the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program)</li> <li>• TAFE/skills funding streams (via Department of Trade, Employment and Training)</li> <li>• Industry contributions or compacts (e.g. Gladstone Regional Council MoU on hydrogen industry development)</li> <li>• Blended public/private transition funds (e.g. CEFC co-financing models)</li> </ul>

<b>Future ready agriculture and grazing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental markets (revenue-based)</li> <li>• Grants for trials and extension</li> <li>• Co-investment with producers • Natural capital finance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACCU scheme</li> <li>• Nature Repair Market</li> <li>• Land Restoration Fund (via the Queensland Government)</li> <li>• FRRR grants (e.g. their Strengthening Rural Communities program)</li> <li>• Research and extension funding</li> </ul>
<b>Diverse enterprise and tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Precinct and place-based infrastructure grants</li> <li>• Small business and enterprise grants</li> <li>• Impact investment for revenue-generating assets</li> <li>• Sponsorship and philanthropy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing Regions / precinct-style grants (e.g. the Growing Regions Program via the federal government)</li> <li>• Local government infrastructure funds (e.g. Queensland government's Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program)</li> <li>• Social impact or place-based investment funds (e.g. the NAB Impact Investment Readiness Fund)</li> <li>• Bank and philanthropic community grants (e.g. Queensland country bank)</li> </ul>
<b>Value from waste, recycling and circular economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure grants</li> <li>• Concessional loans</li> <li>• Public-private partnerships</li> <li>• Revenue-backed business models (fees, offtake agreements)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State resource recovery grants (e.g. Queensland Resource Recovery Boost Fund)</li> <li>• CEFC loans (waste/landfill gas)</li> <li>• Inter-council cost-sharing</li> <li>• Private operators with long-term contracts (e.g. Central Highlands Regional Council recyclable transport services tender)</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure to meet future needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major infrastructure grants</li> <li>• Co-funding with state/federal</li> <li>• Loan finance for fleet upgrades</li> <li>• Private logistics partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disaster and resilience funds (e.g. Disaster Ready Fund)</li> <li>• Regional infrastructure programs (e.g. the federal government's Regional Connectivity Program)</li> <li>• QTC or CEFC finance for fleets</li> <li>• Industry or operator partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>Liveability, services and workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community infrastructure grants</li> <li>• Small, flexible resilience grants</li> <li>• Social impact or outcomes-based finance</li> <li>• Employer partnerships</li> <li>• Philanthropy for pilots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works for Queensland or local government grants</li> <li>• FRRR and community foundations</li> <li>• Social impact investors (housing or service hubs) (e.g. via Social Ventures Australia and Impact Investing Australia)</li> <li>• Employer co-investment (e.g. councils partnering with anchor employers (health, education, energy, major operators) to co-fund staff housing, training pathways, or shared facilities)</li> <li>• Blended finance models</li> </ul>

## Part 2: Council Roadmaps



*The Next Economy facilitating a workshop with the six councils. Credit: The Next Economy.*

Each council roadmap reflects local realities rather than a one size fits all approach. They draw on each council's existing strengths, pressures, capacity and priorities, and focus on practical actions that build on work already underway.

The actions are intended to guide choices, not add to workload. Councils consistently noted that delivery needs to match available staff and budgets. In many cases, the most effective role for council is to convene partners, align efforts, advocate for support, or play a supporting rather than leading role. Progress is therefore expected to come through prioritisation, collaboration and staged delivery, rather than trying to do everything at once.

The following section sets out individual roadmaps for each of the six councils, followed by a regional roadmap for SWQROC outlining the coordination, advocacy and shared actions best delivered at a regional level.

## Maranoa Shire

Regional characteristic	Strengths to build on in the transition	Weaknesses to minimise in the transition
<b>Great communities not afraid to take on challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13,255 people and around 2,620 local businesses</li> <li>• Median house price \$279,372 vs QLD \$828,711</li> <li>• Roma Hospital, local clinics, Country Universities Centre</li> <li>• Roma as a regional service centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing population</li> <li>• Limited rental housing</li> <li>• Councils and community groups filling service gaps</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture is a central pillar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$429m from agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>• Largest employer in the LGA</li> <li>• 52.2 per cent of registered businesses</li> <li>• Roma Saleyards as a major livestock selling centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposed to global markets and trade</li> <li>• Declining labour demand</li> <li>• Climate and biosecurity risks</li> </ul>
<b>Established resource industries under pressure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long history of onshore gas production</li> <li>• Mining is second largest employer</li> <li>• Established industrial skills and infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to external investment and regulation</li> <li>• Volatile employment and spending</li> <li>• Limited long-term local reinvestment</li> </ul>
<b>Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carnarvon and Warrego Highways</li> <li>• Part of the western freight network</li> <li>• Low congestion and available land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High freight and infrastructure costs</li> <li>• Limited and unreliable flights</li> <li>• Long travel times</li> </ul>
<b>Energy infrastructure limits opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing grid connection</li> <li>• History as an energy-producing region</li> <li>• Large properties suit off-grid and hybrid systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWER lines in parts of the LGA</li> <li>• Grid capacity and export constraints</li> <li>• No council control over network connections</li> </ul>
<b>The environment shapes our reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandandanji and Gunggari Traditional Owners</li> <li>• Grazing, cropping and tourism base</li> <li>• \$181.2m in visitor expenditure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing heat, drought and flooding</li> <li>• Rising insurance and infrastructure risk</li> <li>• Climate variability affecting planning and investment</li> </ul>

## Maranoa Roadmap Actions

1. Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households		
<b>1A: Improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy</b>	<b>Continue to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attract large scale renewable developments to the region.</li> <li>Collaborate with regional stakeholders, developers and SWQROC to plan for large-scale renewable projects and identify enabling infrastructure early, such as laydown areas, water and road access.</li> <li>Support transparent community dialogue and maximise co-existence benefits between energy and existing land uses.</li> </ul>	<b>Next Steps:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Powerlink, Ergon and SWQROC to advocate for ongoing improvements in transmission infrastructure. Support developers seeking creative solutions to overcome grid limitations e.g. through accessing private transmission lines.</li> <li>Explore opportunities for community-owned energy: Assess Council and community interest in community owned energy facilities where technically feasible; Identify appropriate governance models, sites and partners to work with to progress.</li> </ul>
	<b>1B: Maximise behind-the-meter generation, storage and efficiency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress implementation of Energy and Emissions Strategy.</li> <li>Support households, businesses and industry to implement energy solutions and reduce energy costs through sharing resources, supporting access to finance, grants and rebates for rooftop solar and batteries, and running energy efficiency programs (e.g. EcoBiz).</li> </ul>	
	<b>1C: Foster industry specific energy generation and emissions reduction solutions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the potential for a bio energy plant at Wallumbilla.</li> <li>Investigate the potential for intermodal rail facilities at the Roma Saleyards to reduce emissions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Roma Saleyards to progress options for an anaerobic digester and potential battery.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to connect with the green ammonia project in Balonne.</li> </ul>
2. A future plan for gas and oil industries		
<b>2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries</b>	<b>Continue to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries</li> </ul>	<b>Next Steps:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with industry to develop a plan for the future of gas in the shire. Setting expectations on local jobs, training, community benefits, environmental performance and information sharing.</li> </ul>

- Integrate gas transition risks into Council planning, budgeting and service delivery, using ramp-up and phase-down scenarios.

### 3. Future ready agriculture and grazing

<b>3A: Support producers to implement future ready practices</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for future conditions and build resilience, including through implementing actions in the South West Queensland Regional Disaster Resilience Strategy, the South West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan and pest management projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills that could help increase the uptake of future ready practices and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for sustainable fertiliser solutions, including innovation in pelletised or alternative fertiliser production tailored to local soils and logistics in collaboration with Balonne Council.</li> </ul>
<b>3B: Diversify on-farm revenue streams and production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options to rebuild a local timber industry. Promote locally sourced cypress pine as a low carbon option for homes and new buildings across South West Queensland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with SWQROC to connect proponents with relevant industry programs, feasibility funding and pilot projects.</li> </ul>

### 4. Diverse enterprise and tourism

<b>4A: Support new and established businesses and industries</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
<b>4B: Explore areas of emerging opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the growth and diversification of the tourism sector. Priorities highlighted in the Maranoa Council's Corporate Strategy include expanding infrastructure, offerings and nature and industry based events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore targeted enterprise support for First Nations and entrepreneurs in tourism, food, or land-based ventures, based on proven ideas and available sites or facilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore emerging areas of opportunity highlighted locally, including: dark sky, agri tourism, eco-tourism, defence and quantum computing, speciality processing e.g. Solar panels, EV batteries, and dry climate research and innovation. The DDSWSB Regional Resilience Strategy highlights the opportunity to take advantage of engineering and technical service clusters in Roma to support new opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with Brisbane 2032 Olympic planning in collaboration with SWQROC to identify and promote opportunities for local suppliers and tourism experiences..</li> </ul>

### 5. Value from waste, recycling and circular economy

<b>5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor for emerging waste management opportunities, such as through the establishment of new recycling facilities or waste streams created by new industries.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for a recycled wood gasifier near where power demand can be co-located with waste streams.</li> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure and regulatory reform to create enabling conditions for regional waste solutions and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with SWQROC Regional Waste Officer on waste streams for regional collaboration, where volumes and costs justify a shared approach.</li> <li>• Explore improved transport and logistics solutions to enable cost effective transport and processing of waste streams.</li> </ul>

## 6. Infrastructure to meet future needs

<b>6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress proposed transport study exploring rail and intermodal freight between Roma and Charleville.</li> <li>• Explore creative logistics and transport solutions e.g. back haulage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey or interview local businesses, freight operators and community services to identify key gaps and priorities e.g. freight reliability, passenger services.</li> <li>• Identify where infrastructure and upgrades such as EV charging and alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels are most needed to support future transport ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<b>6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC, including mobile and internet services.</li> <li>• Support digital skills and inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement recommendations of the Queensland Government's connectivity study (forthcoming).</li> </ul>
<b>6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>
<b>6D: Improve local housing availability and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the workforce strategy developed by Roma Commerce and Tourism (RCAT).</li> <li>• Deliver the Police Paddock subdivision using secured grant funding to bring additional serviced residential lots to market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Local Housing Action Plan and recent data to update a clear picture of housing gaps for key sectors such as health, education, council, gas, tourism and ag, including what types of dwellings are missing and at what price points.</li> <li>• Explore options for diversified housing models that respond to workforce needs,</li> </ul>

working with major employers and community housing providers.

## 7. Liveability, services and workforce

<b>7A: Enhance community wellbeing</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to invest in parks, community facilities, events and programs that support liveability and sense of community in Roma and other towns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships with local tradies, regional contractors or training providers to trial a regional maintenance pool that can address basic infrastructure delays</li> <li>• Meet with key anchor institutions in Roma, such as the hospital, schools, TAFE and CUC, to identify one or two categories of spending or contracts where they could commit to prioritising local suppliers or First Nations organisations where possible, as a first step in community wealth building.</li> </ul>
<b>7B: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the successful CUC model to additional towns or explore CUC-linked outreach initiatives that improve access to training in smaller communities.</li> <li>• Position Maranoa as a regional hub for professional services, education, training and health, in line with the corporate strategy.</li> <li>• Implement the findings of RCAT's workforce study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on RCAT's workforce study, Bring schools, CUC Maranoa, TAFE and major employers together to discuss priority occupations (for example nursing, allied health, childcare, trades, ag, tourism, council roles) and where local training or supported study can help fill those gaps.</li> <li>• Partner with CUC Maranoa to strengthen pathways between education and employment.</li> <li>• Build on Roma's role as a service centre, by attracting professional and technical services that can support the broader region, accounting, engineering, legal etc.</li> </ul>
<b>7C: Improve local access to healthcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide bursaries for nursing and GP students to support training and retention of local health professionals, now in its second year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local GPs, PHNs and providers to identify the most critical service gaps and use this evidence to advocate for sustained or expanded outreach and specialist services.</li> <li>• Support practical local solutions that reduce travel, such as shared schedules for visiting specialists, space for mobile clinics, improved telehealth access and targeted funding for priority needs.</li> </ul>

## Balonne Shire

Regional characteristic	Strengths to build on in the transition	Weaknesses to minimise in the transition
<p><b>Great communities not afraid to take on challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4,345 people</li> <li>• 943 local businesses</li> <li>• Median house price \$218,871 vs QLD \$828,711</li> <li>• St George Hospital and multipurpose health services in Dirranbandi and Mungindi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce attraction constrained by housing and service availability</li> <li>• High reliance on local capacity, particularly council, to sustain services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agriculture is a central pillar</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$450m agriculture output</li> <li>• 52.7 per cent of registered businesses</li> <li>• Cotton, grains, grazing, horticulture</li> <li>• Irrigated systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy exposure to climate variability and water availability</li> <li>• Reliance on global markets and commodity prices</li> <li>• Biosecurity and input cost pressures</li> <li>• Limited industry diversity beyond agriculture</li> </ul>
<p><b>Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31,104 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Freight rail at Thallon</li> <li>• Regional air services</li> <li>• Low congestion and available land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small population, large area</li> <li>• Long distance to major centres</li> <li>• High transport costs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Energy infrastructure limits opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing grid connection</li> <li>• Large properties suit off-grid and hybrid systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on SWER and long rural feeders</li> <li>• Power reliability constraints</li> <li>• Limited local control over network decisions</li> </ul>
<p><b>The environment shapes our reality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gamilaraay, Bigambul, Mandandanji, Gunggari, Kooma and Yuwaalaraay/Euahlayi peoples are Traditional Owners of the area</li> <li>• Rivers, floodplains, tourism assets</li> <li>• \$25.4 million in visitor expenditure (2022–23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood and drought exposure</li> <li>• Insurance and infrastructure risk</li> </ul>

## Balonne Roadmap Actions

1. Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households		
<b>1A: Improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor for future opportunities in large-scale renewable energy development in collaboration with SWQROC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with regional stakeholders, developers and SWQROC to prepare for large-scale renewable projects</li> <li>Support off-grid projects outside of townships.</li> <li>Work with Powerlink, Ergon and SWQROC to advocate for ongoing improvements in transmission infrastructure.</li> <li>Assess Council and community interest in community owned energy facilities where technically feasible;</li> </ul>
<b>1B: Maximise behind-the-meter generation, storage and efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress implementation of Energy and Emissions Strategy.</li> <li>Support households, businesses and industry to implement energy solutions and reduce energy costs through sharing resources, supporting access to finance, grants and rebates for rooftop solar and batteries, and running energy efficiency programs (e.g. EcoBiz).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen energy performance requirements in Council procurement, facilities and events.</li> <li>Incorporate energy performance requirements into new development approvals.</li> <li>Explore options to support energy efficiency or solar upgrades in low-income or rental housing (e.g. by linking to State or Commonwealth programs).</li> <li>Explore options for council to play a role in aggregating demand and managing procurement processes where there is alignment with business or industry.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress alternative fuel studies into bioenergy and sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs); share findings with other Councils.</li> <li>Follow the Queensland Government's biofuel Feedstock Expansion Study and announcements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support exploration of cotton gin trash combustion to replace LPG.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to increase uptake of solar pumping on farms.</li> <li>Explore options, planning and regulatory requirements to support anaerobic digestion of manure at feedlots.</li> </ul>
<b>1C: Foster industry specific energy generation and emissions reduction solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress alternative fuel studies into bioenergy and sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs); share findings with other Councils.</li> <li>Follow the Queensland Government's biofuel Feedstock Expansion Study and announcements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support exploration of cotton gin trash combustion to replace LPG.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to increase uptake of solar pumping on farms.</li> <li>Explore options, planning and regulatory requirements to support anaerobic digestion of manure at feedlots.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress alternative fuel studies into bioenergy and sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs); share findings with other Councils.</li> <li>Follow the Queensland Government's biofuel Feedstock Expansion Study and announcements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support exploration of cotton gin trash combustion to replace LPG.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to increase uptake of solar pumping on farms.</li> <li>Explore options, planning and regulatory requirements to support anaerobic digestion of manure at feedlots.</li> </ul>
2. A future plan for gas and oil industries		
<b>2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate future possibilities to re-use gas assets such as roads, pads, power feeds, communications towers and depots.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with industry operators to understand future plans and initiatives and undertake transition planning. Integrate gas</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with organisations such as Coexistence Queensland and Councils with experience working with the gas industry to prepare for negotiation of tender agreements and ensure local benefit. Priorities highlighted to date include options to service local communities that can't access gas lines, and appropriate community benefit.</li> </ul>	<p>transition considerations into Council's economic and resilience planning.,</p>
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### 3. Future ready agriculture and grazing

<b>3A: Support producers to implement future ready practices</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the green ammonia project:</li> <li>• Collaborate with other Councils on opportunities to support markets for green ammonia in nearby LGAs.</li> <li>• Prepare for future conditions and build resilience, including through implementing actions in the South West Queensland Regional Disaster Resilience Strategy, the South West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan, applying for grant funding for land rehydration projects and disaster ready initiatives with farmers and pest management projects.</li> <li>• Improve digital connectivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills that could help increase the uptake of future ready practices and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>
<b>3B: Diversify on-farm revenue streams and production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities for diversification of production, including through St George High School's Agriculture, Water and Environment (AWE) Program.</li> <li>• Expand agricultural tourism opportunities (see Opportunity Area 4: Diverse enterprise and tourism).</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to convert agricultural waste and byproducts into new products (see Opportunity Area 5: Value from waste).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with SWQROC to connect proponents with relevant industry programs, feasibility funding and pilot projects.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for co-location of production with renewable energy (see Opportunity Area 1: Energy solutions).</li> </ul>

### 4. Diverse enterprise and tourism

	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
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<b>4A: Support new and established businesses and industries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the growth and diversification of the tourism sector, building on current collaboration with local businesses and industry bodies, and the re-emergence of the Chamber of Commerce to strengthen small business support and coordination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with businesses to address practical constraints such as peak-period accommodation shortages, including supporting short-term providers considering expansion and progressing council scoping for additional short-stay options.</li> <li>Use roundtables or advisory groups to identify emerging gaps linked to major projects and population growth, and help local SMEs respond.</li> <li>Package of events, food and cultural experiences to build on existing tourism products.</li> </ul>
<b>4B: Explore areas of emerging opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress the Thallon mixed-use development precinct, included in the 2023 to 2027 Economic Development Strategy and currently subject to funding, and share findings with other councils as the proposal advances.</li> <li>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with Brisbane 2032 Olympic planning through SWQROC, building on the regional capability mapping work to identify realistic opportunities for local suppliers, facilities upgrades and event hosting.</li> <li>Support First Nations and local entrepreneurs to pursue business opportunities in tourism, food and land-based ventures, taking a facilitative, place-based role alongside operators and partners rather than leading delivery</li> </ul>

## 5. Value from waste, recycling and circular economy

<b>5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value</b>	<p><b>Continue to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor for emerging waste management opportunities, such as through the establishment of new recycling facilities or waste streams created by new industries.</li> <li>collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage waste minimisation, reuse and recovery, incorporating waste reduction in EcoBiz offerings.</li> <li>Collaborate with SWQROC Regional Waste Officer on waste streams for regional collaboration, where volumes and costs justify a shared approach.</li> <li>Explore improved transport and logistics solutions to enable cost effective transport and processing of waste streams., Explore opportunities for a recycled wood gasifier near where power demand can be co-located with waste streams.</li> </ul>
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## 6. Infrastructure to meet future needs

<b>6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised</b>	<p><b>Continue to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify where infrastructure and upgrades such as EV charging and alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels are most</li> </ul>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to support and utilise intermodal freight facilities being developed in Roma.</li> </ul>
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<b>transport options</b>	<p>needed to support future transport ecosystems..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore creative logistics and transport solutions e.g. back haulage.</li> </ul>	
<b>6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC (digital connectivity was highlighted as a priority during engagements).</li> <li>• Support digital skills and inclusion programs,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement recommendations of the Queensland Government's connectivity study (forthcoming).</li> </ul>
<b>6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners such as Sunwater to secure long-term water allocations and reduce reliance on leased supply, and progress water treatment solutions to improve bore water quality for towns and communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for enabling water infrastructure, services and skills, including upgrades and expansion to support St George and future growth areas, and collaborate with SWQROC and industry on coordinated solutions and funding.</li> </ul>
<b>6D: Improve local housing availability and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek funding for key infrastructure needs, including the Residential Activation Fund, with two RAF projects already approved and progressing.</li> <li>• Monitor and implement the Local Housing Action Plan through regular updates led by the Planning and Development Manager, including ongoing engagement with landowners, agents and builders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess housing needs across key sectors to understand workforce demand and price points, noting where information is commercially sensitive.</li> <li>• Identify a small number of priority, infrastructure-ready sites where council support with planning or headworks could unlock supply, and encourage smart metering, good design and circular construction principles in new developments.</li> </ul>

## 7. Liveability, services and workforce

<b>7A: Enhance community wellbeing</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and upgrade community facilities, recreation areas and main streets in St George, Dirranbandi and smaller communities, and support local events that strengthen connection.</li> <li>• Work with responsive local contractors while continuing to grow the local trades base through closer collaboration between schools, employers and workforce development programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trial a small maintenance pool with local tradies or regional contractors to address backlogs and test more reliable delivery for council and community facilities.</li> <li>• ""Work with anchor institutions and the private sector to increase local procurement, including professional services, so more spending, skills and jobs stay in the region, with council playing a facilitative rather than lead delivery role.</li> </ul>

<p><b>7B: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the CUC model and linked outreach to improve access to tertiary and vocational study in smaller communities.</li> <li>• Use the workforce development program to track hard-to-fill and critical local roles and share this intelligence with schools, training providers and employers.</li> <li>• Maintain targeted attraction and retention efforts, including engagement with SEQ jobseekers, migration pathways, and advocacy to enable international students to study and work locally where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen pathways between education and employment by linking local training directly to real jobs, building on bursaries, youth summits and employer-led programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7C: Improve local access to healthcare</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and support existing local services, including Roma Diagnostic Imaging and allied health provision in Balonne, and work with providers to sustain access to core diagnostics and visiting services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local GPs, Primary Health Networks and health providers to identify the biggest access gaps (for example renal, maternity, mental health and specialist care) and use this evidence to advocate through PHNs, Hospital and Health Services and State agencies for sustained or expanded outreach.</li> <li>• Back practical, locally led solutions that reduce travel, such as coordinating schedules for mobile services or visiting specialists, providing council premises and basic infrastructure, and strengthening telehealth access.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to expand local diagnostic capacity where viable, including equipment or philanthropic partnerships that could increase specialist visits and reduce the need to travel to Roma, Toowoomba or Brisbane.</li> <li>• Investigate affordable and reliable patient transport options to major centres as a complementary solution where services cannot be delivered locally.</li> </ul>

## Murweh Shire

Regional characteristic	Strengths to build on in the transition	Weaknesses to minimise in the transition
<p><b>Great communities not afraid to take on challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3,966 people</li> <li>• 653 local businesses</li> <li>• Median house price \$155,479 vs QLD \$828,711</li> <li>• Multipurpose clinics (Injune, Mitchell, Surat) and Wallumbilla clinic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce attraction and retention pressures</li> <li>• Service demand across a large catchment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agriculture is a central pillar</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$149m agriculture output</li> <li>• 49.5 per cent of registered businesses</li> <li>• Agriculture is 13.8 per cent of employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate variability impacts production and costs</li> <li>• Market exposure and input pressures</li> <li>• Smaller share of jobs than some shires, so flow-on impacts can hit local services quickly</li> </ul>
<p><b>Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40,770 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Warrego, Landsborough and Mitchell highways</li> <li>• Westlander rail, Greyhound, QantasLink and Rex services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High transport and infrastructure maintenance costs</li> <li>• Long travel times for specialist services</li> <li>• Exposure of road and rail access to weather disruption</li> </ul>
<p><b>Energy infrastructure limits opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large properties suit off-grid and hybrid systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on SWER and long rural feeders</li> <li>• Power reliability constraints</li> <li>• Limited local control over network decisions</li> </ul>
<p><b>The environment shapes our reality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bidjara Traditional Owners</li> <li>• Charleville Cosmos Centre, Royal Flying Doctor Service Base, Bilby Experience</li> <li>• \$27.45m in visitor expenditure (2022–23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood and drought exposure</li> <li>• Insurance and infrastructure risk</li> </ul>

## 1. Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households

1A: Improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the energy landscape for future opportunities in collaboration with SWQROC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for community-owned energy: Assess Council and community interest in community owned energy facilities where technically feasible; Identify appropriate governance models, sites and partners to work with to progress.</li> </ul>
<b>1B: Maximise behind-the-meter generation, storage and efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor risk, reduce energy costs and promote increased energy efficiency and self sufficiency through the Earth Check Sustainable Destinations Program 2024-2030.</li> <li>Progress implementation of Energy and Emissions Strategy.</li> <li>Support households, businesses and industry to implement energy solutions and reduce energy costs through sharing resources, supporting access to finance, grants and rebates for rooftop solar and batteries, and running energy efficiency programs (e.g. EcoBiz, solar pumping for bores).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen energy performance standards in Council procurement, facilities, events and new developments, favouring efficient and all-electric options where practical</li> <li>Support upgrades for low-income or rental housing through relevant State or Commonwealth programs.</li> <li>Aggregate demand and coordinate procurement to secure better pricing for households, businesses or industry.</li> </ul>
<b>1C: Foster industry specific energy generation and emissions reduction solutions</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore potential sites for waste to energy (e.g. anaerobic digester at Moven Freight Hub or abattoir).</li> <li>Ensure local planning regulations do not restrict energy generation and emissions reduction projects that would benefit local industry</li> </ul>

## 2. A future plan for gas and oil industries

2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries	Continue to:	Next Steps:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand local dependency on gas and oil industries, identifying rates, roads, jobs and suppliers that rely on the sector. Hold targeted conversations with businesses known to service gas and oil to understand how important that work is for their viability and their exposure to change in the sector.</li> </ul>

### 3. Future ready agriculture and grazing

<b>3A: Support producers to implement future ready practices</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for future conditions and build resilience, including through implementing actions in the South West Queensland Regional Disaster Resilience Strategy, the South West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan, and pest management projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills that could help increase the uptake of future ready practices, and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>
<b>3B: Diversify on-farm revenue streams and production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support diversification opportunities in game, premium beef, and niche products like gidgee charcoal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage participation in biodiversity credits and nature repair markets that contribute to recovery and protection efforts for local species and landscapes as per Corporate Plan (incorporate lessons learned from carbon farming in the region to do this well).</li> </ul>

### 4. Diverse enterprise and tourism

<b>4A: Support new and established businesses and industries</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the growth and diversification of the tourism sector. Local opportunities have been identified in astro-tourism, eco-tourism, WWII heritage and Indigenous cultural tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore options to increase economic viability of Cosmos Centre.</li> <li>Package events, local food and cultural experiences to extend existing offerings.</li> </ul>
<b>4B: Explore areas of emerging opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the Charleville industrial precinct.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build on opportunities for Charleville to become a hub and spoke logistics and service centre for the region.</li> <li>Explore targeted enterprise support for First Nations and entrepreneurs in tourism, food, or land-based ventures, based on proven ideas and available sites or facilities.</li> <li>Engage with Brisbane 2032 Olympic planning in collaboration with SWQROC to identify and promote opportunities for local suppliers and tourism experiences.</li> </ul>

### 5. Value from waste, recycling and circular economy

<b>5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure and regulatory reform to create enabling conditions for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with SWQROC Regional Waste Officer on waste streams for</li> </ul>

<b>costs and add value</b>	<p>regional waste solutions, and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore, advocate and seek funding for improved transport and logistics solutions to enable cost effective transport and processing of waste streams, including new opportunities enabled by proposed intermodal rail facilities and new hub and spoke logistics models, and back haulage.</li> </ul>	<p>regional collaboration, where volumes and costs justify a shared approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to build on successful Containers for Change model e.g. adding collection points in smaller communities.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to build on mobile tyre shredding project.</li> </ul>
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## 6. Infrastructure to meet future needs

<b>6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
<b>6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress proposed transport study exploring rail and intermodal freight between Roma and Charleville. Consult with all surrounding LGAs to understand how the project can cater to broad regional needs, in order for surrounding areas to benefit from and support this project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore creative logistics and transport solutions e.g. back haulage.</li> <li>Identify where infrastructure and upgrades such as EV charging and alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels are most needed to support future transport ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<b>6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain excellent telecommunications and connectivity infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement recommendations of the Queensland Government's connectivity study (forthcoming).</li> <li>Support digital skills and inclusion.</li> </ul>
<b>6D: Improve local housing availability and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek and apply for funding for key housing-enabling infrastructure such as the Aurora Estate expansion and related residential projects. Use this development to implement standards for sustainable and recoverable building materials, energy efficiency, solar installations etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress planning and infrastructure delivery for Aurora Estate and any other flood-free residential land, and ensure there is a clear pathway for private builders and households to take up new lots, including basic guidance on approvals and services.</li> <li>Explore options for diversified housing models that respond to workforce needs</li> </ul>

## 7. Liveability, services and workforce

	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>

<b>7A: Enhance community wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local events, cultural activities and community facilities in Charleville and smaller communities that strengthen connection and pride.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a maintenance pool with local tradies, regional contractors or training providers to address maintenance delays.</li> <li>Meet with key anchor institutions such as the hospital, schools and larger employers to discuss where procurement could more deliberately support local businesses and First Nations organisations,.</li> </ul>
<b>7B: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for a Country University Centre.</li> <li>Support local schools, distance education and training providers as key partners in Murweh's future workforce.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen pathways between education and employment by linking local training directly to real jobs.</li> <li>Advocate for coordinated regional workforce planning that links Murweh's needs into broader South West Queensland strategies.</li> <li>Work with CUC Maranoa, CUC Balonne and the national CUC network to refine Murweh's case for a study hub in Charleville, including data on current and potential students, priority courses and likely use.</li> </ul>
<b>7C: Improve local access to healthcare</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local GPs, primary health networks, and health providers to understand which services are the biggest access issue e.g. renal, maternity, mental health. Use the evidence to advocate through PHNs, Hospital and Health Services, and relevant State agencies for sustained or expanded outreach services.</li> <li>Back locally driven solutions that reduce travel for health care. This could include: collaborating with other Councils to arrange a schedule of mobile services or regular visiting specialists; providing premises, basic infrastructure or promotion for mobile and outreach clinics; improving access and availability of telehealth services; advocating for funding for key local needs.</li> </ul>

## Quilpie Shire

Regional characteristic	Strengths to build on in the transition	Weaknesses to minimise in the transition
<b>Great communities not afraid to take on challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 709 people</li> <li>• 213 local businesses</li> <li>• Median house price \$184,178 vs QLD \$828,711</li> <li>• Quilpie Hospital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very small workforce base</li> <li>• Service access constraints over distance</li> <li>• High reliance on council and local capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture is a central pillar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$58m agriculture output</li> <li>• 51.68 per cent of registered businesses</li> <li>• Agriculture is the largest employer (26.6 per cent)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate variability impacts production and costs</li> <li>• Market exposure</li> <li>• Biosecurity and input cost pressures</li> </ul>
<b>Established resource industries under constraints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local capability in logistics, contracting and services that support resource operations</li> </ul> <p>Already developed commercial resource operations, accessing interstate markets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to external investment and policy settings affecting oil and gas activity</li> <li>• Local employment and spending can shift with commodity cycles</li> <li>• Limited local control over the timing of a longer-term phase-down</li> </ul>
<b>Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67,415 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Vast sealed road network including Cooper Development Road, Diamantina Development Road and key local roads.</li> <li>• Potential for expansion through the Western Freight Route.</li> <li>• Rex Airlines services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance to major centres (820 km to Toowoomba, 955 km to Brisbane)</li> <li>• High transport and service delivery costs</li> <li>• Travel time constraints for services and workforce</li> <li>• Freight lines are active but not operational.</li> </ul>
<b>Energy infrastructure limits opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large properties suit off-grid and hybrid systems</li> <li>• Unfettered production being exported through South Australia</li> <li>• Existing networks set up to be an energy exporter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on SWER and long rural feeders</li> <li>• Power reliability constraints</li> <li>• Limited local control over network decisions</li> </ul>
<b>The environment shapes our reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mardigan, Boonthamurra, Bidjara, Kullilli and Wongkumara Traditional Owners</li> <li>• National parks and tourism assets, including Eromanga Natural History Museum</li> <li>• \$7.1m in visitor expenditure (2022–23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood and drought exposure</li> <li>• Climate extremes affecting access and infrastructure</li> <li>• Insurance and infrastructure risk</li> </ul>

## 1. Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households

1A: Improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor the energy landscape for future opportunities in collaboration with SWQROC.</li> <li>• Support microgrid development for local consumption where power demand and generation can be co-located at the edge of the grid or where grid reliability is inadequate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities for community-owned energy: Assess Council and community interest in community owned energy facilities where technically feasible; Identify appropriate governance models, sites and partners to work with to progress.</li> </ul>
1B: Maximise behind-the-meter generation, storage and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress implementation of Energy and Emissions Strategy.</li> <li>• Support households, businesses and industry to implement energy solutions and reduce energy costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen energy performance standards in Council procurement, facilities, events and new developments, favouring efficient and all-electric options where practical.</li> <li>• Support upgrades for low-income or rental housing through relevant State or Commonwealth programs.</li> <li>• Aggregate demand and coordinate procurement where it helps secure better pricing for households, businesses or industry.</li> </ul>
1C: Foster industry specific energy generation and emissions reduction solutions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support energy generation and emissions reduction projects that would benefit local industry through Council backing and connection to funding pathways.</li> </ul>

## 2. A future plan for gas and oil industries

2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with oil and gas operators in Quilpie Shire on coexistence, safety, road use and community benefit.</li> <li>• Work and advocate with state and federal governments on long-term prospects of resource production and exploration in the Quilpie Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with gas and oil industry operators to understand future plans and initiatives and undertake transition planning. This could include developing a relationship compact with industry operators that sets shared expectations about local jobs, training, community benefits, environmental performance and how information will be shared as activity ramps up or winds down.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate gas and oil transition considerations into Council's economic and resilience planning,</li> <li>• Diversify economic activity and strengthen other sectors to ensure the local economy is ready to respond to changes in gas and oil industries and support local jobs.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
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### 3. Future ready agriculture and grazing

3A: Support producers to implement future ready practices	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for future conditions and build resilience, including through implementing actions in the South West Queensland Regional Disaster Resilience Strategy, the South West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan, and pest management projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills that could help increase the uptake of future ready practices, and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
3B: Diversify on-farm revenue streams and production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities for diversification of production.</li> </ul> <p>Continue understanding and the betterment of Carbon Farming in line with the SWROC Carbon Farming Study</p> <p>Continue to support already developed agritourism operations and identify best practice for more areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with SWQROC to connect proponents with relevant industry programs, feasibility funding and pilot projects.</li> </ul>

### 4. Diverse enterprise and tourism

4A: Support new and established businesses and industries	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the growth and diversification of the tourism sector.</li> <li>• Maintain and support strong private sector tourism leadership in Quilpie Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package events, local food and cultural experiences to build on existing products.</li> </ul>
4B: Explore areas of emerging opportunity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore targeted enterprise support for First Nations and entrepreneurs in tourism, food, or land-based ventures</li> <li>• Engage with Brisbane 2032 Olympic planning in collaboration with SWQROC to identify and promote opportunities for local suppliers and tourism experiences. Local</li> </ul>

opportunities have been highlighted in opals and metals.

## 5. Value from waste, recycling and circular economy

<b>5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore back haulage opportunities to enable cost effective transport and processing of recycling streams.</li> <li>Explore and seek funding for improved transport and logistics solutions to enable cost effective transport and processing of waste streams, i</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage waste minimisation, reuse and recovery</li> <li>Incorporate waste reduction in EcoBiz offerings.</li> <li>Collaborate with SWQROC Regional Waste Officer on waste streams for regional collaboration, where volumes and costs justify a shared approach.</li> </ul>

## 6. Infrastructure to meet future needs

<b>6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore creative logistics and transport solutions e.g. back haulage.</li> <li>Maximise existing airfreight contracts for continual service of remote regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to support and utilise intermodal freight facilities in Charleville in collaboration with Murweh Council.</li> <li>Identify where infrastructure and upgrades such as EV charging and alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels are most needed to support future transport ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<b>6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement recommendations of the Queensland Government's connectivity study (forthcoming).</li> <li>Support digital skills and inclusion.</li> </ul>
<b>6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>
<b>6D: Improve local housing availability and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Quilpie's housing initiatives, including land release, incentive schemes and modular or townhouse developments, to attract and retain residents and essential workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build on locally led housing solutions. Quilpie's offer of free housing and CACH's grant-funded home purchases show what can be done to attract and retain staff when mainstream housing supply is limited.</li> <li>Ensure the new townhouse and modular housing projects deliver a mix of dwelling sizes and standards that respond to workforce needs.</li> </ul>

## 7. Liveability, services and workforce

7A: Enhance community wellbeing	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen liveability in Quilpie and smaller communities through parks, streetscape improvements, community events and housing initiatives that support attracting and retaining residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support trusted, culturally safe responses to local issues like crime, domestic violence and drug use. Build on what is already working through existing health services and community programs.</li> <li>Develop a maintenance pool with local tradies, regional contractors or training providers to address maintenance delays.</li> </ul>
<b>7B: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local schools, distance education and training pathways for Quilpie residents, and promote apprenticeships and traineeships linked to local employers in council, trades, ag and tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with CUC Maranoa, CUC Balonne or CUC Mount Isa to explore outreach or 'study intensives' in Quilpie, combined with online support, so that local people can access higher education without fully relocating.</li> <li>Support initiatives that bring short training blocks, mentoring or career taster programs into Quilpie, making use of council facilities and aligning schedules with busy seasons in agriculture and tourism.</li> <li>Use Quilpie's housing and liveability work to support workforce attraction and retention by clearly linking incentives (such as free land or staff housing) to roles the Shire most needs, and share this approach through SWQROC.</li> </ul>
<b>7C: Improve local access to healthcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for expanded permanent aged care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local GPs, primary health networks, and health providers to understand which services are the biggest access issue e.g. renal, maternity, mental health. Use the evidence to advocate through PHNs, Hospital and Health Services, and relevant State agencies for sustained or expanded outreach services.</li> <li>Back locally driven solutions that reduce travel for health care. T</li> </ul>

## Paroo Shire

Regional characteristic	Strengths to build on in the transition	Weaknesses to minimise in the transition
<b>Great communities not afraid to take on challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,725 people</li> <li>• 248 local businesses</li> <li>• Median house price \$97,560 vs QLD \$828,711</li> <li>• Cunnamulla Hospital, Cunnamulla Medical Clinic, RFDS clinics (Eulo, Yowah) and RFDS presence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited workforce depth</li> <li>• High reliance on council and local capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture is a central pillar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$43m agriculture output</li> <li>• 50.8 per cent of registered businesses</li> <li>• Agriculture is the largest employer (23.6 per cent)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate variability impacts production and costs</li> <li>• Market exposure and input pressures</li> <li>• Biosecurity and input cost pressures</li> </ul>
<b>Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 47,828 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Balonne and Mitchell highways</li> <li>• Western Freight Network access</li> <li>• Rex Airlines and coach services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance to major centres (650 km to Toowoomba, 788 km to Brisbane)</li> <li>• High transport and service delivery costs</li> <li>• Long distances to specialist services</li> </ul>
<b>Energy infrastructure limits opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large properties suit off-grid and hybrid systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on SWER and long rural feeders</li> <li>• Power reliability constraints</li> <li>• Limited local control over network decisions</li> </ul>
<b>The environment shapes our reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kooma, Kunja, Kullilli, Mardgany and Budjiti Traditional Owners</li> <li>• Currawinya National Park, Culgoa Floodplain National Park, Yowah opal fields and artesian assets</li> <li>• \$11m in visitor expenditure (2022–23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood and drought exposure</li> <li>• Insurance and infrastructure risk</li> </ul>

## 1. Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households

	Continue to:	Next Steps:
<b>1A: Improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the energy landscape for future opportunities in collaboration with SWQROC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for community-owned energy: Assess Council and community interest in community owned energy facilities where technically feasible; Identify appropriate governance models, sites and partners to work with to progress.</li> </ul>
<b>1B: Maximise behind-the-meter generation, storage and efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress implementation of Energy and Emissions Strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support households, businesses and industry to reduce energy costs through advice, grants, finance and programs such as solar, batteries and efficiency upgrades.</li> <li>Strengthen energy performance standards in Council operations and new developments, favouring efficient and all-electric options where practical.</li> <li>Encourage local installation and maintenance services and support upgrades for low-income or rental housing.</li> <li>Aggregate demand and coordinate procurement where it improves value or access.</li> </ul>
<b>1C: Foster industry specific energy generation and emissions reduction solutions</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support energy generation and emissions reduction projects that would benefit local industry through Council backing and connection to funding pathways.</li> </ul>

## 2. A future plan for gas and oil industries

	Continue to:	Next Steps:
<b>2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand local dependency on the gas industry, identifying rates, roads, jobs and suppliers that rely on the sector.</li> </ul>

## 3. Future ready agriculture and grazing

	Continue to:	Next Steps:
<b>3A: Support producers to implement future ready practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for future conditions and build resilience, including through implementing actions in the South West Queensland Regional Disaster Resilience Strategy, the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills that could help increase the uptake of future ready practices, and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>

	South West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan, and pest management projects.	•
<b>3B: Diversify on-farm revenue streams and production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for diversification of production.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with SWQROC to connect proponents with relevant industry programs, feasibility funding and pilot projects.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Diverse enterprise and tourism

	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
<b>4A: Support new and established businesses and industries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the growth and diversification of the tourism sector, including regional collaboration around niche tourism opportunities.</li> <li>Support First Nations communities to pursue self-determined opportunities for economic development, such as the Indigenous Tourism Traineeship.</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Package events, local food and cultural experiences to build on existing experiences.</li> <li>Explore targeted enterprise support for First Nations and entrepreneurs in tourism, food, or land-based ventures, based on proven ideas and available sites or facilities.</li> </ul>
<b>4B: Explore areas of emerging opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore options for development of industrial land in Cunnamulla to take advantage of high levels of freight traffic and strategic location at the crossroads of highways, and encourage longer stays and generation of local opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with Brisbane 2032 Olympic planning in collaboration with SWQROC to identify and promote opportunities for local suppliers and tourism experiences. Local opportunities have been highlighted in livestock, leather products, and embroidery.</li> </ul>

#### 5. Value from waste, recycling and circular economy

	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
<b>5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities and seek funding for key enabling infrastructure and community education, and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> <li>Explore improved transport and logistics solutions to enable cost effective transport and processing of waste streams, including new opportunities enabled by proposed intermodal rail facilities and new hub and spoke logistics models (see Opportunity Area 6:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage waste minimisation, reuse and recovery .</li> <li>Collaborate with SWQROC Regional Waste Officer on waste streams for regional collaboration, where volumes and costs justify a shared approach.</li> </ul>

Infrastructure to meet future needs), and back haulage.

## 6. Infrastructure to meet future needs

<b>6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore creative logistics and transport solutions e.g. back haulage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to support and utilise intermodal freight facilities in Charleville in collaboration with Murweh Council.</li> <li>Identify where infrastructure and upgrades such as EV charging and alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels are most needed to support future transport ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<b>6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support digital skills and inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> <li>Implement recommendations of the Queensland Government's connectivity study (forthcoming).</li> </ul>
<b>6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek funding to complete the renewal of the water mains reticulation system in Cunnamulla.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>
<b>6D: Improve local housing availability and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support locally led housing solutions such as the Cunnamulla Real Estate service and to advocate for improved staff housing for government and community services.</li> <li>Streamline processes for developers to provide housing, such as through the planning scheme review and making it easier to do business with Council.</li> <li>Explore new opportunities to boost housing stock such as through the housing needs assessment, securing funding for social housing, redevelopment of Council's old depot. Collaborate with SWQROC and other Councils to learn from their successes and challenges in housing development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the Local Housing Action Plan and local employer input to keep a live picture of housing needs for government staff, health workers, council employees and key local businesses, including gaps in quality and size of dwellings.</li> <li>Work with Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health, Queensland Government agencies and other employers to coordinate staff housing efforts, for example by aligning purchases and refurbishments and sharing information on vacancies.</li> <li>Explore diversified governance and ownership models for Paroo housing, such as partnerships with community housing providers, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and cooperatives, to improve both availability and quality without over-stretching council.</li> </ul>

## 7. Liveability, services and workforce

<b>7A: Enhance community wellbeing</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support programs, spaces and events that build community connection and pride in Cunnamulla, Yowah, Eulo and other communities, especially those led by First Nations organisations and community groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support trusted, culturally safe responses to local issues like crime, domestic violence and drug use. Build on what is already working through existing health services and community programs.</li> <li>Develop a maintenance pool with local tradies, regional contractors or training providers to address maintenance delays.</li> <li>''</li> <li>Explore how council and local anchor institutions such as health services, schools and Aboriginal organisations can direct more of their everyday spending to local businesses and community-controlled organisations.</li> </ul>
<b>7B: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local schools, training providers and community organisations that help young people and adults in Cunnamulla, Yowah and Eulo stay engaged in learning and work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map key workforce gaps in Paroo with local employers and services, especially in health, education, caring roles, trades and council, and turn this into a simple 'jobs in Paroo now and in future' profile for students and jobseekers.</li> <li>Work with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and employment services in Paroo's RAES/CDP region to align training and job pathways with local priorities.</li> <li></li> </ul>
<b>7C: Improve local access to healthcare</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Back locally driven solutions that reduce travel for health care. This could include: collaborating with other Councils to arrange a schedule of mobile services or regular visiting specialists; providing premises, basic infrastructure or promotion for mobile and outreach clinics; improving access and availability of telehealth services; advocating for funding for key local needs.</li> </ul>

## Bulloo Shire

Regional characteristic	Strengths to build on in the transition	Weaknesses to minimise in the transition
<b>Great communities not afraid to take on challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 346 people</li> <li>• 51 local businesses</li> <li>• Median house price \$124,040 vs QLD \$828,711</li> <li>• Thargomindah Community Clinic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very small workforce pool</li> <li>• Reliance on council and volunteers for core services</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture is a central pillar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$61m agriculture output</li> <li>• Agriculture is 43.9 per cent of employment</li> <li>• Grazing-focused systems</li> <li>• 33.3 per cent of registered businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate extremes are a constant operating constraint</li> <li>• High transport and input costs</li> <li>• Small local market for value-added activity</li> </ul>
<b>Established resource industries under pressure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mining is 15.8 per cent of employment</li> <li>• Local capability in logistics, contracting and services that support resource operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mining exposure is volatile and externally driven</li> <li>• Limited local capacity to absorb industry shocks</li> <li>• Highly reliant on gas industry</li> </ul>
<b>Realities of distance and scale require practical solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 73,880 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Adventure Way and Warri Gate Road connections (to NSW)</li> <li>• Low congestion and available land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely remote service catchment</li> <li>• High freight and infrastructure costs</li> <li>• Long distances to specialist services</li> </ul>
<b>Energy infrastructure limits opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of energy production e.g. Thargomindah Hydro Power Plant</li> <li>• Large properties suit off-grid and hybrid systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on SWER and long rural feeders</li> <li>• Power reliability constraints</li> <li>• High upgrade and maintenance costs</li> </ul>
<b>The environment shapes our reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kullilli, Budjiti, Wongkumara, Kungadutji and Boonthamurra Traditional Owners</li> <li>• Lake Bindegolly National Park, Currawinya National Park, Bulloo River, Noccundra Waterhole</li> <li>• \$3.6m in visitor expenditure (2022–23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood and drought exposure</li> <li>• Insurance and infrastructure risk</li> </ul>

## 1. Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households

1A: Improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy	Continue to:	Next Steps:
<b>1B: Maximise behind-the-meter generation, storage and efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress implementation of the Energy and Emissions Strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess interest and feasibility for community-owned energy, including governance models, sites and partners.</li> <li>Support microgrid development where demand and generation can be co-located or grid reliability is limited.</li> <li>Support households and businesses to access finance, grants and programs for solar, batteries and efficiency.</li> <li>Strengthen energy performance standards in Council procurement, facilities and events.</li> <li>Embed energy efficiency and rooftop solar requirements into new developments where practical.</li> <li>Support upgrades for low-income or rental housing.</li> <li>Aggregate demand or coordinate procurement where it improves value.</li> </ul>
<b>1C: Foster industry specific energy generation and emissions reduction solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support energy generation and emissions reduction projects that benefit local industry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Back priority projects and connect proponents with funding pathways and partners.</li> </ul>

## 2. A future plan for gas and oil industries

2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage regularly with gas and oil operators to understand plans and implications for the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map local dependence on the sector across jobs, suppliers, roads and rates.</li> <li>Develop shared expectations with operators around jobs, training, benefits and environmental performance</li> <li>Integrate phase-up and phase-down scenarios into Council economic and resilience planning.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify other sectors and consider setting aside revenue into a future industries or resilience fund.</li> <li>• Develop and communicate a clear regional transition plan with community input.</li> </ul>
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### 3. Future ready agriculture and grazing

<b>3A: Support producers to implement future ready practices</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement regional resilience and drought strategies and pest management initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify enabling infrastructure, services and skills priorities with SWQROC.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>3B: Diversify on-farm revenue streams and production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore diversification of production across the Shire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore co-location with renewables, agri-tourism and value-from-waste opportunities.</li> </ul>

### 4. Diverse enterprise and tourism

<b>4A: Support new and established businesses and industries</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support growth and diversification of tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with businesses to address pain points such as accommodation capacity</li> <li>• Package events, food and cultural experiences to extend existing offerings.</li> <li>• Support First Nations and local entrepreneurs to develop tourism and land-based ventures.</li> </ul>
<b>4B: Explore areas of emerging opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote local enterprise development opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with Brisbane 2032 planning through SWQROC to position local suppliers and experiences.</li> </ul>

### 5. Value from waste, recycling and circular economy

<b>5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priority enabling infrastructure and collaborate regionally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve transport and logistics for waste streams, including back haulage and intermodal options.</li> <li>• Promote circular economy design and material recovery standards.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with SWQROC on shared regional waste solutions where viable.</li> </ul>
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## 6. Infrastructure to meet future needs

<b>6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore creative logistics and freight solutions, including back haulage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with Murweh on intermodal freight opportunities.</li> <li>• Survey local gaps in freight and passenger services.</li> <li>• Identify sites for EV charging and alternative fuels.</li> <li>• Review Council fleet use and replacement plans.</li> </ul>
<b>6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve digital connectivity and inclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify infrastructure and skills priorities with SWQROC.</li> <li>• Implement outcomes from the State connectivity study.</li> <li>• Support digital skills workshops and telehealth access initiatives.</li> </ul>
<b>6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with SWQROC.</li> </ul>
<b>6D: Improve local housing availability and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with major employers, including oil and gas operators, to secure and manage housing for essential workers and services in Thargomindah and smaller communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a simple overview of current housing supply and demand for council staff, health and education workers, police, and major industry workers, noting where shortages or quality issues are most acute.</li> <li>• Explore partnerships with industry and community organisations to provide housing that meets the local workforce needs.</li> </ul>

## 7. Liveability, services and workforce

<b>7A: Enhance community wellbeing</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support core liveability in Thargomindah and other communities through basic services, community spaces and local events, recognising the challenges of distance and small population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a maintenance pool with local tradies, regional contractors or training providers to address maintenance delays.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support trusted, culturally safe responses to local issues like crime, domestic violence and drug use. Build on what is already working through existing health services and community programs.</li> </ul>	
<b>7B: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support access to school, distance education and vocational education and training (VET) options for residents in Thargomindah and smaller communities, acknowledging the lack of nearby campuses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map Bulloo's critical workforce needs with local employers, focusing on council roles, health and aged care, oil and gas operations, trades and core services, and identify which roles are hardest to fill and keep.</li> <li>• Work with SWQROC, CUC Maranoa and CUC Balonne to identify realistic ways Bulloo residents can tap into CUC support..</li> <li>• Support short, intensive training blocks and mobile training in Bulloo by offering council facilities and coordinating with employers to ensure enough participants to make delivery viable.</li> <li>• Explore, with relevant agencies, the pros and cons of using seasonal or targeted migration programs to fill specific roles in Bulloo, and document what council would need to consider in terms of housing, community integration and support.</li> </ul>
<b>7C: Improve local access to healthcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back locally driven solutions that reduce travel for health care.</li> </ul>

## SWQROC actions

### 1. Energy solutions customised to regions, industries, businesses and households

1A: Improve access to large-scale reliable, affordable, decarbonised energy	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide regional coordination, advocacy and information sharing on energy infrastructure and investment priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for upgrades to transmission infrastructure to unlock renewable energy opportunities, including increased capacity on Powerlink lines, open access to private networks, and improvements to Ergon's SWER network to strengthen reliability and enable edge and off-grid systems.</li> <li>• Support councils to work with stakeholders and developers to set clear expectations for engagement and local benefit, sharing practical examples of community benefit policies and governance models.</li> <li>• Assist councils to collaborate on power purchase agreements where this strengthens buying power or reduces costs.</li> <li>• Support exploration of community-owned energy by sharing relevant models, partners and case studies.</li> <li>• Track energy market, policy and technology changes to identify emerging opportunities for the region.</li> </ul>
<b>1B: Maximise behind-the-meter generation, storage and efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share practical information and resources across councils to support local energy cost reduction and efficiency initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide councils with clear, up-to-date information to support behind-the-meter energy solutions, including rebates, programs, independent advice and practical FAQs on solar, batteries and efficiency. Share regionally via a simple SWQROC webpage or regular updates to council staff.</li> <li>• Support all councils to participate in efficiency programs such as EcoBiz.</li> <li>• Help councils collect and share data on solar, batteries, efficiency uptake and emissions reductions to track progress and strengthen funding bids and advocacy.</li> <li>• Develop shared guidance on low-emissions, energy-efficient construction and renovations, including practical advice and resources for council websites. Where relevant, promote local low-carbon materials such as Maranoa cypress.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for subsidies that make solar and batteries viable for rentals and affordable housing in remote areas.</li> <li>• Support councils to aggregate demand and run shared procurement processes for rooftop solar, including supplier vetting.</li> </ul>
<b>1C: Foster industry specific energy generation and emissions reduction solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage regional industries to understand energy needs and support coordinated responses where shared solutions are possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold an industry roundtable or survey to understand top energy pain points, future opportunities, and transition plans for specific industries.</li> <li>• Advocate for enabling conditions such as regulatory certainty and consistency to encourage an opportunity mindset, investment and adoption of new practices.</li> </ul>

## 2. A future plan for gas and oil industries

<b>2A: Understand and plan for future risk and opportunity in gas and oil industries</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a regional overview of gas and oil activity and support councils to share information and coordinate responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate to regulators and governments to reduce community and economic impacts from changes in gas and oil activity.</li> <li>• Support organisations such as Coexistence Queensland to work with councils and communities in areas of new or changing activity.</li> <li>• Coordinate regional information sharing on gas development, coexistence, benefit-sharing and transition opportunities (for example methane abatement, efficiency, CCS).</li> <li>• Support councils to engage industry early and integrate gas transition planning into local strategies.</li> <li>• Build a region-wide picture of gas dependency (rates, jobs, suppliers, projects) and track simple transition indicators over time to inform decisions.</li> <li>• Partner with TAFE and industry on short courses that help oil and gas workers move into adjacent sectors.</li> <li>• Monitor company announcements, regulatory changes and production trends to identify risks early.</li> <li>• Explore a regional reference group for councils with higher exposure to guide proactive planning.</li> </ul>

### 3. Future ready agriculture and grazing

3A: Support producers to implement future ready practices	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Councils to implement actions in the SW Queensland Regional Disaster Resilience Strategy, the South West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan and pest management projects.</li> <li>Build agricultural climate adaptation and resilience by ensuring policy coherence across food security, energy transition, and emissions reduction, and advocate for rural voices in national strategies.</li> <li>Advocate for investment in priority regional infrastructure and service needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocating for simple, fit for purpose regulation that supports farmers to implement future ready practices without increasing compliance burden.</li> <li>Advocate for accreditation systems to distinguish and reward better practice.</li> <li>Support Councils to connect with industry bodies to encourage adoption of leading practice, innovation and technology and development of regional trials. This includes regionally coordinated initiatives to decarbonise farming practices and fleet, where regional consistency in shifting to electrified, hydrogen or biofuels ecosystems enables cost savings through shared infrastructure and economies of scale.</li> <li>Spotlight and replicate successful initiatives</li> </ul>
3B: Diversify on-farm revenue streams and production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elevate learnings and address challenges in carbon farming by highlighting examples where carbon farming has been done in ways that benefit the region. Advocate for regulatory settings to encourage coordination and management that minimises the negative impacts of the industry, such as rural depopulation and fire and pest management.</li> <li>Provide information to Councils on new carbon and nature repair market opportunities, incorporating lessons learned from carbon farming.</li> <li>Support Councils to connect proponents with relevant industry programs, feasibility funding and pilot projects.</li> <li>Spotlight and replicate successful initiatives, pilots and examples of coexistence and diversification.</li> </ul>

### 4. Diverse enterprise and tourism

4A: Support new and established	Continue to:	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate regional business support, advocacy and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share intelligence across councils on common small business constraints and</li> </ul>

<b>businesses and industries</b>	information sharing to strengthen local enterprise and investment readiness.	<p>emerging opportunities (for example housing, workforce, accommodation, freight, digital).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect councils and local businesses to relevant State and Commonwealth programs, grants and advisory services.</li> <li>• Promote regional strengths and priority projects to investors, agencies and delivery partners through joint advocacy and communications.</li> <li>• Spotlight and replicate practical local initiatives that are working (for example chambers, business roundtables, shared services or procurement approaches).</li> </ul>
<b>4B: Explore areas of emerging opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep Councils abreast of opportunities associated with the Brisbane 2032 Olympics, and support Councils to package products and services for offer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider data centre suitability for the region by exploring requirements and sharing information across Councils.</li> <li>• Consider how the region engages with and supports First Nations communities.</li> </ul>

## 5. Value from waste, recycling and circular economy

<b>5A: Explore collaborative opportunities to reduce waste management costs and add value</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support councils, businesses and industries to collaborate across the region to achieve scale and viability, and maximise beneficial outcomes.</li> <li>• Monitor conditions for changes in project viability e.g. changes to Queensland Waste Levy Rebate, regulation, technology, development of new recycling and resource recovery facilities in eastern Queensland, re-establishment of a timber industry creating opportunities for waste-to-energy or achieving viable scale for organic waste management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage waste minimisation and resource recovery through better design and planning. Develop a shared 'sustainable construction' webpage with practical guidance, links and FAQs, and reinforce through approvals and grants.</li> <li>• Advocate and support funding for enabling infrastructure such as rail loading facilities and weighbridges.</li> <li>• Advocate for regulatory settings that suit remote areas and small volumes, and allow councils to trial decentralised and low-volume circular economy solutions.</li> <li>• Advocate for a consistent state-wide education campaign to reduce the burden on individual councils.</li> <li>• Support collaboration with logistics providers to improve cost-effective waste transport and processing, including rail, hub-and-spoke models and back haulage.</li> <li>• Share and replicate proven initiatives across the region.</li> </ul>

## 6. Infrastructure to meet future needs

<b>6A: Improve access to reliable, affordable, decarbonised transport options</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate regional advocacy and planning for transport and logistics improvements that support economic resilience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate opportunities for the benefits of rail to reach western parts of the region.</li> <li>• Support collaboration and dialogue between Councils and logistics providers on improved transport and logistics solutions to overcome barriers of transport distance and cost.</li> <li>• Advocate for Queensland Energy Roadmap to expand funding for key EV charging points in remote councils that aren't currently included. Work with Councils to identify potential locations for EV charging and infrastructure development to enable decarbonised transport options.</li> <li>• Monitor changes in regulation, markets and uptake of decarbonised transport options to ensure local councils are prepared to act in time to attract new opportunities.</li> <li>• Prepare survey template for use by Councils with freight operators to identify key gaps and priorities that can be aggregated for the region.</li> <li>• Explore and communicate alternative transport options that have greater resilience during times of flood and extreme weather e.g. Flying Whales.</li> </ul>
<b>6B: Ensure digital connectivity enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for improved digital connectivity and share priorities, data and funding opportunities across councils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support funding and advocacy for identified priorities for key enabling infrastructure, services and skills and collaborate on initiatives with Councils.</li> </ul>
<b>6C: Ensure water security enables future opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support regional coordination and advocacy on water security, planning and infrastructure investment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support SWQROC Councils to engage with Murray Darling Basin and Great Artesian Basin planning processes.</li> </ul>
<b>6D: Improve local housing availability and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spotlight, replicate and support funding advocacy for successful local housing initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pull together a simple regional housing snapshot using the existing Local Housing Action Plans and council data, summarising for each shire the main issues (availability, quality, type, key worker shortages).</li> <li>• Explore the appetite to convene a SWQROC housing working group or Roundtable with representatives from each council plus major employers (health, education, council, ag, tourism,</li> </ul>

		<p>policing) to share what is already being tried and where the biggest gaps are.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate shared advocacy to the Queensland Government on issues that cut across the region, such as access to the Residential Activation Fund, Local Housing Action Plan follow-up, and targeted housing for essential workers.</li> <li>• Explore regional coordination on housing delivery, for example shared procurement of modular or prefabricated homes, joint attraction of trades and building firms, and coordinated engagement with Olympic legacy housing opportunities where relevant.</li> </ul>
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## 7. Liveability, services and workforce

<b>7A: Enhance community wellbeing</b>	<b>Continue to:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support councils to share approaches and collaborate on liveability, safety and wellbeing initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a light regional set of wellbeing indicators, drawing on national and local frameworks, and support each council to select measures that fit their context</li> <li>• Coordinate regional action to improve liveability and access to services, particularly in communities with high First Nations populations.</li> <li>• Advocate for funding models that recognise the challenges of population stability or decline.</li> <li>• Bring councils and key organisations together to identify shared liveability and safety priorities, such as housing, youth spaces and access to services.</li> <li>• Share examples of trusted, culturally safe responses to issues like crime, domestic violence and drug use, and connect councils with effective programs.</li> <li>• Support councils to strengthen community engagement, including meaningful involvement of First Nations and migrant communities.</li> </ul>
<b>7B: Strengthen local education and workforce opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for better access to tertiary and vocational education across South West Queensland, including through the Country Universities Centre (CUC) network and Regional University Study Hubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spotlight, replicate and support initiatives where wraparound supports (e.g. housing, family support, community connection) have helped retain workers in the region.</li> <li>• Address workforce shortages by creating seasonal and return-to-region</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight regional workforce shortages in health, care, trades, agriculture, tourism and council roles in regional forums and submissions.</li> </ul>	<p>employment models and supporting targeted migration schemes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase accessibility of essential maintenance work through shared trade pools, group procurement arrangements or targeted support for regional contractors.</li> <li>• Work with relevant Commonwealth and State programs (for example PALM/seasonal schemes, tourism workforce initiatives, regional jobs programs) to provide councils with simple guidance on when seasonal or targeted migration models might make sense, and what councils need to consider before supporting them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7C: Improve local access to healthcare</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for equitable access to health services across South West Queensland and support councils to share practical solutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spotlight, replicate and support funding advocacy for successful local healthcare initiatives.</li> <li>• Work with South West Hospital and Health Service and the PHN to compile a regional summary of key health access gaps by LGA (for example, renal, maternity, mental health, allied health).</li> <li>• Facilitate information sharing between councils about locally driven solutions like Cunnamulla's mobile renal service, visiting specialists, and culturally safe primary health care, so others can adapt what fits their context.</li> <li>• Coordinate regional advocacy for more flexible, place-based health funding and service models that recognise distance, small populations and high First Nations health needs in Paroo, Bulloo, Quilpie and similar areas. For example, Quilpie has upgraded dental facilities but no dentist, could advocate for a contractor dentist to spend a week per quarter funded through public private partnerships.</li> </ul>

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## ANNEX I: Engagement summary

Between August 2025 and March 2026, The Next Economy in partnership with SWQROC engaged with 77 people across 24 organisations through a mix of online and in-region discussions. This figure reflects unique participants only and excludes repeat engagement with the same individuals or organisations.

Period	Activity	Type of stakeholder
<b>August – November 2025</b>	Online meetings to define the scope of project, conduct background research and co-design in-region engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDAC working group</li> <li>• representatives SWQROC secretariat</li> </ul>
<b>November 2025</b>	In-region trip to South West Queensland, to carry out workshops and interviews with councils and key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWQROC meeting of Mayors and CEOs</li> <li>• Balonne Shire Council</li> <li>• Maranoa Shire Council</li> <li>• Regional bodies</li> <li>• Education and workforce</li> <li>• Health and community services</li> <li>• Energy and resources</li> <li>• Agriculture and land management</li> <li>• Local business and services</li> </ul>
<b>November – February 2025</b>	<p>Online interviews with key stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with EDAC members and review to refine roadmaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture and land management</li> <li>• Energy and resources</li> <li>• Education and workforce</li> <li>• Regional bodies</li> <li>• EDAC working group representatives</li> <li>• Government bodies</li> </ul>
<b>April 2025</b>	Final review of the roadmaps and strategy with each council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayors and/or CEOs of the six regional councils</li> </ul>