

New possibilities

# Central West Regional Resilience Strategy

*Championing resilience and prosperity  
across Central West Queensland*

January 2020

BARCALDINE  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Barcoo  
SHIRE COUNCIL



RAPAD  
REGIONAL AREA PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD





## Document details

Security classification	Public
Date of review of security classification	January 2020
Authority	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
Document status	Final
Version	1.0
QRA Reference	QRATF/19/3890

The Central West Queensland Regional Resilience Strategy New Possibilities is a locally-led and multi-disciplinary approach to championing resilience and prosperity across the Central West, and is a partnership between the organisations listed below.

Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD)	<a href="http://www.rapad.com.au">www.rapad.com.au</a>
Barcaldine Regional Council	<a href="http://www.barcaldinerc.qld.gov.au">www.barcaldinerc.qld.gov.au</a>
Barcoo Shire Council	<a href="http://www.barcoo.qld.gov.au">www.barcoo.qld.gov.au</a>
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council	<a href="http://www.btrc.qld.gov.au">www.btrc.qld.gov.au</a>
Boulia Shire Council	<a href="http://www.boulia.qld.gov.au">www.boulia.qld.gov.au</a>
Diamantina Shire Council	<a href="http://www.diamantina.qld.gov.au">www.diamantina.qld.gov.au</a>
Longreach Regional Council	<a href="http://www.longreach.qld.gov.au">www.longreach.qld.gov.au</a>
Winton Shire Council	<a href="http://www.winton.qld.gov.au">www.winton.qld.gov.au</a>
Queensland Government	<a href="http://www.qld.gov.au">www.qld.gov.au</a>



## Copyright

This publication is protected by the *Copyright Act 1968*. © The State of Queensland (Queensland Reconstruction Authority), January 2020.

## Licence

This work is licensed by State of Queensland (Queensland Reconstruction Authority) under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 International licence.

To view a copy of this licence, visit [www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

In essence, you are free to copy, communicate and adapt this publication, as long as you attribute the work to the State of Queensland (Queensland Reconstruction Authority).



## Interpreter

The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty in understanding this report, you can access the Translating and Interpreting Services via [www.qld.gov.au/languages](http://www.qld.gov.au/languages) or by phoning 13 14 50.

## Disclaimer

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, the State of Queensland accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained within.

To the best of our knowledge, the content was correct at the time of publishing.

## Copies

Copies of this publication are available on our website at: [www.qra.qld.gov.au/centralwest](http://www.qra.qld.gov.au/centralwest)

Further copies are available upon request to:

Queensland Reconstruction Authority

PO Box 15428

City East QLD 4002

Phone (07) 3008 7200

[info@qra.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@qra.qld.gov.au)

[www.qra.qld.gov.au](http://www.qra.qld.gov.au)

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this Country. We recognise and honour their ancient cultures, and their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures, and to their Elders, past, present and emerging.



## Foreword

The boom and bust cycle of flood and drought is endemic to Central West Queensland, but these cycles are changing.

As our landscape, weather and climate continues to change, our drive towards continuous improvement and sustainability for our communities is being challenged. To meet this challenge, together we must strategically navigate our 'pathway to prosperity'.

These cycles are often reflected and expressed in economic, social and environmental terms, with cascading effects that can be far reaching and which impact upon the wellbeing of our region. The communities of Central West Queensland are amongst Queensland's most resilient. However, identifying opportunities to bolster resilience action into the future can help our region to collectively 'change the game' in supporting individuals, communities, the economy and the environment to continue to prosper.

New Possibilities draws upon an expansive evidence base to build a pathways approach to transition towards a climate resilient future for our region. It identifies opportunities to strengthen community and climate-related disaster resilience. Collectively, we know our regional aspirations and what we want for our future. New Possibilities charts a pathway to help us to move towards that vision. This Strategy is supported by an Action Plan to guide our focus and priorities over time, to match community need with possible funding pathways. Its ultimate goal is to underpin a sustainable and prosperous Central West into the future.

New Possibilities has been developed as a partnership between the Queensland Government, the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) and its member councils. Its purpose is to guide how we work together to proactively support resilience action across the Central West.

The seven councils of the Central West together form RAPAD, a regional collaboration of councils with a key focus on delivering shared solutions to common challenges across the Central West.

Together, these councils include:

**Barcaldine Regional Council**

**Barcoo Shire Council**

**Blackall-Tambo Regional Council**

**Boulia Shire Council**

**Diamantina Shire Council**

**Longreach Regional Council**

**Winton Shire Council.**

Councillor Rob Chandler  
Chair of the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD)





*There is no other region in Australia quite like Central West Queensland.  
Steeped in rich Aboriginal and pioneering heritage.  
Part of one of the world's last unregulated dryland river systems.  
A landscape of contrasts between flood and drought, boom and bust.  
The land of Burke and Wills, home of the legend of the Min Min Light.  
Stretching west to the Simpson Desert, beyond the Black Stump.  
Where famed bush ballad 'Waltzing Matilda' was penned.  
Home to legend of brazen cattle rustler Harry 'Captain Starlight' Redford.  
The birthplace of Qantas.*



## Contents

---

Foreword	3
Our vision	6
Our community	7
About the Strategy	8
Our region	15
Our catchments	16
Our Exposures	21
Drought in the Central West	21
Flood in the Central West	23
Fire in the Central West	24
Heat and heatwaves	25
Weed and pest infestation	26
Rural and remote resilience	27
Resilient transport	39
Resilient economy	43
Resilient environment	47
Strategic pathways	50





## Our vision

---

*We are among Queensland's most resilient communities.*

*We harness the value of connection - with each other, with our land and across this great region we proudly call home. We would not want to be anywhere else.*

*We work hard to look out for one another, we come together to achieve greatness in a variety of ways. We act in collective spirit – it is part of the grassroots values of our bush communities.*

*We look for ways to introduce innovation and ingenuity into every aspect of our day-to-day workings. It is bred into us – even our newcomers and visitors. It is a legacy of our strong pioneering heritage.*

*We triumph over adversity, and come to expect the unexpected. The only thing certain about life in the bush – is uncertainty, and we thrive on it.*

*We are of the land - the land of drought, fire and flooding rains. Our history and our know-how show us the pathway forward. Our land is self-sustaining, and so are we.*

*When people come to stay or visit, we enjoy sharing our knowledge to help others to understand our way of life and the resilience it breeds – it attracts people to this amazing part of Outback Australia.*

*We seek new opportunities to adapt and to prosper. We take proactive action to harness the power of our people. Our strength lies in our commitment and dedication to our communities.*

*We are a proud and passionate Central West Queensland.*

*Image: Jundah Longreach Road.*



## Our community

### About our communities

The Central West region occupies almost 23 per cent of the area of Queensland, with a population of just over 10,500 people.

Key towns across the Central West include (from east to west) Tambo and Blackall, Alpha, Jericho, Barcaldine, Aramac, Muttaborra, Ilfracombe, Isisford, Yaraka, Longreach, Stonehenge, Jundah, Windorah, Winton, Boulia, Urandangie, Bedourie and Birdsville. Each and every town across the Central West maintains its own unique character, steeped in rich history.

Distance, isolation and remoteness characterises the Central West, yet the sense of community is pervasive, fundamental and the life blood of the outback.

Aboriginal peoples have lived in the region for at least 50,000 years, and the region is dotted with sites and artefacts which are testament to a long and enduring history on this land.

The region is a rich tapestry of landscapes and ecosystems, often in delicate balance within their boom and bust cycles. Rural settlement began in the 1860s with the discovery of the Mitchell Grass Downs and Channel Country by the early explorers.

Since this time, agriculture continues to be the primary economic activity of the Central West, largely consisting of beef and sheep production. This sector dominates the current employment share of the Central West at 27.7 per cent. Tourism comprises 6 per cent of regional output (2017) and maintains an enormous capacity for growth. Towns across the region provide local services and industries which support our communities, our economy and local businesses.

Our love of the land, our neighbours, our work and our heritage make opportunities like campdrafts, gymkhanas, racing events and local social events the perfect occasion to come together as a community, and warmly welcome visitors from near and far to our special way of life in the Outback.





## About the Strategy

### Purpose of New Possibilities

Natural events in our region are not necessarily disasters, like they may be in the city. The natural processes of our landscape are part of our lifeblood, we respect and embrace it. However, we acknowledge our climatic cycles are shifting. How we drive community and economic prosperity is intricately tied to our land and its function, and ultimately our overall resilience and ability to adapt to change over time.

The purpose of the Strategy is to:

- be a regional blueprint to guide coordinated resilience action
- guide how we work together to proactively journey toward enhanced community and climate-related disaster resilience over time
- combine strategy and investment in community resilience in a way that encompasses the impacts of our weather and climatic conditions
- adopt a holistic approach to the factors that underpin and contribute to disaster resilience
- acknowledge the people of the Central West as being amongst Queensland's most resilient, and recognise the proud cultural and pioneering heritage of the region, and its important role as part of the Lake Eyre Basin
- forge a clear framework of strategies, building upon a comprehensive suite of existing studies and position statements derived at a local and regional level
- outline our approaches and actions to promote sustainable, resilient and prosperous Central West communities into the future, as well as the government systems that are critical to its success.

**New Possibilities recognises the natural cycles of our landscape**

#### Our objectives under New Possibilities are to:

- thrive on uncertainty
- maintain strong settlements
- enhance liveability
- diversify economic activity
- adapt to climate uncertainty
- support local custodianship for environmental longevity
- support capacity and capability
- support connections.



**Video:** Find out more about the Central West Regional Resilience Strategy at [www.qra.qld.gov.au/centralwest](http://www.qra.qld.gov.au/centralwest)





## Championing resilience across Central West Queensland

Championing resilience relies upon integrated and collaborative approaches.

Collaboration and integrated engagement has been critical to the formulation of New Possibilities. This includes collaboration between governments, not-for-profit and non-government organisations, community groups, landholders and industry representatives. It has involved a multi-disciplinary approach engaged in mental health, engineering, planning, community and economic development, community recovery, agricultural and rural industry, tourism, disaster management, land and environmental management, transport and communications.

This multi-disciplinary approach has informed the adoption of five elements which contribute to holistic resilience action:

It is the intention of this Strategy that it is considered and factored into a range of cross-discipline strategies including (but not limited to):

- regional plans
- regional economic development strategies
- regional transport and infrastructure plans
- natural resource management plans
- water resource plans
- local and district disaster management plans
- local asset management and capital works plans
- local corporate and community development plans
- land use planning schemes
- local and regional health strategies.



Resilience is multi-dimensional.  
It is everyone's business.



## Integrating related programs and projects

New Possibilities combines and builds upon a range of local and regional strategic documents to articulate the various aspects of resilience action identified across the Central West. Some key plans, projects and studies which have been drawn upon to inform this Strategy include:

### Resilient Queensland 2018-21 - delivering on the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience

The Queensland Government is focused on strengthening disaster resilience so that communities are better equipped to deal with the increasing prevalence of natural disasters.

A key outcome of Resilient Queensland will be the development of regional resilience plans that will support the coordination and prioritisation of future resilience building and mitigation projects across Queensland.

By 2022, every local government in Queensland will be part of a regional resilience strategy that clearly identifies and prioritises actions to strengthen disaster resilience over time.

New Possibilities is one of four regional resilience strategies being piloted throughout 2019 as part of Resilient Queensland. It will be used to guide future regional resilience strategies being developed throughout the state. The Strategy seeks to identify and address locally-derived challenges which may also resonate more broadly with bush councils across western Queensland.

As the most disaster-impacted state in Australia, it is critical we harness best practice and look for new ways to work together to improve the resilience of communities across Queensland, adopting pathways toward a safer, stronger and resilient Queensland.

Queenslanders are disaster resilient when...



Diagram: The four objectives of the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience

### Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy

The Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030 outlines how Queensland will collectively prepare for current and future impacts of a changing climate that reduces risk and increases resilience. This Strategy recognises Queensland is already experiencing hotter summers, more frequent natural disasters and impacts on our natural environment, and that these changes pose a threat to our economy, our communities, our environment and our way of life.

The Strategy, along with specific sector-based adaptation plans, outlines our commitments and the actions we will take to transition to a low carbon, clean growth economy and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

### RAPAD Strategic Plan

The RAPAD Strategic Plan 2018-2020 prioritises innovation, creativity, consultation and partnerships through the vision of 'a united regional organisation, proactively shaping and creating a prosperous future for the RAPAD region of Outback Queensland'. RAPAD has a regional mandate where decision-making, strategies and actions are to produce an outcome that provides either multi-local government or regional benefit. Decision-making is to consider the cultural, economic, environmental and social factors applicable to the region.

### RAPAD Pathfinder Report 2017

The RAPAD Pathfinder Report 2017 is the result of a large project in partnership with the University of Southern Queensland and the Regional Australia Institute. The project was funded by the state government and included a number of fact-finding and community engagement activities prior to releasing reports on the potential future pathways for the central west. The pathfinder is a continuation of the 2016 pathways research and community engagement.





### Pathways to the Future Report 2017

The follow up report after the Pathfinder project is the Pathways to the Future: Building Local Strategies for Regional Resilience and Sustainable Development in Central Queensland 2017. This report highlights human capital as essential in building sustainable development and that resilience is not an end, but a functional means of a thriving regional system. To build resilience, there are five crucial enabling factors in a region or community to be assured and developed including awareness, diversity, integration, self-regulation, and adaptation. The report identifies nine key themes and seven resilience pathways, each of which has been factored into the development of New Possibilities.

### Beyond the Dust 2018

The Beyond the Dust 2018 report highlights the results from a study which examined the impact of drought on small town business across the Central West and reviewed the effectiveness of drought assistance measures adopted between 2013-2016. The basis for action to challenges across the region is driven by four key themes including the decision to act, understanding the context, supporting local capacities and local organisations, and transformation for change.

### Other state and local government and industry documents

A range of other state and local government plans, strategies and studies have also been used to inform New Possibilities. This is in addition to a series of industry-based documents and content prepared by relevant not-for-profit organisations and non-government organisations with a presence in the Central West.







## Walking the Landscape

New Possibilities is supplemented by a separate body of work led by the Department of Environment and Science, called Walking the Landscape.

Walking the Landscape is a whole-of-system framework for understanding and mapping environmental processes and values across Queensland. It is a systematic and transparent science synthesis framework which integrates existing data with local and expert knowledge through hands-on workshops to create a common understanding among multi-disciplinary teams.

The framework incorporates all the available knowledge on landscape components (e.g. groundwater dependent ecosystems, lacustrine wetland, vegetation etc.) and processes (hydrological, geological etc.) and uses the information to produce conceptual models which link to mapping.

These products help answer questions such as how the landscape contributes to flood behaviour or why groundwater dependent ecosystems occur in certain locations.

The primary aim of the framework is to help develop a whole-of-landscape understanding to improve evidence-based decision making for the sustainable management and restoration of ecological systems.

The Walking the Landscape engagement process was undertaken in the Central West and map journals have been created for the Queensland portion of the Lake Eyre Basin. The information contained within these map journals links to New Possibilities, helping to bare out the strong relationship between climatic and weather systems, and their interaction with the landscape. These relationships have obvious and direct cascading effects on social and economic systems. As such, these map journals help to chart the linkages between climate-related disaster and overall community resilience with the deep understanding of and connection to the landscape, which is inherent in residents across the Central West.

The Walking the Landscape catchment stories can be accessed at [www.wetlandinfo.des.qld.gov.au](http://www.wetlandinfo.des.qld.gov.au)

The preparation of New Possibilities and Walking the Landscape has been informed by a range of stakeholders from across the region, and across Queensland.

A total of 11 'big map' workshops were conducted, involving local residents, landholders and property managers, land managers, elected representatives, council staff and works officers, non-government organisation representatives, community group representatives, industry bodies, state agency representatives and emergency services personnel.

In addition, extensive individual consultation, collaboration and engagement with these valued stakeholders was also conducted over a period of 18 months.

New Possibilities is a locally-led, regionally-coordinated and state-supported approach to championing resilience and prosperity across the Central West.





## Queensland portion of the Lake Eyre Basin

The Central West area takes in seven local governments and six sub-basins of the wider Cooper, Diamantina and Georgina catchments flowing into the Queensland portion of the Lake Eyre Drainage Division. This area accounts for about 30 per cent of the Queensland's land mass, including the area of the lower Cooper Creek Catchment within Quilpie Shire. The major systems of Cooper Creek, the Diamantina and the Georgina River catchments are extremely variable in their flow, either generating years of flourishing flora and fauna or giving rise to years of drought.

Each of these catchments flow south from their respective headwaters north of Boulia, Winton, Barcaldine and Blackall. The river systems are characterised by very low gradients with wide, braided channels which do not always contain water. Each system drains into Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre in South Australia. Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre is approximately 15 metres below sea level, Australia's lowest natural point.

The desert uplands through the Barcaldine and Blackall regions are also key groundwater recharge areas for the Great Artesian Basin – the largest and deepest artesian basin in the world, underlying over 20 per cent of Australian continent. The Great Artesian Basin is considered one of the region's greatest assets, and supports life and livelihoods across the Central West.

The Lake Eyre Basin is a unique and special environment, home to a range of endangered and threatened animal and plant species, including rare migratory species. The habitat provided across the Basin remains amongst Australia's greatest environmental assets. Every few decades, in good years, Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre in South Australia will fill from floodwaters conveyed across a distance of almost 1000 kilometres.

***“The Lake Eyre Basin is one of the world’s last unregulated dryland river systems”***

Desert Channels Queensland

For more information visit the Bureau of Meteorology article on Queensland floods: the water journey to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre at

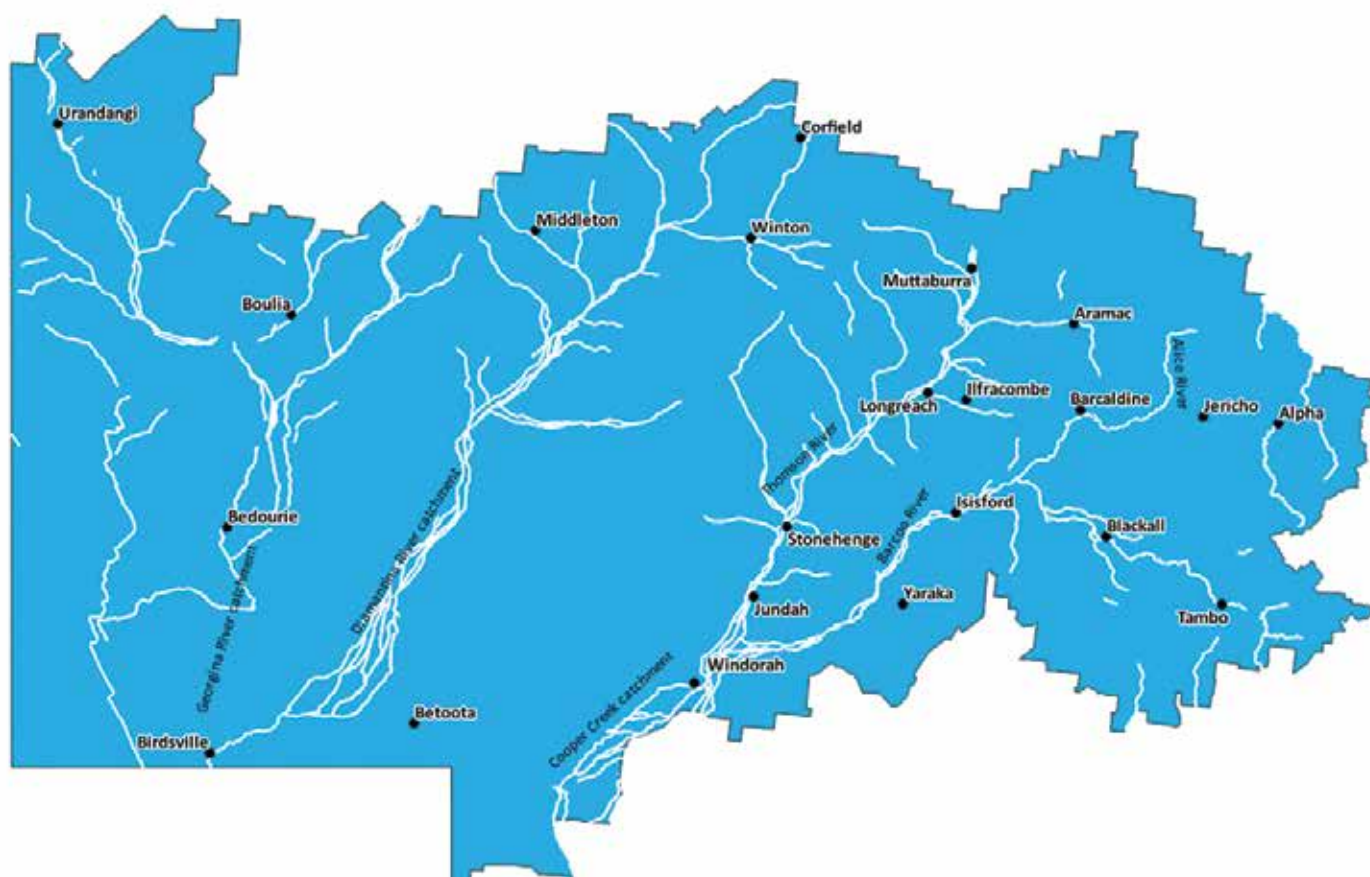
<http://media.bom.gov.au/social/blog/2059/queensland-floods-the-water-journey-to-kati-thanda-lake-eyre/>

## Aboriginal Way

The Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee, over a period of 12 years, has worked with Traditional Owners of the Lake Eyre Basin to prepare the Aboriginal Way Map. This map, now managed by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, features songlines, historical trade routes and other cultural information about the basin, which covers 71 language groups. It is an invaluable education resource on the richness, diversity and vibrancy of Aboriginal cultures across the Lake Eyre Basin.

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/lake-eyre-basin-aboriginal-way-map>

## Central West Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) area







## Our region

The Central West is a diverse community and this is reflected across our major towns and centres of business.

### Blackall-Tambo

The Blackall-Tambo region comprises the key towns of Tambo and Blackall. Tambo is the oldest town in the Central West and also occupies the headwaters of five river systems including the Burdekin, Bulloo, Fitzroy, the Murray-Darling and Lake Eyre. Blackall is a key administrative centre with a strong arts and cultural scene, and hosts one of the largest saleyards in the region - one of only two organic saleyards in remote Australia. Everything west of Blackall is beyond the Black Stump.

### Barcaldine

The Barcaldine local government area is known for cattle, sheep and wool production. It includes the townships of Alpha, Aramac, Barcaldine, Jericho and Muttaborra. The Barcaldine region is located at the headwaters of the Cooper Creek catchment, and is an important groundwater recharge area of the Great Artesian Basin. The region is home to the world's largest sculpture trail and the famous Tree of Knowledge, being the birthplace of the Australian Labor movement. Barcaldine's iconic windmill on Oak Street warmly welcomes you to town, standing proudly upon the location of the first flowing artesian bore in Queensland.

### Longreach

Longreach serves as one of the primary administrative centres in the Central West. It is home to the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, Qantas Outback Founders Museum along with a diverse range of pioneering experiences. Longreach is home to the first cattle station in Queensland, Bowen Downs, as well as the legendary tale of cattle rustler Harry 'Captain Starlight' Redford. Popular attractions across the broader Longreach region include Ilfracombe's Machinery Mile, Isisford's Outer Barcoo Interpretation Centre Museum, and Yaraka's Mt Slocombe Lookout.

### Barcoo

The Barcoo River and Thomson River meet to form Cooper Creek south of the town of Jundah, and flows through to Windorah. Jundah is the administration centre for the Barcoo Shire, whilst Windorah was established on a stock route and remains a top fishing spot, and is an ideal place for bird watching, as migratory species flock to the region's waterholes after rain or flood. The township of Stonehenge is located between Jundah and Longreach, and is Queensland's home of bronco branding. 90 kilometres east of Jundah lies the remnants of Magee's Shanty, immortalised in the famed poem 'A Bush Christening' by Banjo Paterson.

### Winton

Winton Shire includes the key towns of Winton, Middleton, Corfield and Opalton and forms part of Australia's dinosaur trail, and is home to the Australian Age of Dinosaurs and Lark Quarry experiences, established following the discovery of dinosaur fossils and 'stampede' footprints immortalised in sedimentary rock – known as the 'Winton Formation'. Winton is also the 'birthplace' of Australia's most famous bush ballad 'Waltzing Matilda', penned by Banjo Paterson during a visit to Dagworth Station in 1895, and first performed at the North Gregory Hotel. Winton celebrates this history with the Waltzing Matilda Centre, along with other events such as the Outback Festival, Way Out West Fest and outback film festival, Vision Splendid.

### Boulia

Boulia is located on the banks of the Burke River. The township name comes from the traditional Pitta Pitta language meaning 'waterhole'. It is the land of the mysterious and legendary Min Min Light. Situated only 200 kilometres from the Northern Territory border, Boulia is one of Queensland's western-most towns along with Urandangie, established in 1885 on the Georgina stock route – once a popular place for drovers to pull up for a rest. The Boulia Desert Sands Camel Races are an annual tourism favourite. The Region is Queensland's gateway to the Outback Way which stretches from Winton to Laverton in Western Australia.

### Diamantina

Named after the Diamantina River (which was named after Lady Diamantina Bowen – the wife of Queensland's first Governor), Diamantina Shire is home to three of Queensland's most remote townships including Birdsville, Bedourie and Betoota. In the dry season, the 300+ population of the Shire swells by the thousands as people flock to the area for the Big Red Bash and Birdsville Races. Diamantina Shire is home to just 14 stations, despite being one of Queensland's largest local government areas by land size. Its administrative centre is located at Bedourie, which is the local Aboriginal word for 'dust storm'.



## Our catchments

### Cooper Creek Catchment

The Cooper Creek Catchment comprises the Thomson River, Barcoo River and Cooper Creek sub-catchments.

The Cooper is the only watercourse in Australia where river systems (the Thomson and the Barcoo) run into a creek.

The Thomson River is punctuated by billabongs, draining into Cooper Creek from seven local government areas as far north as Charters Towers. It collects water from across central Queensland's many creeks before becoming the Thomson at Muttaborra. It continues through Longreach and Jundah before joining the Barcoo River north of Windorah.

The Barcoo River adjoins the Thomson River sub-catchment to the south. Major towns on the Barcoo River system include Barcaldine and Blackall, with the small town of Jericho at the highest reaches of its headwaters which lies on a low floodplain just 30 kilometres west of the Great Divide. The large catchment area of the Cooper includes land within the local government areas of Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Longreach and a small part of Quilpie Shire.

Where the Barcoo meets the Thomson lies the beginnings of true Channel Country.

The principal town is Windorah, perched at the edge of the sprawling tributaries of the Cooper Creek where the abundant tributaries of the Thomson and the Barcoo join to form a riverbed some 10km wide in true channel country form. The catchment spreads across the Barcoo Shire to parts of Quilpie Shire and Bulloo, and across the border to South Australia.

### History and heritage

The Cooper is rich in history. Indigenous history in the region dates back more than 50,000 years with over 25 tribal groups living across the Channel Country. Artefacts continue to be uncovered, and Traditional Owner Dreamtime stories share the formative history of the Cooper, as well as that of the Lake Eyre Basin region more broadly.

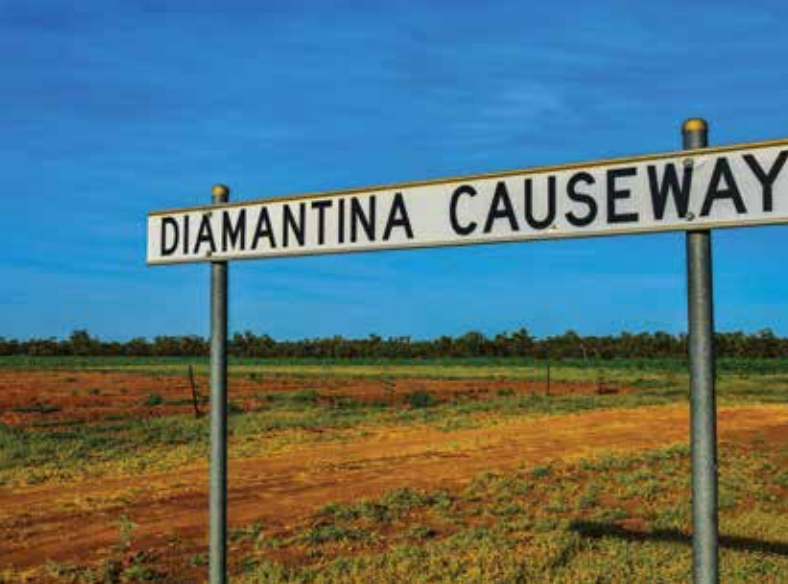
Cooper Creek was named in 1845 by Charles Sturt after Sir Charles Cooper, the Chief Justice of South Australia.

Explored by Burke and Wills, Leichardt, Mitchell, Kennedy, Landsborough and Buchanan, the Cooper Creek catchment forms part of Western Queensland's semi-arid Mitchell grass country. It was on the Cooper that famed Australian explorers Burke and Wills died in 1861, near Innamincka in South Australia.

In the 1880s, the town of Longreach was first surveyed, before being gazetted in 1887. It is referenced that a local Indigenous group provided the survey team with information of the Thomson River in flood which informed the location of the Longreach township. This detail is included in historical publications, including that of 'The Longreach Story' authored by the late Angela Moffat.

Since before the establishment of the first station in the region, Bowen Downs, the boom and bust cycles of flood and drought have been front of mind – with commentary on such matters captured in the journals and writings of the first explorers to navigate the Cooper.





## Diamantina Catchment

The Diamantina River rises in the Swords Range, some 70 kilometres south-west of Kynuna and flows initially in a north and easterly direction before changing to a south-westerly direction 70 kilometres west of Winton.

Major tributaries joining the river are Mills Creek, Nesbitt Creek, Oondooroo Creek and Jessamine Creek, east of Winton as well as Wokingham Creek and the Western and Mayne Rivers north of Diamantina Lakes, and Farrars Creek south of Monkira.

The Diamantina sprawls out into true Channel Country south of Diamantina Lakes.

The river does not have a well-defined main channel but consists generally of a series of wide, relatively shallow channels. South of Winton, the principal town on the Diamantina is the remote outpost of Birdsville, and it receives waters from ten local government areas. Such is the scale of the Diamantina River catchment. From Birdsville, the Diamantina crosses the border into South Australia and flows into Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre – the lowest natural point in Australia.

## History and heritage

The Diamantina River was named after Lady Diamantina Roma Bowen, the wife of the first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Bowen. Lady Bowen was born in Greece and married Sir George in Corfu in 1856. The Bowens arrived in Brisbane in 1859. The river was named by William Landsborough in 1866. Landsborough was an experienced bushman and explorer, chosen by the government to lead the search expedition for Burke and Wills in 1861. He was the first man to cross the continent from north to south.

Dagworth Station, located on the upper headwaters, is the location of events which gave rise to Australia's unofficial national anthem, *Waltzing Matilda*, penned by A.B. 'Banjo' Patterson at Combo Waterhole on the river in 1895. The river has been further immortalized by 'The Diamantina Drover', written by Hugh McDonald of Redgum in the 1980s.

Diamantina Lakes station was first established in 1875 before being purchased as a national park in 1992. Stations were taken up from the late 1860s especially after the publication in 1862 of Landsborough's journals. The establishment of service towns followed in the 1880s.

The first meeting of the Divisional Board of Diamantina was held on 29 April 1886 and Birdsville was proclaimed as a town in 1887. Until then it was known as Diamantina Crossing. Birdsville is simply a reflection of the abundant birdlife in the waterholes of the Diamantina River.



## Georgina Catchment

The Georgina River catchment takes in a vast expanse of the state's border and extensive areas of the Northern Territory.

It rises to the north-west of Mount Isa with three main tributaries – the Buckle, Sander and Ranken Rivers. The latter two have their headwaters in the Northern Territory.

Further inflow occurs from numerous creeks and rivers, the main tributaries being the Burke and Hamilton Rivers which find their headwaters in the Selwyn Range and flow south. It is home to Boulia and Camooweal in the far north.

The Burke joins the Georgina to the north of Marion Downs, whilst the Hamilton joins it to the south. At Marion Downs, the Georgina spreads into braided channels – expanding across vast floodplains on its travels to Bedourie.

It is at this point where the Channel Country meets the Simpson Desert.

The Georgina River catchment stretches across four Queensland local governments including Cloncurry, Mount Isa, Boulia and Diamantina, not to mention areas of the Northern Territory.

## History and heritage

Originally named the Herbert River by Landsborough, it was renamed the Georgina in 1890 to avoid confusion with the Herbert River in north Queensland. Apparently it is named after the Queensland Governor's daughter, Georgina Mildred Kennedy. However, another theory is the name was changed to match the Diamantina and honour Sir George Bowen by the government surveyor who thought this logical given the watercourses eventually joined.

The catchment extends north of Urandangi and Camooweal and into the Northern Territory, in the region of Lake Nash. This route was used for stock transportation and townships sprung up as supply centres from the 1880s.

Urandangi itself was founded in 1885 when a general store was established along the Georgina stock route. By the 1920s it had grown to include two stores, a hotel, dance hall, post office, police station and several houses. Its current resident population is about 14.

As the Georgina flows south toward the South Australian border the floodplain enters the sand dunes of the eastern edge of the Simpson Desert. Local knowledge describes instances where waters travelling down the Georgina 'disappear', seeping into cracking alluvial clays and sand, and in some cases re-emerging downstream. Very few stations flank the Georgina, making it one of the most remote parts of Queensland.





## Burdekin Headwaters

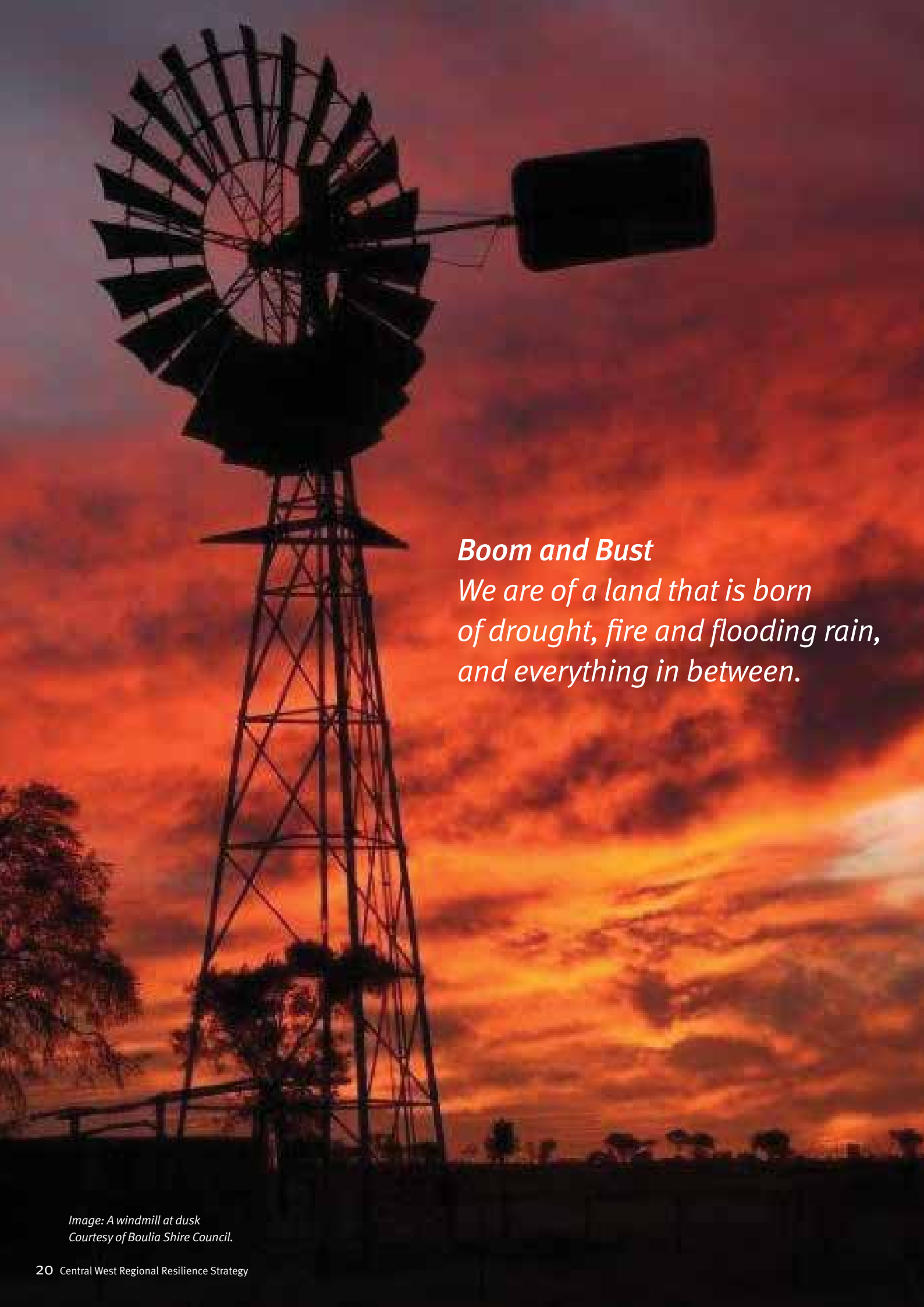
East of Jericho lies the headwaters of the Belyando River. Flowing north from Mt Observation, Mt Paddy, Mt Mudge and Mt Victor are Duck Creek, Alpha Creek, Native Companion Creek and their tributaries, as well as the Belyando River.

These waterways, including associated tributaries, flow north through Alpha and across the Capricorn Highway. The creeks named above eventually each flow into the Belyando River to the north of the Barcaldine region, which in turn flows into the Suttor River at Mt Douglas and onto Lake Dalrymple (Burdekin Falls Dam).

The area of the Barcaldine region which sits at the headwaters of the Burdekin catchment continues to remain part of this resilience strategy, along with the balance of the Barcaldine local government area, however it will also form part of a flood specific resilience strategy for the Burdekin and Haughton Catchment.

*Images: Courtesy of Barcaldine Regional Council.*





## ***Boom and Bust***

*We are of a land that is born  
of drought, fire and flooding rain,  
and everything in between.*

*Image: A windmill at dusk  
Courtesy of Boulia Shire Council.*





# Our Exposures

## Drought in the Central West

Australia is the land of drought and flooding rains. The severity and circumstances of drought depend very much on the local situation in terms of climate and water use, which varies significantly across landscapes and land uses.

Drought can be:

- meteorological: dryness resulting from deficiencies of precipitation
- agricultural: depletion of soil moisture supplies, or
- hydrological: shortfalls on surface and subsurface water supply.

Drought sets in over several years, resulting in a persistent strain on every day operations and ways of life as it wears on. Just as slow as the prolonged drought conditions set in, the recovery process is equally as long. It can be easy for people to say that we must prepare for drought, but it must be acknowledged how challenging this can be when drought conditions last for a decade or more. The strain of drought will arise for us into the future as sure as day turns into night, and we will endure. By not only by being prepared, but because of the strategic and holistic approach we take to our region's resilience.

***"You cannot 'drought-proof' yourself - you can only manage it"***

**Rick Britton, Goodwood Station and Mayor of Boulia Shire**

In the landscape of the Central West, drought is intrinsically related to climatic zones, the resistance of plants to water shortages and the ability of the land to support the economy. Generally, natural pastures and herbage have evolved to become highly resistant to extended periods of low rainfall particularly in the arid zone.

The Central West and the Lake Eyre Basin in particular are unique and self-sustaining landscapes. Soils, vegetation and fauna species have adapted to the natural extremes of boom and bust cycles, springing to life when rain and floods occur.

Drought affected areas can also be subject to flooding due to heavy rains in river catchments hundreds of kilometres away without actually having any rainfall. These floodwaters can take weeks, and sometimes months to travel downstream, and in western Queensland this is called a 'dry flood'. However, one flood does not break a drought. Especially if it does not break out of the banks, a 'gutter flood', to spread across our vast channels.

From 1895 to 1903 the whole of Australia was drought affected, including central Australia. This was Australia's worst drought to date in terms of severity and area. Sheep numbers, which had reached more than 100 million, were reduced by approximately half and cattle numbers by more than 40 per cent. Dubbed the Federation Drought, the event was repeated a century later as the Millennium Drought.

Halfway through the 20th century drought was again widespread and severe. For more than a decade from 1957, drought was consistently prominent and frequently made news headlines from 1964 onwards. This period was tough in the Central West.

From late 1996 to mid-2010, much of southern Australia (except parts of central western Australia) experienced a prolonged period of dry conditions, known as the Millennium Drought, unique in being both widespread and protracted.

Since 2011, much of the Central West has endured drought conditions with good floods becoming fewer and farther between. Over recent years, prolonged drought conditions have given rise to other, cascading issues from a social, economic and environmental perspective. Rain and flood events in 2019 provided some relief in some areas, however – not without a toll. Long-term drought effects coupled with driving rain, wind, cold temperatures and flooding led to considerable stock loss north of Winton, largely as a result of exposure.

One flood or rain event does not break a drought, and there are different types of drought.

The North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough, 25 January - 14 February 2019, led to dry flooding in the lower parts of the Diamantina catchment. This phenomenon clearly illustrates why a single rain event does not break a drought. Follow-up rain is essential.



The frequency of dust storms also go hand-in-hand with drought, when westerly winds from the continental interior blow across the landscape, and they can be scary. Visibility decreases, homesteads and buildings can be damaged and some people and animals can experience severe respiratory distress as a result of the level of particulate (fine dust) matter in the air. Dust storms do not just occur during periods of drought, however. They remain a natural phenomenon which kick up on occasion, given certain atmospheric conditions.

Dust storms are not unusual to this part of the world and for the most part they are a nuisance, but sometimes they can produce circumstances which can present serious issues.







## Flood in the Central West

Very little rainfall is needed to bring this country to a standstill. This has a lot to do with the very slight gradient of the landscape and its underlying geology. These aspects apply to large areas of the Central West and work to limit absorption and enable the vast spread of floodplains across the landscape. This is typical of vast swathes of this country which sit atop the Winton Formation.

The Walking the Landscape catchment stories for the Cooper, Diamantina and Georgina provide further detail in relation to why and how floodwaters transition across the landscape.

In the Central West, the river systems include the broad expanse of floodplains – not just river channels. In some locations, the floodplain extent can reach more than 70 kilometres in width.

These characteristics of topography, geology and flood behaviour means it takes weeks, and often months, for floodwater to make its way downstream toward Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre. There is simply nowhere for rainfall from large, intense rain events to drain, other than to travel south to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre. Rain that falls near Corfield or Kynuna, 164 kilometres north-west of Winton, can take up to three months to reach Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre due to the very low gradient of the Diamantina River catchment.

The Lake Eyre Basin gradient is often described as so slight that the fall is the equivalent of less than 20 millimetres over the distance of a football field.

Floodwaters often reduce in volume on the journey down the floodplain, either absorbed into cracked clays and soils, or alluvium, absorbed into groundwater aquifers, or through evaporation.

In other parts of Queensland, flooding can be dangerous and destructive, but for western Queensland flooding presents different challenges. Agricultural impacts like stock loss can sometimes arise, but for the most part flooding is good for the land, and we welcome it as a necessity. Our ecological and environmental systems come alive with water, and these are systems upon which our region thrives. It rejuvenates the landscape, returning nutrients to the soils, producing fodder, supporting native vegetation growth and recharging groundwater. Flooding supports the health of our landscape, which in turn supports our economy and our communities.

From an environmental perspective, both terrestrial and marine ecosystems prosper with water. Whilst species in the Central West have adapted to periodic, severe dry conditions and survived over millennia, ecosystem health is driven by species diversity. Species diversity is bolstered by flooding, as biota is transported between waterholes, when they occasionally fill and connect across the broader floodplain, or as terrestrial species find improved nourishment from a greater abundance of plants, insects and animals generated by flood events. The Lake Eyre Basin, every few years, becomes a haven for migratory bird species, following rain and flood events.

With the good comes the bad and in some events, floodwaters have damaged town infrastructure and houses. In others, it has led to tragic stock losses, in combination with other weather conditions. So whilst we recognise the role and the value of flooding, we are also well aware that it can cause damage, loss and isolation.

Isolation during a big wet is commonplace in the Central West. For those living on stations this can mean being prepared for long periods without re-stocking. The people of the Central West are resilient and skilled at being prepared. However, we cannot ignore the fact that isolation can be a stressful experience for some people, whether in town or on a station. This can particularly be the case for the vulnerable, elderly and ill, those with disabilities, and visitors to the region who are unfamiliar with driving to our unique conditions.

Erosion and topsoil scour can be a significant effect of flooding, and has many flow-on implications for businesses, rangelands health, infrastructure and service provision. Generally, it can be worse during and following harsh drought conditions if herbage cover has reduced over time, leaving valuable topsoil exposed to potential erosion and scour. Certain land management practices can be employed which may mitigate topsoil transportation, scour and erosion as the landscape transitions between its boom and bust cycles of flood and drought.

*Images: (Top) Flooding at Winton, March 2018.  
(Top left) Diamantina Shire (bottom left) dust storm  
at Bedourie. Courtesy of Leon Love, Diamantina Shire Council.*



## Fire in the Central West

Fire is commonplace across the Central West, where large expanses of the landscape comprise geologies which contain iron – a great conductor of lightning. This is particularly evident across the desert uplands area through Barcaldine and Blackall-Tambo, which is slightly higher in its topography.

In this landscape, fire is a natural partner of drought. Forest and scrub fires are certainly part of the Australian landscape, however fast-moving grassfires are equally as common. In an arid and semi-arid landscape comprising expansive Mitchell grass downs, swift moving grassfires can grow rapidly and consume valuable stock feed, damage or destroy facilities, buildings and infrastructure and potentially injure stock or lead to stock loss. They can also cause irreparable damage to our unique Central West ecosystems.

As equally a partner to drought, fire is also a partner of flood. Flood events which trigger fodder growth through winter months equally elevate fire threat in spring and into summer, with increased fuel loads spread across the landscape. Fodder is a prized resource, and protecting it from grassfire is essential.

How fire is used is therefore of great importance. The injection of good fire management practices into the landscape is critical for bush and grassfire management, overall ecosystem health, as well as for strategic fire management. Different vegetation communities require different fire regimes. A fire regime articulates the threshold for how frequently a certain vegetation community can experience fire, before the ecological characteristics of that community start to change – which is not desirable. A fire regime which is suitable for spinifex grasslands for example, is not the same as that required to appropriately manage acacia shrublands.

**Fire is endemic to the Australian landscape.**

Harnessing fire as a tool to manage the landscape for health and for risk management purposes is a core element of caring for Country. Since European settlement, the injection of fire into the landscape has decreased from which Traditional Owners applied which has led to changes in fuel load and ecological dynamics across different vegetation classes. Less frequent burning generally tends to generate hotter, more intense fire behaviour, as fuels have built up over a longer period. This can lead to ecosystem damage as specimens could be harmed and become unable to regerminate. More frequent, cooler burns provide many ecological and risk management benefits however, this must be balanced. Time-since-fire is a critical element in maintaining healthy flora and fauna, and burning too often can also result in negative impacts.

The Department of Environment and Science has prepared a range of bioregional planned burn guidelines which are bespoke to each of the thirteen different bioregions of Queensland. Relevant to the Central West region is the Channel Country Bioregion, the Mitchell Grass Downs Bioregion, the Desert Uplands Bioregion and small parts of the Mulga Lands Bioregion. Each of these bioregions comprise different vegetation characteristics which in turn, attract vastly different fire regimes. Burning to Country, and cultural burning, is critical to overall ecosystem health and is never a one-size-fits-all approach.

*Image: Courtesy of the Department of Environment and Science.*





## Heat and heatwaves

Summer in the Central West can see temperatures creep towards 45 degrees Celsius at times. Heat during these periods is constant and unrelenting, and whilst heatwaves compound this, from the local perspective a few more degrees when the temperature is already above 40 is not uncommon. How residents in different areas of Australia feel heatwaves is different, because people may or may not be used to localised temperature ranges. Out-of-season heatwaves are perhaps more of a challenge in the Central West.

There is a link between cyclones and heatwaves, and heatwaves and bushfire.

From a health perspective, heatwaves cause more deaths than bushfires, cyclones, earthquakes, floods and severe storms combined. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are the main health illnesses connected with heat and heatwaves, relating to a person's body temperature.

*Images: (top) near Bedourie, (bottom) temperature at Boulia.  
Courtesy of Harin Karra, Boulia Shire Council.*

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Queensland State Heatwave Risk Assessment was released in 2019, and combines scientific data across hazard and risk, health and environmental science. Human health and the well-being of animals and plants remain the core direct impacts, along with direct impacts to community infrastructure. This can be in the form of mechanical failure, failure or damage to essential services such as electricity and water supply, and interruption to transport.

Into the future and as our climate changes, the frequency and intensity of heatwave conditions is likely to rise, and for this we must plan and prepare at an individual, household and business level, as well as at the community level, in conjunction with emergency services, health services and government service providers.

Heatwaves are only one of a range of climatic factors relevant to the Central West. As documented by Desert Channels Queensland, living with climate variability and the uncertainty which is endemic to boom and bust cycles, remains a key challenge for the pastoral industry and communities across the region.







## Weed and pest infestation

Weed and pest infestation is no stranger to the Central West, and remains a significant issue. Prickly acacia (*Vachellia nilotica*) is an invasive plant species which encourages erosion, threatens biodiversity, decreases pastures and out-competes them for water, and forms dense, thorny thickets that interfere with stock movement. Often transported by stock, floodwater, or vehicles, the environmental and economic impacts of the spread of Prickly acacia can result in several years of direct land management practices to eradicate.

As Prickly acacia invades an area and becomes more abundant, it can cause significant changes to the structure and habitat value of native grassland communities. Prickly acacia can transform open grasslands into thorny scrub and woodlands, causing undesirable changes to flora and fauna.

Prickly acacia is a particular threat to the Mitchell Grass Downs bioregion which is home to 25 rare and threatened animal species and two endangered plant communities.

Flood events sustain critical environmental processes that rejuvenate the landscape. However, they also convey Prickly acacia seed throughout the Channel Country leading to outbreaks across the floodplain and beyond, in addition to other weed and pest issues as well. Parkinsonia weed is similar to Prickly acacia, forming thorny thickets across floodplain areas. Parkinsonia also provides a haven for feral pigs, which in turn prey on livestock, damage crops and degrade the environment. Other invasive weeds found across the region include Mesquite, Parthenium, Noogoora burr, Rubber vine, and others.

Pest infestations such as wild dogs, feral pigs, foxes, feral cats, rabbits and locust plagues also require ongoing land management across the region for the benefit of environmental and economic outcomes. To date, weed and pest infestations have limited environmental, economic, and to an extent social opportunities across the region. Recent land management approaches based on collaborative efforts are changing the future of the Central West.

Local landholders, land managers and Traditional Owners are stewards and custodians of this special landscape, its natural resources and cultural heritage. Our local ability to utilise skills to improve the health of our land is a tremendous opportunity, including in times of drought. Organisations such as Desert Channels Queensland and its 'Positive Action Cluster Team' (PACT) program supports and champions landholders to manage natural resource and weed issues on a strategic, landscape-scale basis. This program demonstrates that together, we can make significant advancement in managing our land for both environmental and economic prosperity.

*Image: Prickly acacia infestation.  
Courtesy of Queensland Government.*





## Rural and remote resilience

Western Queensland breeds a unique type of resilience. Every aspect of our way of life in the Central West is intrinsically linked to the boom and bust cycles of the land. We expect drought, we plan for it, and we make decisions on the basis of it. Over recent decades however, these drought periods have grown longer and become more intense. When flooding rains do eventually turn up, they sometimes arrive with such ferociousness that issues such as stock loss from exposure, top soil erosion, scouring, siltation, weed spread, and infrastructure damage are being magnified.

There are many stresses we must plan for as part of everyday life – drought, isolation in the event of flooding rains, commodity price downturn, and so on. We are adept at this, but that does not make us immune from the challenges these present.

The cascading issues associated with these challenges can place substantial, long-term stress on communities – both in town and across the pastoral sector. The interconnection and reliance upon every segment of our community is critical to our collective wellbeing. We take immense pride in our level of community spirit and community mindedness. Looking out for others is endemic to our identity in the bush. Values that are lost in other communities, we live by in our part of the world – commitment, compassion and connection to others. However, we sometimes forget that we also need to look after ourselves.

***"There is a difference between stoicism and resilience"***

Selena Gomersall, CEO Outback Futures

We endure a lot in the outback, and we would not want to live life any other way. Being stoic is different to being resilient. Both are admirable, but stoicism is a show of strength in the face of adversity and hardship to continue on and persevere. Resilience is about being equipped over the longer term to adapt to rapid change and new circumstances – both for individuals and for communities more holistically.

Resilience attributes can include a sense of resourcefulness, open mindedness, self-reliance, awareness, ingenuity, capability, strength of core values and connection with others. These attributes stand a person in good, solid stead to overcome and adapt to life's challenges.

Professor John Cole OAM, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southern Queensland in his 2016 work 'Pathways to the Future' identified a range of attributes which underpin resilient communities across Central West Queensland. These leverage the five resilient regional systems elements identified by the Rockefeller Foundation's '100 Resilient Cities' program.

As part of this work, Professor Cole identifies the need for communities to be adaptable, connected, diverse, integrated, enterprising, healthy, have strong leadership, evoke a strong sense of identity and belonging, and encourage links from local to global.



## A model of community success

Barcaldine Regional Council Deputy CEO, Brett Walsh, recently completed a study tour to the United States of America, as part of a broader study considering the ingredients of how small rural communities are adopting smart growth opportunities to underpin sustainability.

The culmination of this work has led to the development of a conceptual model to demonstrate the pathway to the future success and growth of Barcaldine, as well as other bush communities.

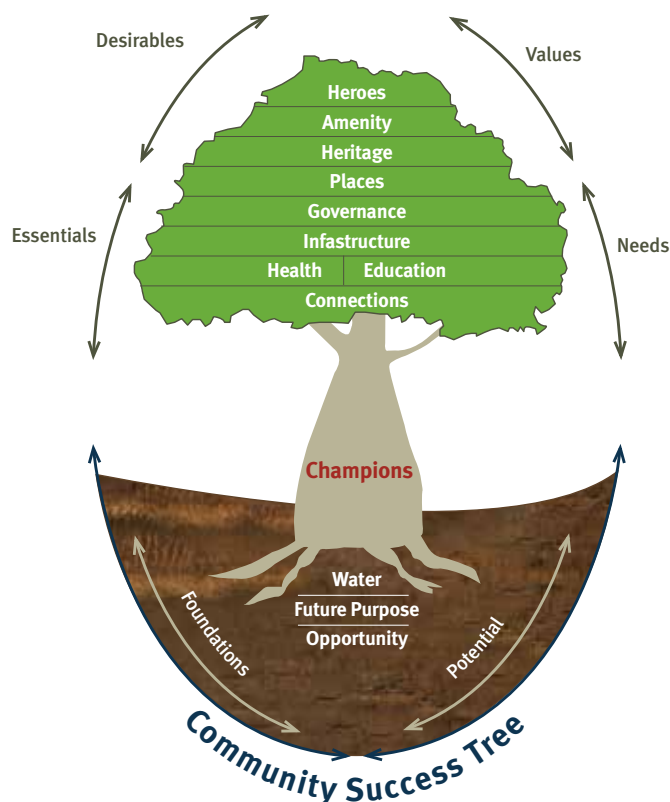
This model, derived by Mr Walsh and born in the Central West, provides a framework for the generation of ideas and collaborative discussion which focuses on the foundations, essentials and desirable elements collectively contributing to resilient and prosperous communities. Similar to 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' for individuals, this community success model articulates the necessary ingredients of community capacity and capability, and the essential underpinnings of resilience, for bush communities not just in Queensland, but applicable Australia wide.

This model shows that there are key foundations to bush communities, like water and a purpose for being. Champions are the 'trunk' of the tree, core to success. Other community elements build upon that core in a layering but interconnected way.

Episodic shocks like floods in the Central West can impact the 'pointy end' of the model – rarely do floods shake, if ever, the fundamental underpinnings of a community. But drought can, particularly persistent, long term drought without relief. It shakes the very core of a community – champions can no longer provide the leadership needed, while water and purpose for being are slowly eroded.

This is the challenge that faces many of Queensland's rural and remote communities, businesses and people.

*A model of community success for the bush  
Source: Brett Walsh, Barcaldine Regional Council*







## Our resilience baseline

In order to be resilient in the face of natural hazard events and changing climate conditions, a durable, consistent and solid baseline is essential. As reflected by the Model of Community Success, there are a number of key ingredients which contribute to the overall community resilience baseline. These include access to water, education, health services, governance and public services, employment opportunity, etc. When any one of these is altered, it can create ripple effects or cascading issues throughout the broader community.

In metropolitan areas there is a critical mass of services and users. Small changes in community services, such as the relocation of a police officer, or a teacher from one community to another often occurs without noticeable effect in urban areas. For bush communities, this impact can be significant and cumulative. To this end, the resilience baseline of bush communities must be considered in a different context to that of urban, metropolitan and coastal communities. Some changes, even small changes, can send waves of impact across our communities which can be significant, cascading and compounding.

### Our needs in the bush are very different.

Our community resilience baseline in some regards, is not as streamlined, stable or consistent as metropolitan areas, it is highly variable as a result of constant disruption. This is not to say our people are not resilient – we most certainly are. We have to be. But our unique challenges are bred of a particular set of social and economic circumstances which are almost constantly changing. In the face of that change, our individual resilience increases to compensate for the almost constant state of community-wide push and pull effects.

Community members without employment certainty in their particular industry, field or area of expertise may choose to leave the region to pursue gainful employment elsewhere, despite a strong desire to stay in the Central West. This can disrupt access to public and personal services, and makes it difficult to retain valued, skilled and professional workforces. This is not to mention the effects on personal relationships. This results in a fluctuating community resilience baseline as access to consistent services and employment fluctuate. This is not a pressure which is known in metropolitan areas, and cannot be underestimated in terms of its cumulative impact on community well-being in smaller, bush communities.

We do not need all of the services which may be available in larger, metropolitan areas, but consistency is key. This is fundamentally the most critical factor in maintaining community resilience in the Central West.

As a result of this constant disruption, we have grown our own, unique brand of individual and collective rural resilience. However, our community resilience baseline fundamentally relies on the right governmental support, in partnership with local service providers, businesses and communities.

Our level of community resilience is complex and relies upon inter-dependencies. Disaster resilience in our communities is a function of understanding our landscape, economic opportunity and diversity and strength of community. None of these elements can be considered in isolation.



## Social resilience

Our land is self-sustaining,  
and so are we.

### Social and community resilience

Our people are our greatest asset. The residents of our communities are what make the Central West a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Our communities have a special bond that cannot be replicated elsewhere. We look out for one another, we help each other and importantly, we value each other's contributions, beliefs and opinions. We especially take great pride in looking after our vulnerable – our elderly, our children and the ill. We make this our business, it is not a chore. We receive a great deal of personal fulfilment and happiness from helping our friends, neighbours and fellow community members. We come together as a community in times of need.

More so than our urban counterparts, we make a point of participating in community and social events. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to connect with others, share our stories and enjoy ourselves. These are important occasions in our calendars.

We work hard to leverage our combined skills, capabilities and capacity, and continued investment in our people to support the social, economic and environmental fabric of our region is one of our most significant opportunities.

### Skills, capability and capacity development

Investing in our people and skills development is perhaps our greatest collective priority. Building our individual technical skills across a range of disciplines and applications will enable higher participation in education, health, tourism, marketing, land management, business administration, and the list goes on.

With specific regard to digital platforms, technical skills can enable data-led councils and industry, investment in technology with the local skill-base to maintain and operate support for data collection to underpin informed decision-making, and specific skills to improve framing practices, tourism offerings and the like.

A particular focus of skill development is in support of new industries, whether this is updating skills in pest and weed control, industry best practice, or entering new markets and e-commerce. Local businesses are a key driver of economic development, and business skills and business planning are both critical pursuits for attention. All of these opportunities represent the ability for continued agricultural value-add products, advancement of agricultural technology and innovation.





## The value of local knowledge

Sharing local knowledge across generations has, until recent times, been something that has been organic. Families and communities would share stories, knowledge, skills and information for mutual benefit, and this knowledge would typically be shared across generations in varied ways.

But times have changed. More properties are now owned by corporations across the regions, and land managers who may be new to the region may need a hand in understanding the historical context of our way of life, and how our landscape works. Recent opportunities to capture local stories and knowledge by historians, as books or oral or video history archives, has enabled some of this to be retained as a community resource.

However, the nuances of how our landscape works is infinitely more complex than can be captured by stories. How long it takes for floodwaters to peak from Point A to Point B and under what circumstances, the local phone tree which might be in place, knowledge on how floodwater runs, where rivers back up, how long until bridges and culverts are cut off, is typical of the nature of local knowledge which over time, has been lost out of part of the region. This is due to a number of factors including generational land holders leaving the land, increased absentee land owners, property managers who are new to the region, and so on. Capturing this information is a critical element of community resilience, reinforcing the connections between New Possibilities and Walking the Landscape. In addition are the catchment-based Rules of Thumb which have been updated in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Desert Channels Queensland.

Tapping into the wealth of Traditional Owner knowledge across the region will help us to harness and reinforce our deep understanding of and connection with the landscape.

## Mateship and wellbeing

Our most prized attributes of life in the bush include our strong sense of community and civic pride, and outback loyalty.

How we collaborate and support each other is unique, and we value it immensely. These characteristics underpin our resilience as well as our collective identity.

Looking after one another and our own wellbeing is something we dedicate time to each and every day, even if in small ways and through small gestures. The impact of one's kind actions or heartfelt words can mean a lot. We all have a role and responsibility to play.

Sometimes, our friends and broader communities will experience events which have a profound impact. Whilst perseverance and stoicism are admirable and common traits in the bush, resilience is different to stoicism. Individual, emotional or personal resilience is our ability to call upon our inner capabilities of awareness, resourcefulness, ingenuity, open-mindedness, strength of core values and connections with others to adapt to changed circumstances. This might also include helping others around us to do the same, through personal leadership. Bouncing back to 'normal' is great – if it is possible, but in reality, some things in life happen which change us, or the course of our lives.

***“Adapting to and finding value in our new circumstances is how we reflect our own level of resilience”***

Anne Leadbeater

Being resilient is not necessarily something we are born with. Building the tools to be resilient often involves learnt processes, and is something we have to practice. Fortunately, we have many wonderful organisations available to assist – from community groups to service providers, and professional organisations. The Western Queensland Primary Health Network and Central West Rural Wellness Network reflect locally-based collaborative efforts to streamline challenges and opportunities as they relate to physical and mental health, with organisations, agencies and community groups coming together for mutual, collective benefit.



## Cultural heritage

Our First Peoples are inextricably bonded to the landscapes as the very substance of their culture. We can learn so much from their stories of the earth, tradition, kinship, and ceremony which nurtured their culture and the land for eternities.

As a young nation, the Australian Outback has a special place in the hearts of the Australian people. The pioneers have created the ultimate definition of resilience through exceptional fortitude and overwhelming hardship, resulting in a fusion of land and people and an enduring spirit which continues today.

A resilient community is one which, is connected to and celebrates its heritage. We value our rich Aboriginal and pioneering cultural heritage. We protect important Aboriginal and pioneering heritage sites, artefacts and histories and work with traditional owners, locals and historians to educate others.

As custodians of the rich tapestry of outback pioneering courage and the profound relationship between the Aboriginal people and the land, we aspire to draw together Indigenous knowledge of the land with modern practices for mutual benefit and common understanding of lived history. With help we can celebrate our abundant heritage legacy locally, preserve it for the future and reveal it to our visitors.

*Image: Courtesy of Red Ridge (Interior Queensland).  
Photo by Skin Deep Photography, Baracaldine.*





## Resilience case studies

### Best of the West - Telling our stories to the world

The Queensland Writers Centre is working with communities across the Central West to author their individual stories and communicate them to the world.

In partnership with Rotary Longreach and Queensland Health, through its 'Tackling Regional Adversity Through Integrated Care (TRAIC)' program, The Queensland Writers Centre is delivering a community-driven arts-health initiative known as 'Best of the West'.

Best of the West aims to empower the community to tell their stories rather than have a narrative imposed on them. It is a celebration of life in Western Queensland that values the work being done in the community and aims to showcase their activities to attract more engagement with the region.

### Partnering for Outback Mental Health

Barcaldine Regional Council and not for profit organisation, Outback Futures, along with the University of Southern Queensland, have partnered to introduce the 'Head Yakka' program across the Barcaldine region.

Head Yakka is a program focused on working together for outback mental health and well-being and is a unique community-based and led initiative. It is a ten year vision to strengthen mental health and is committed to facilitating long-term suicide prevention with an inter-generational approach. The Head Yakka program is being shaped by community and local government representatives with a commitment to long-term change for the region.

Head Yakka is about facilitating purpose, conversation, action and outcomes for all ages.

Head Yakka has been developed in response to local initiative. It is place-based and leverages existing community networks, and seeks to strategically achieve generational mental health change. It is an engagement-based program which focuses on the whole person in the whole community.

Head Yakka is an exemplar program which offers whole-of-community benefits with a focus on application across the whole region and more broadly across all rural and remote areas.

For further information on Head Yakka, visit the Barcaldine Regional Council and Outback Futures websites.



## Red Ridge (Interior Queensland)

Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) helps create healthy and resilient communities in remote western Queensland by bringing people together in art and cultural activities. Red Ridge seeks to help people enrich their lives and protect local heritage by working with communities, government and donors.

Red Ridge focuses on the social and economic health of western Queensland communities and all who live here. Its mission is to create better rural communities through participation in the arts.

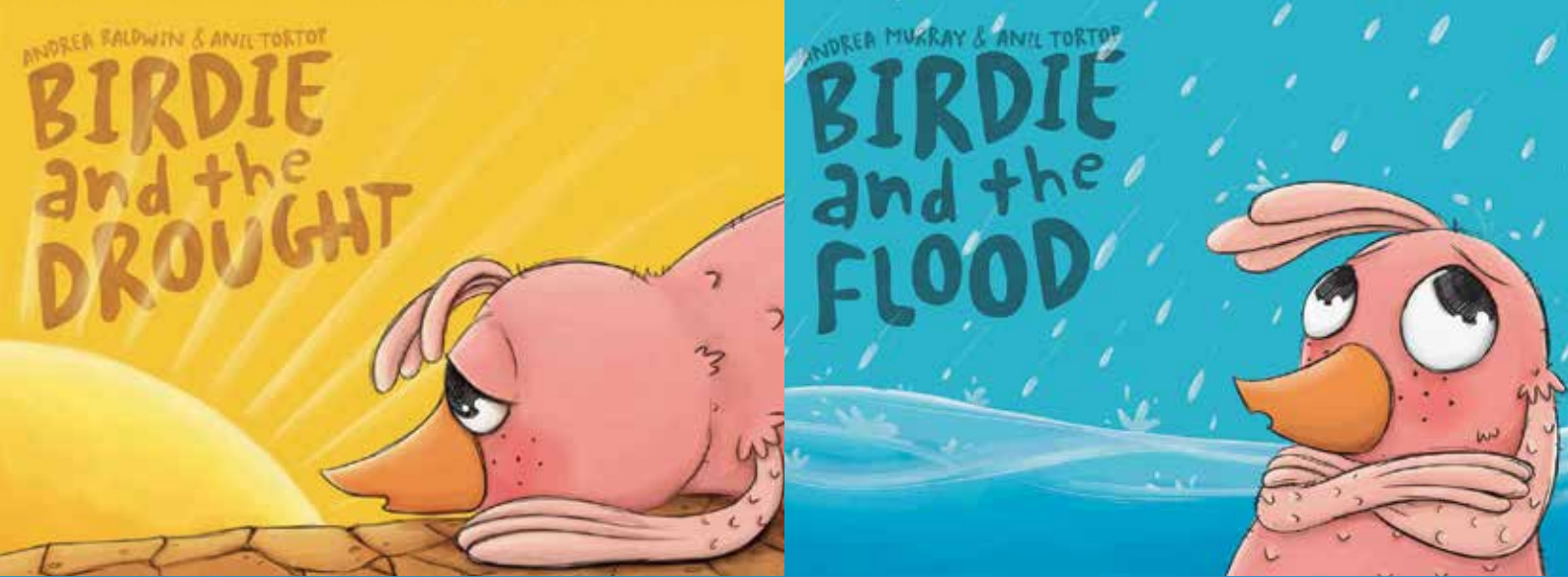
Red Ridge's success is often measured in the small groups spread across remote western Queensland who come together and express their creativity in arts and cultural activities, and in doing so break down isolation and create new and strong connections with their fellow citizens.

A few of the key successes achieved by Red Ridge over recent years includes:

- music recording of 'Just Us', a group of elderly people from Alpha who, for over 50 years, played old time music in the dance hall every Friday night
- publication of an illustrated book in the Aboriginal language of the Munga-thirri as told by two Wangakangarru/Yarluyandi women who wanted to share their language with younger generations before it was lost
- establishment of a bushcraft and leather skills program in Blackall for unemployed and persons with disability to preserve and pass on this important element of pastoral heritage. These goods continue to be retailed to the public from a shopfront in Blackall. This program brings together generations of men in the community, creating a safe forum for the discussion of men's physical and mental health. The intention is to expand this program to other communities across the Central West
- publication of the book 'Droving the Long Paddock' which tells personal tales in short stories, interpreted into artwork that provides readers with a fascinating insight into the lifestyle and hardships of working and living on the land
- the 'Life on the Road' exhibition, installed at Winton's Diamantina Heritage Truck and Machinery Museum
- the 'Voices from Yaraka' project which produced multimedia storyboards using photography, graphics and writing to tell stories of those who live in and around Yaraka
- the 'Iningai Health Arcade Art' project, which was a collaborative partnership with Central West Hospital and Health Services designed to bring together the worlds of Indigenous art, culture and health
- the 'My Earth Calls' exhibition which aimed to strengthen Aboriginal identity by nurturing Indigenous cultural heritage and expression. It provided a platform for leading and emerging Queensland indigenous artists to celebrate and share culture through their arts practices
- the commission of various public art installations across western Queensland including the Bedourie community mural.

*Image: Courtesy of Red Ridge (Interior Queensland).*





## Winton Shire community-led recovery

The 2019 Monsoon Trough event impacted more than 50 per cent of the State's land mass, and had a profound impact on the community of Winton Shire – particularly properties in the northern area of the Shire.

Of 160 rural properties in Winton Shire, 137 (85.6 per cent) were impacted or badly damaged and experienced devastating numbers of livestock loss. Millions of dollars' worth of livestock, genetics and bloodlines were lost in addition to damage and loss of fencing, cattle yards, machinery, fodder, dams, troughs, windmills, solar panels, grids, gates, tanks, bores and equipment. Telecommunications networks were impacted, power was lost in certain areas, and the immediate and ongoing loss of income has also been experienced. Families were separated in some instances for prolonged periods, and visitors to the region were unable to relocate. Overall, the social, economic, town and infrastructure and environmental hardships which transpired as a result of this event will take some time to recover from.

Winton's approach to community-led recovery in the wake of the Monsoon Trough event differed from 'usual practice'. Rather than the establishment of a state-led recovery hub for the Shire, Winton Shire Council installed its Neighbourhood Centre staff as the primary point of contact for community-led recovery. This enabled locals to speak with a local, people with whom they are familiar, to discuss their needs and recovery pathways. This personalised approach to recovery epitomises the community and people-focused values of Central West Queensland.

Winton Shire Council implemented a locally-led, coordinated multi-agency approach to recovery.

The Winton Shire Council event specific local recovery plan is included in the *North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough State Recovery Plan 2019-2021*.

## Birdie's Tree

Birdie's Tree is a program operated by the Queensland Government's Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service, with a focus on growing together through natural disasters.

Birdie's Tree recognises that events such as drought, storms, cyclones, floods or fire can be a frightening and upsetting experience for babies and young children. This program provides a range of resources to assist educators, parents and care-givers to assist young people to work through experiences and 'big feelings'.

Birdie's Tree includes an interactive web-based platform which includes games for children, along with hazard-specific fact sheets for parents and educators. Birdie's Tree also includes a series of children's books, which can aid in communicating hazard-specific and 'big feeling' information to young children.

Birdie's Tree 's books can be accessed at <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>



## Resilient towns and infrastructure

Investment in innovation and future proofing, as well as redundancy, is the foundation upon which our region will thrive and prosper.

### Resilient townships and infrastructure

Our towns and infrastructure help to support the day-to-day operations of our communities, and provide the opportunity for socialising and entertainment. Our towns are a key pillar of our wider communities.

Whilst many of our townships are not immune from the threat of natural hazards, they have been adapted to conditions over time. Whilst flooding can be welcome across the broader floodplains, flooding in town can result in profound impacts on homes, businesses, services and critical infrastructure.

The health and sustainability of our beloved towns is dependent upon a vast range of inter-connected and inter-dependent systems, social, geographic and economic. Supporting our towns to thrive, prosper and grow through new technological innovations, economic enablers and enhanced services is one of our greatest opportunities to bolster collective, community-based resilience. Achieving this in a manner which considers climate and natural hazards is fundamental, and a core focus moving forward will be enabling conditions and processes to encourage opportunities for community-based resilience.

### Infrastructure connectivity, reliability, future-proofing and redundancy

Water security issues tend to vary across the region. Longreach for example, relies on surface water in the Thomson River which can be uncertain at times, and is subject to high evaporation rates. Other local government areas rely upon ground water sourced from the Great Artesian Basin. Whilst certainty of security of water supply might be higher, other concerns involve the age of assets and the ability to replace or maintain, and the high energy costs associated with reliance on ground water pumping. This is a particular issue for consideration in regard to the ability for local governments to provide reliable infrastructure (not just water supply) capable of servicing the vast number of visitors to the region, which swells annually beyond the ratepayer base. This economic activity is vital to the region in supporting bush communities.

Energy reliability is also a key area of focus across the Central West, with opportunity for renewable energy to supplement existing energy sources – both at the property scale as well as broader communities. In a region blessed with endless sunshine, the pursuit of low-cost renewable energy is logical and, as an economic enabler, could attract new business to the region.

There are some significant solar projects underway in Barcaldine and Longreach, and geothermal energy is progressing in Winton and Birdsville. The ability to be self-reliant and invest broadly in small-scale projects to achieve independence provides potential to realise considerable savings and opportunities socially, economically and environmentally.

Digital infrastructure that more closely reflects urban connectivity is both tangible in infrastructure and an enabler of skills. As an infrastructure item, the focus is on the network itself, the type of services, black spots and coverage of internet access, bandwidth, mobile phone coverage and digital television. Jointly with the infrastructure-based consideration of enhanced telecommunications, is its role as an enabler of digital skills and local empowerment. Outback Wi-Fi, a free public Wi-Fi network launched by RAPAD in 2017, is a key example of innovation in telecommunications infrastructure delivery, poised to become one of the largest single public Wi-Fi networks in Australia, providing coverage to some of the most remote communities in the country.

The ability to grow business and support diversification has obvious flow-on effects in terms of greater quality of life and retention, and growth, of population. A combination of investment across different levels will help to improve access.

*Image: Courtesy of Longreach Regional Council.*





## Local service provision

The attraction and retention of skilled and professional workers across the Central West remains one of our greatest challenges and, in many ways, is a challenge we cannot control.

Employment is generally not an issue in the Central West, there are typically more openings for job seekers than there are persons applying. However, particular services, industries and areas of expertise are reliant upon ongoing funding for specific positions. When community members in those positions do not have certainty of employment, sometimes they may need to leave the area in order to attain employment and income certainty, despite a desire to remain in the Central West.

The ripple effect of this can be considerable on smaller communities, and proactive mechanisms should be introduced by decision-makers across sectors to ensure community disruption is minimised by corporate or organisational workforce activities.

Supporting our region to be welcoming, inclusive, friendly, and a place of great opportunity and enjoyment will attract newcomers. The Central West is a great place to raise a family. Opportunities to sell this to prospective employees from outside the region should continue to be a key focus. Whilst job seekers might not attain the position they originally applied for, they might be interested in other similar opportunities across the region. Proactive approaches to attract new workforces and their families to the Central West will help generate consistency in quality local service provision.

## Supporting the local economy

During times of drought, the local and regional economy is impacted. Graziers, landholders and businesses have less money to spend, as stations de-stock and budgets tighten. This translates to less money being spent in towns with businesses which support the region.

Proactive approaches such as buying or spending local, as opposed to outside the region, and arranging drought relief vouchers and gift cards for local businesses can be of profound assistance.

Opportunities to attract diverse income streams into the region, and retain those funds through local spending will help sustain local businesses and towns during tougher economic cycles. Diversification of economic opportunities also opens up the ability for off-farm employment, and utilising local skills, resources and equipment, can all help to sustain local and regional economies during times of drought.



## Resilience case studies

### Barcoo Living Multi Purpose Service in Blackall

The Churches of Christ Care Barcoo Living Multi-Purpose Service is a 24-bed, resident care service offering a range of personal care, therapies and accommodation.

The inception of this residential aged care facility was entirely conceived of the Blackall community. The brainchild of a consortia of local community members, this service and facility was developed to fill a gap in aged care service provision in the Blackall Tambo region, allowing families to stay together, and elderly residents to remain in the community.

The facility was financially backed by members of the Blackall Tambo region, who continue to own the facility which is leased and operated by Churches of Christ Care.

This establishment of this facility is testament to the drive and willpower of the local community to obtain specialist support services for the elderly, who are a valued part of the Blackall Tambo region's community. It also provides a valuable source of employment in the region, and is a consumer of local products and businesses which service this facility.

### Digital Enablement

In 2017 and in a Queensland-first, a free, connected Wi-Fi service over more than 300,000 square kilometres was launched in the Central West.

Facilitated by the seven member Councils of RAPAD, Outback Wi-Fi opens new opportunities for local communities and businesses, as well as visitors to the region. The service provides reliable, high speed connectivity with a single sign-on from access point to access point across towns in the region.

The Wi-Fi network also enables the RAPAD region to capture valuable data which provides invaluable insight for the local tourism and business industry.

In conjunction with Outback Wi-Fi is the RAPAD commitment to OutbackHubs. OutbackHubs provide the physical space, state of the art facilities and technical and commercial know-how to assist the local community, businesses and others to create global connections that melt away the tyranny of distance. Funded by the Advance Queensland's Advancing Regional Innovation Program, OutbackHubs is dedicated to the digital enhancement of the region.

### Connecting remote communities

The internet today is a necessity - for business, social, educational and almost every other aspect of our lives. But, until recently some of our more remote communities have found high speed digital access a challenge.

For residents of the local government areas of Barcoo and Diamantina, a narrow-bandwidth microwave network, built in the 1990's, was for voice-only service and incapable of supporting modern telecommunications applications such as the 3G and 4G mobile networks, high quality real-time broadband, fixed line and wireless internet solutions, high resolution and high quality real-time video conferencing or video streaming. These capabilities are a must when living some distance from specialist services.

Barcoo and Diamantina Shire's have collaborated to build a 700 kilometre backbone optic fibre network, from Boulia via Bedourie to Birdsville, and from Isisford to Windorah via Stonehenge and Jundah. This infrastructure now services five towns with mobile phone base stations, and broadband ADSL for four towns.

Optic fibre is the only scalable telecommunications technology that can meet virtually any telecommunications needs of remote towns and communities. This new infrastructure makes it possible for future services to be employed, ensuring it is adaptable and agile to improving technology.

This project was completed in 2017 and came at a cost of \$21.4 million, underpinning the mobile and data networks that provide much of the telemetry for flood monitoring, and provides local emergency services with access to the Government Wideband Internet Protocol (GWIP) services and mobile phone services across the two shires.

*Images: (Left) Courtesy of Churches of Christ Care, (right) courtesy of RAPAD.*





## Resilient transport

**Our connectivity across road, rail and air transport keeps our region strong and agile.**

Transport networks are an essential component of day-to-day life in the Central West. Not only do these networks enable us to travel for work and for personal purposes, but they support freight and stock movements and drive tourism as foundations of our economy. Transport provides a lifeline in a medical emergency. Our varied road, rail and air transport networks sustain our communities.

Roads across western Queensland, and indeed across all of Queensland, are subject to flooding at times. There is much more to a resilient road network than flood immunity, such as network efficiency, road safety, ground and surface conditions (such as soil type) and access to water for construction are all relevant factors.

Our road, rail and air networks support communities to access services both near and far, brings visitors into our special part of the world, enables freight and stock supply chains to operate, and supports emergency services and the Royal Flying Doctor Service to help us in our times of need. Our transport network provides the arteries of economic activity, community wellbeing and development opportunity.

Maximising our road, rail and air mobility is essential.

But, we also need to keep people safe on these networks, and understanding the skill required to drive on black soil and red soil, encountering road trains, driving long distances on variable surfaces, road closures and wet surfaces, and driving while towing are all issues for Outback drivers. Driving on outback roads is inherently different to city roads, and requires a level of know-how. Educating visitors to our region on how to drive our roads is essential.

### Road

Much of our economic and community resilience is linked to road access. Roads are our lifeblood of connectivity for our family, work, visitors and economy.

The Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group (a partnership between the Councils and the Department of Transport and Main Roads) strives to advance identified priorities to enable the region's economic visions. Managing the regional road network, including closures during flood events, in a coordinated and easily communicable way helps our landholders, businesses, communities, emergency services and suppliers, and keeps our roads in good condition.

The region has 2018 kilometres of local road per resident to maintain safely for the many hours we drive.

Driving vast distances and on black soil and red soil is a skill, and from time to time our tourists are unfamiliar with its perils. Even locals sometimes take a gamble. We work to educate visitors and newcomers to our region on staying safe on our road networks.

Our road network is of regional and state importance to freight and stock movement. It acts as a backup for coastal disaster events, enabling freight and stock to continue to move across Queensland, and the resilience of our network is paramount as climatic conditions become more unpredictable.



## Rail

Rail has connected the outback for more than a century and it continues to be a permanent and efficient transport mode for heavy freight, food, domestic needs and business, delivering farming and hazardous materials.

Increasing efficiency, exploring new opportunities and ensuring safe mobility options are central to maintaining tourism, freight, stock and logistics movements.

The confidence shown by the private sector in the purchase of the Longreach rail and freight service is a step change for the Central West and access to this supply chain network can only offer enhanced opportunity for logistics and freight for the future.

## Air

Regular and affordable air services contribute to the liveability of our towns and the accessibility of visiting services and expertise which partners with our region.

Reliable and safe air service infrastructure underpins a critical area of community need for remote residents. It provides security that health services are nearby and able to land in the case of medical emergency, supporting the great work of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Air services have also contributed significantly to remote damage assessment during disaster events in the spirit of mateship and collective recovery.

Opportunities to expand air services across a range of infrastructure for locals and tourism or passenger services can be investigated as a long-term addition to the connectivity options for our region. Maintaining the current services for a range of needs is essential.

Connectivity and access provided by a resilient transport network are primary contributors to the resilience of our people.





## Resilience case studies

### Sealing the Outback Way

The Australian Government is investing \$330 million to upgrade key sections of the Outback Way, the 2800 kilometre route that links Laverton in Western Australia with Winton in Queensland via Alice Springs in the Northern Territory.

This investment is made up of a number of commitments which together are delivering upgrades to the Outback Way over a more than 10 year period.

Sealing the Outback Way will improve the inter-jurisdictional transport network by increasing connectivity and reducing travel times, in addition to cutting costs for freight operators and enhancing economic opportunities for the cattle, mining and tourism industries. Recent studies demonstrate the benefit to stock health by travelling on sealed, rather than unsealed roads.

The investment in the Outback Way will also improve access for remote and Indigenous communities to health and social services. By improving access to health and social services, these upgrades help build on government initiatives intended to improve standards of living and equity for Indigenous communities.

The potential cascading economic and tourism benefits for the Central West from this investment requires pre-planning, to maximise the potential opportunities which sealing Australia's longest shortcut are to generate.

### Queensland's stock network

The Long Paddock is more than just a national stock route network. It helps us move stock to market and mitigate drought risk, but it also comprises considerable heritage, economic, mobility and environmental values which are unique to our region.

Where surrounding land might have been previously cleared for grazing purposes, the Long Paddock continues to comprise some of Queensland's most untouched environments. From a fauna and flora perspective, it provides key habitat and ecological values which support environmental connectivity and biodiversity.

It also offers immense latent tourism potential in terms of rural and outback heritage experiences. Much of our pioneering heritage is steeped in tales of courageous explorers and hard-working drovers moving large herds across Queensland.

Our stock route network connects us with the past whilst helping us navigate into the future.

In partnership with the Queensland Government, local government authorities maintain delegated authority for the management of local stock routes. Beyond the assessment of applications and issuing of permits, Council's manage the environmental condition of the local network as well as its facilities. The process aims to sustainably manage the Long Paddock for generations to come.

<https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/>



## Outback Road Safety

Roads in Western Queensland are unlike those anywhere else, and require particular adaptive driving approaches. The Queensland Police, Department of Main Roads, local governments and tourism authorities undertake regular safety and awareness campaigns with a focus on remote and desert driving.

Western Queensland road user numbers swell every autumn through to spring, reflecting the peak tourist season. Some tourists, and even locals from time to time, are underprepared for their journeys. It is a key challenge across the region, but is also one which can be mitigated.

Recent campaigns demonstrate the conditions to be expected across our vast country, and how travellers can be better prepared. Always travel with emergency fuel, food and sufficient water when travelling long distances.

Outback roads often stretch across areas of black soil and red soil which, with the slightest bit of rain, can become incredibly soft. Even in the dry, braking on loose dirt and bulldust can catch people by surprise, and can cause the rear end of vehicles to slide out.

This can lead to accidents, especially when passing road trains and trucks which should always have the right of way. When approaching a road train on an unsealed or narrow surface road, it is important to move off the roadway to allow the road train to pass.

For travel tips, visit the Outback Queensland website <https://www.outbackqueensland.com.au/>

*Images: (Left) Tips for Safe Driving sign in Diamantina, (right) Birdsville Big Red. Courtesy of Eye on Photography.*





## Resilient economy

A diverse economic offering will help us reach a new frontier.

Vitality, diversification and sustainability.

Our townships and communities experience boom and bust weather and economic cycles as part of everyday life. In our part of the world, our economic prosperity varies with that of the weather and climate, shifting between flooding rains and persistent drought. Sometimes swift, sometimes endless, but always part of life.

Agricultural production is the largest contributor to the region's economy and the Central West contributed to 48.4 per cent of Queensland's agricultural value in 2013. Since 2013, agricultural production has declined significantly from approximately 50 per cent of the regional economy in 2013 to 25 per cent in 2017 due to drought.

Notwithstanding the above, the number of businesses (by percentage) which turned over more than \$2m per annum in 2018 is identified at:

Central West - 6.5 per cent

South East Queensland - 6.5 per cent\*

While the agricultural sector has declined, the tourism industry has increased in value by approximately 7 per cent per annum over the last three years.

Investment in economic enablers such as saleyards, wild dog fencing, tourism opportunities and supporting infrastructure is an important step in championing community resilience. The linkage and inter-dependency of economic vitality to factors of liveability, community and social resilience is undeniable.

*\*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics*

## Diversification

Agricultural production is proudly our primary economic activity. However, we recognise the need to value add, innovate in business and spread economic activity across our strengths, to reduce climate dependency impacts.

Working together, local innovation, industry expansion, e-commerce or value-adding can all contribute to the sum of regional prosperity and help sustain our communities year-round.

Economic stability is part of the foundational baseline of resilience in the Central West. Stability will be achieved through diversification, smoothing seasonal fluctuations and building industries and businesses which are not climate-dependent.

For example, the vast open spaces of our region provide a perfect setting for testing, handling, practice and programming of drone technology.

We have great opportunity to increase profitability and population through continued rollout of the wild dog fencing program across the region to enable transition to sheep and stock diversification.

Driving excellence in tourism experiences which build depth include great food, excellence in service, ease of booking and finding information, choice and quality in accommodation and transport options, helpfulness and attitudes of the friendly outback people.

Building local skills in e-commerce, business planning, social media marketing and campaigning will strengthen our business future.

A diverse economy underpins a strong and vibrant community which can continue to thrive and trade in a challenging economic and environmental climate.



## Supporting liveability

The liveability of our region is integral to individual and community wellbeing. It is essential to attract and retain population, skilled workers and tourists alike.

Each township engages in significant community-building activities which fosters community pride, volunteering and a close-knit community fabric. Projects such as sculpture trails, heritage showcases, streetscape improvements, shade, walkability, water features, parks, community events, even 3D pedestrian crossings help to support liveability.

The liveability of our towns attracts investment, drives the economy and nurtures civic pride. To maintain high standards of liveability, our towns depend on energy, access to water and telecommunications for growth and stability and providing the standard of services our region needs and deserves.

The holistic attractiveness and opportunity of our towns and communities underpins our region's economic vitality. The resilience of our communities is directly and indirectly tied to our liveability.

*Image: Courtesy of Blackall-Tambo Regional Council.*





## Resilience case studies

### Championing economic enablers

#### Saleyards

Saleyards are not only a hub of economic (and often social) activity on sale day, but offer a cascading range of economic opportunities for local businesses from trucking companies, to places of accommodation and the local bakery. The Longreach, Winton and Blackall Saleyards represent key economic enablers within respective localities, generating local prosperity as stock flows through.

The saleyards in the Central West reflect tremendous local effort - the Longreach Saleyards resuming cattle sales in early 2019 after almost five years without operation, and the Blackall Saleyards becoming the first organic-certified saleyards in Outback Queensland, and only one of two in all of Northern Australia.

#### Tambo Sawmill

The Tambo sawmill, which closed in 2011, re-opened in 2018 - driven by the support of the local community. The sawmill, which led to the over-subscription of the Tambo housing market and bringing new families into the region, has generated 15 new jobs which is a substantial level of growth for a town with a population of less than 400.

New workers and families in town have led to a one-third increase in enrolments at the local state school, with flow-on effects by way of increased social and economic activity.

#### Creating new industry

As part of a strategic focus on technology and digital transformation, RAPAD continues to play a key role in the delivery of opportunities in drone technology. The focus of this approach seeks to help grow local capacity, attract investment and boost regional business potential.

The growing drone, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), sector presents significant opportunities for Central West Queensland. From tourism, to emergency responses, to land management – drones have a very real and practical application for our region. Untapped business potential is waiting with opportunities, including drone piloting, drone training facilities and hosting drone testing for Beyond Visual Line of Sight, all in demand – the sky's the limit.

Continued advocacy in UAV industry opportunities across the region will position the Central West to take advantage of research and development activity, driving the future growth of drone technology as a key emerging industry across the region.

The Outback Aerodrone symposium, launched in 2018 in a partnership between RAPAD and Barcaldine Regional Council, showcases the open skies of outback Queensland along with emerging equipment innovation - with a focus on the multitude of opportunities for integration of UAV technology into agricultural and other activities.

### Not just a fence

The Queensland Feral Pest Initiative Cluster Fence project was born out of a partnership between State and Federal Governments and RAPAD, with a focus on preventing stock loss through wild dog attack and enabling the re-introduction of the sheep industry.

Cluster fencing is not just a fence. Wild dogs cost jobs and livelihoods for many in the Australian agricultural sector. Each year millions of dollars' worth of livestock are killed or maimed by wild dogs. In western Queensland alone, the region has seen a 75 per cent drop in sheep numbers.

This negative impact reaches beyond the farm and into the social and economic fabric of outback communities. Populations are declining, employment prospects are dwindling, shop fronts in the main streets are increasingly vacant and there is little economic stimulus.

The sheep industry is labour intensive, which means more jobs, which means more money circulating through a town, which means more opportunities in services, education, employment and social life.

Under the pressures of wild dog attacks, population decline and drought the community came together to work on turning their situation around. Meetings were held across the region searching for a solution because it was clear to all that continuing with business as usual would result in no business and no one to do business with.



Community leaders and wool growers admitted they could not break the drought, but they could protect their remaining sheep from wild dog attacks and be ready to capitalise on extraordinary growth once the drought broke.

In 2016 RAPAD councils and communities partnered with the state and federal government to build fences around groups of properties to stop wild dogs and bring back the sheep. The RAPAD Queensland Feral Pest Initiative (QFPI) Cluster Fence project was born.

With the support of RAPAD and QFPI, neighbours agreed to work together to build 1.5-metre-high fences around groups of properties. These fenced clusters of land now had a physical barrier to stop wild dogs entering their properties and attacking sheep. At the end of round two an area larger than Hong Kong had been protected behind the fences. The project was part funded by government, but the local landholders paid for about 75 per cent of the cost, their contributions exceeded \$18 million.

Aside from being able to control the number of wild dogs on their properties and protect sheep the fence:

- creates jobs and grows employment opportunities
- enables wool growers to have better and more predictable productivity, in turn offering stable and predictable employment
- provides more stability to the community in terms of long-term work and economic surety
- grows school numbers, boosts sporting teams, brings people with skills to the region
- reduces the amount of time wool growers need to be out looking for wild dogs and maimed sheep and allows them to use that time on other areas of the farming operation
- removes the constant emotional stress producers were experiencing during lambing when dog attacks happened every night
- enables people to become better equipped to withstand future drought events.

## Sustaining innovation

In the early 1990s, Outback Queensland was in the grip of long-term drought, coinciding with a crash in wool prices.

The community of Tambo, south of Blackall, convened to workshop and brainstorm opportunities for industry diversification to help sustain the economy of the town into the future. Merging ideas to assist the local industry, create employment and attract tourists - Tambo Teddies was born, and has since grown into an iconic brand. Its name is synonymous with the small town.

Tambo Teddies are now stocked in retail outlets across Australia, and have been gifted to Royalty, Premiers and Ministers. Paying tribute to their origin, each teddy is named after a local station and comes with a special poem.

The Tambo Teddies story is one of resilience. Through collaboration, innovation and dedication, the town of Tambo harnessed the challenge of drought to establish and champion a local opportunity in economic diversification which has since, placed Tambo on the map.

Still going strong after almost 30 years in business, Tambo Teddies is a truly successful example of tackling the effects of drought and commodity price flux head on, with cascading benefits across the broader community.

## Creating drive tourism

The Lake Dunn Sculpture Trail was created organically, simply as a small number of sculptures created by one local artist for children who regularly travel on the route for school.

Local Aramac artist and station-owner, Milynda Rogers, unintentionally started the trail by placing a small number of handcrafted sculptures, formed of recycled metal, on the roadside - beginning what would become the Lake Dunn Sculpture Trail and one of the Central West's finest tourist experiences. Now stretching over 205 kilometres, with over 37 sculptures, the Lake Dunn Sculpture Trail attracts thousands of visitors to the Barcaldine region each year and has grown into the largest free-to-the-public sculpture loop in the world.

Organic, community-led and supported projects such as the conception of the Lake Dunn Sculpture Trail are testament to the innovative and creative spirit of our outback community, transitioning a local venture into a domestic and international tourism attraction.

*Image: Lake Dunn Sculpture Trail. Courtesy of Barcaldine Regional Council.*





## Resilient environment

**We recognise Traditional Owners and locals as key custodians and stewards of our land into the future.**

The climate of the Desert Channels region of Queensland is hot and dry, typical of desert climates with highly variable, predominantly summer rainfall, usually associated with trough systems. Summer days are long and hot, but the winter brings beautiful clear blue skies, warm days and cold nights. Significant rainfall events can occur as remnants of monsoonal or cyclonic events further north, bringing water down the channels without localised rainfall.

Rainfall can range from around 600mm in the north of the region to 165mm at Birdsville in the south, depending on the season.

Evaporation is very high.

The natural ecosystems of the Desert Uplands, Mitchell grass plains and Channel Country are adapted to the boom and bust climatic cycle of highly irregular rainfall and flooding events, but it is a significant challenge for the region's pastoral industry and town communities.

The ancient landscapes of the region range from the western Desert Uplands of the Great Dividing Range, through open Mitchell grass plains, to the floodplains of the Channel Country and sand dunes of the Simpson Desert. The water flow of the Queensland portion of the Lake Eyre Basin are still largely in their natural or unregulated form, and form critical natural environments for the region. Aboriginal people have lived in the region for at least 50,000 years, and the region is dotted with sites and artefacts which are testament to a long and enduring history on this land.

Our relationship to the landscape underpins almost every aspect of our life in the Central West. It supports our economy and our social activities, and community wellbeing. We take our responsibility as stewards of this land seriously, and we are proud of our collective dedication to good, sustainable land management practices, with the intent to leave this land in a better condition for future generations.

## Biodiversity

The biodiversity of the region, composed of the species, the ecosystems and the genetic diversity within, is supported by the intact regional landscapes, ranging from the flooding river plains of the Channel Country, the woodlands of the Desert Uplands to the open grasslands of the Mitchell Grass Downs.

Six of Queensland's bioregions are represented in the Central West region, predominantly Mitchell Grass Downs and Channel Country, which covers 81 per cent of the region. The Desert Channels Bioregion fans out from the south-western corner of the state where the Cooper, Diamantina and Georgina flow into South Australia and onto Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre. The cast of braided floodplains extend in all directions covering more than half of the region and surrounded by gravel or gibber plains, dune fields and low ranges. The Desert Channels Bioregion includes the sparse shrublands and woodlands of the Simpson Desert dune fields.

The Channel Country Bioregion is banded by the next largest Bioregion, the Mitchell Grass Downs, which occurs in a belt from Blackall in the east across the plains to Longreach, Winton, Middleton and Boulia, and on to the Northern Territory border. This Bioregion comprises about a third of the region, is predominantly treeless interspersed with drainage lines and isolated remnant plateaus, otherwise known as Mesas or Jump-ups. It is of course dominated by Mitchell grass, sometimes with a low tree layer of gidgee.

Smaller areas of the region comprise the Desert Uplands Bioregion, which includes the scenic red rocks of the Aramac ranges. The uplands take on a north to south orientation from Muttaborra and Hughenden in the north to Jericho and Barcaldine in the south, and form part of the Great Dividing Range. This Bioregion occupies about a tenth of the region and is characterised by sandstone ranges and sand plains with remnants of ancient weathered plateaus. It supports a wide diversity of plant species including dense eucalypt and acacia woodlands and spinifex grasslands.

The remaining three Bioregions of the Queensland portion of the Lake Eyre Basin include the Mulga Lands of sandy soils and endless Mulga woodlands, the Northwest Highlands of rugged ranges and spinifex grasses, and the Brigalow Belt. Each of these Bioregions account for only very small areas of the region.





## Fauna and flora

Within these landscapes, over 2500 plant species can be found, as well as over 748 native animal species such as small marsupials like the iconic Bilby, or freshwater fish found only in small artesian springs.

There are many wetlands of high ecological significance, including those from the Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia. There are six in the Eyre Creek sub-catchment alone, one in the Barcoo sub-catchment, five in the Cooper Creek catchment including Lake Yamma Yamma, and the Cooper Creek swamps. Other important listed wetlands are found along the Thomson and the Diamantina Lakes area. These wetlands perform vital habitat roles and support an amazing array of migratory bird species which flock to the region when the Lake Eyre Basin comes to life with floodwater.

The unique landscape and biodiversity of the region is equally respected by the pastoral industry, demonstrating how well-managed agriculture can co-exist with natural values.

The region includes one of the largest areas of organic beef production in the world, driven principally by the natural irrigation of the highly productive Channel Country. The native pastures of the region are in remarkably good condition and land managers are embracing sustainability and looking towards the future.

The most commonly listed threats to the biodiversity and ecology of the region today are total grazing pressure, introduced plants and animals, altered fire regimes and altered hydrology. After floods, fires or droughts our ecosystems tend to recover without being permanently changed. This 'shock-absorbing' capacity, or resilience, enables ecosystems to recover from shocks up to a limit.

Resilience is usually stronger in natural ecosystems as they have an inherent diversity of plants, animals and connected habitats. By removing or endangering diversity of plants and animals, we simplify our landscapes and reduce resilience. The impacts of climate change may place additional stresses on the ecology and productivity of the region, particularly if the boom and bust cycles to which we have adapted change and become more intense and prolonged into the future.

The natural features and characteristics of our region help us to understand the 'how and why' of climate interactions with our landscape - why floodwaters move the way they do, why erosion and silting occur in certain ways and in certain locations, and so on. This deep understanding of our landscape reflects our deep connection with the land.

The Walking the Landscape map journals prepared by the Department of Environment and Science contains an array of detailed information and data sets for further examination.





## Resilience case studies

### Desert Channels Queensland

Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ) is a community-based organisation tasked with strategic and sustainable natural resource management planning and implementation in the Desert Channels region of Queensland.

With a focus on promoting good land management practices for rangelands health, DCQ's project commitment to the eradication of prickly acacia in the upper Lake Eyre Basin commenced in 2013 with a field day which showcased innovative weed control techniques and facilitated a series of community discussions to find alternatives to existing strategies which did not focus on core areas. These core areas were so dense that agricultural production was reduced, and these sites then acted as seed sources for further spread.

The views expressed suggested that, by addressing infestations within core areas and being able to manage dense and ultra-dense infestations, private investment and participation would return. The greatest challenge however, was that investment had to shift from single landholders to groups of landholders participating in a joint coordinated plan to ensure longevity of investment and ongoing management.

This saw the development by DCQ of a strategic plan for control of the core areas of woody weeds within the Lake Eyre Basin.

Works to date have demonstrated that collaborative, coordinated, strategic weed control, built on innovation and supported by good science and baseline information, has the ability to effectively control prickly acacia in the region. The program, which is a response to community concerns, has generated a significant support base even with the ongoing drought.

The project also effectively built strong links between local government and State agencies and gained additional partners as control works have been shown to be effective.

### Understanding our Landscape

Understanding how the landscaping operates is a key activity of anyone living and working on the land in the Central West. Taking the time to learn about historical natural hazard events, however the landscape has been shaped, the geology upon which the Central West is comprised - all provide a piece of the puzzle which helps us understand how and why some hazards transpire the way they do, and the impacts they can impart.

Celebrating this knowledge is also part of the outback way of life, and this is especially the case in Diamantina Shire. In April 2019, the town of Bedourie was poised and waiting for the arrival of floodwaters into Eyre Creek from upstream. In celebration of the forthcoming floodwaters, a community social event was hosted at the Bedourie Community Hall where residents could guess the height of the flood peak. Bringing the community together for a fun, social event, events like this also help to enable the sharing of local flood knowledge across generations.

Also in 2019, the Drama in the Desert students of the Diamantina hosted a community barbecue and show called 'Flood'.

Celebrating, connecting and sharing stories on how the landscape works assists in the inter-generational transfer of local knowledge on how the landscape functions both with water, and without.



## Strategic pathways

### Achieving our shared objectives

We are unique in the Central West - in every way possible. Our landscape and environment, our communities, our economy - our needs and aspirations are different to communities in other parts of Queensland. This is reflected across the range of strategies prepared by RAPAD, its member Councils, non-government organisations and community groups over recent years.

New Possibilities draws upon this foundation of information. Acknowledging the integrated, complex and far-reaching concepts of resilience, the objectives of New Possibilities is focused on the following:

#### Thriving on uncertainty

The only thing certain about life in the bush is uncertainty, and we have learnt to thrive on it. Economic uncertainty, climatic uncertainty and uncertainty of service provision remain not only our most significant challenges, but our greatest opportunities.

#### Maintaining strong settlements

Our townships are the heartbeat of our communities. Strong settlements support our regions by enabling access to goods and services, opportunities to socialise and relax, and supporting diversity in employment which underpins population retention and service provision in the longer term.

#### Enhanced liveability

Seeking out opportunities to bolster liveability and quality of life experiences as a key opportunity to support our valued communities, and to attract and retain skilled workers, professionals and their families - showcasing why the Central West is a great place to call home.

#### Economic diversification

Economic diversification will help us ride the wave of climate variability between flood and drought. New opportunities across our region emerge, particularly in terms of tourism, agriculture, technology, e-commerce and service provision.

#### Adapting to climate uncertainty

Droughts may become longer and floods, more intense. Proactive planning to explore our opportunities to harness and thrive on change is inherent to our way of life in the bush. Working together will help us continue to capitalise on innovation and ingenuity in adaptation.

### Environmental longevity through local custodianship

Every aspect of our way of life is linked to the landscape in which we live, and we care for it and respect its processes deeply. We have a very deep connection with our land and its health and sustainability is important to us and we rely on it. We want to leave this land in a healthy condition for future generations.

We recognise the value of local knowledge and local community members in administering key land management practices, building skill and capability and sharing knowledge through mutually beneficial processes. These skills carry us through times of drought.

### Supporting capacity and capability

Building capacity and capability across governments, the private sector, industry groups and communities through knowledge sharing, collaboration and a focus on resourcing will assist us to work better together, and work towards continuous improvement for our region.

### Connection

Resilience is about connection. Connection between people and communities, connection with our land and its processes, environmental and ecological connectivity, connection to economic markets, and connection to our past, our history and local knowledge. Maintaining connection requires multi-dimensional approaches.

*Image: Jundah Longreach Road.*





## Foundations for resilience

New Possibilities sets out foundational elements of resilience along the lines of social, towns and infrastructure, transport, economic and environmental aspects. These systems do not operate individually or in isolation in the Central West, but are inter-connected and inter-dependant. Because of the size of our communities, we are inherently exposed to changes of a scale which are simply not felt in urban and metropolitan communities. These changes can send ripple-effects through our communities, our economy and can affect our levels of service provision.

Activities across the Central West embody the foundations of resilience, but it is important to outline exactly what these are, so as to keep them front of mind. The enabling behaviours summarised below are but a few of the key ingredients demonstrated by existing, successful resilience-supporting activities across the Central West, and the people who lead them - which should continue to be championed, nurtured and supported.

### Collaborative partnerships

Collaboration by its very nature requires parties to identify their own vulnerabilities in order to successfully negotiate workable partnerships. On many ventures, either locally or regionally, shared efforts will generally realise greater benefit. Working better together and sharing common goals on multi-objective processes across businesses, organisations, industries and across different sectors (including research and academic sectors) helps achieve project success, as well as broadened networks and horizons.

### Leadership, advocacy and championing

Many of the case studies contained within New Possibilities highlight the strength of regional and rural leadership which exists across the Central West. Much of this sentiment is borne of the need to deliver on certain community needs. Leaders are not necessarily those 'at the top', but those who move first to embrace new futures and opportunities, in spite of risk. Community members are leaders, placing collective benefit and opportunity at the forefront of decision making, and this culture is strong across the communities of the Central West.

## Capability and capacity building in skills and innovation

Hand in hand with leadership, commitment and embracing technology is the culture of innovation. This is a re-occurring theme across a range of existing strategies in place in the region, including the 2016 Smart Central Western Queensland - Digital Plan which devotes an entire section to entrepreneurship, enablement, smart hubs and a mobile innovation centre.

Through the case studies incorporated within New Possibilities, dedication and commitment to doing new things, reinventing opportunities, building regional skills across the community and adopting innovative approaches to getting things done are each at the core of various project successes.

***"RAPAD communities stand ready and willing to reinvent themselves as one of the most resilient communities in Australia by developing and implementing strategic projects to enable residents, businesses, councils and investors to make decisions with confidence."***

RAPAD, 2018

## Matching funding criteria to demonstrated investment benefit

Adopting a strategic, rather than an ad hoc, approach to matching funding criteria to demonstrated investment benefit is key to maximising community benefit from funding opportunities. It is an integral part of expanding, diversifying, branding and resourcing local and regional visions. The region's reliance on grant funding is high, thus making it a premier aspect of concentration.

## Mission and vision

The Central West is unique. Building stronger community cohesion through common goals and community-led solutions is a strong and valued characteristic of the Central West community. The cultural brand of the Central West unites communities and transcends differences for the common good.



## Strategic pathways to champion resilience

A range of strategies to inform collaborative approaches to the diversity of resilience objectives across the region have been identified. These strategic pathways form a regional 'blueprint' for coordinated resilience and prosperity action across Central West Queensland.

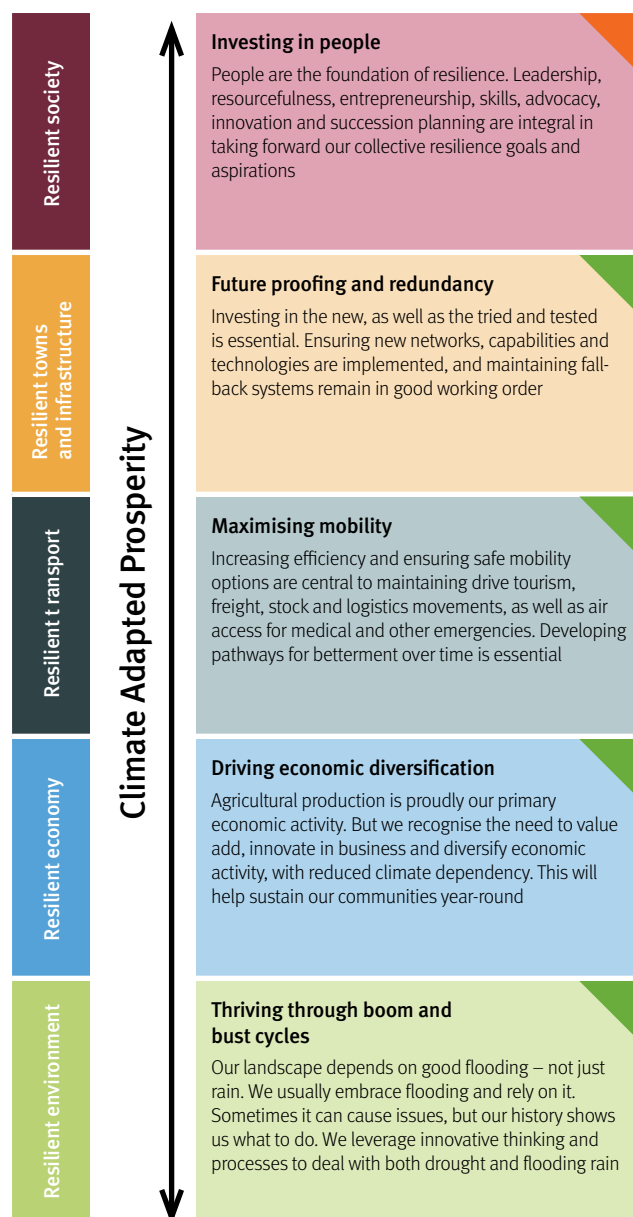
These strategic themes represent potential pathways to meet the aspiration of the region from a social, towns and infrastructure, transport, economic and environmental perspective.

The themes and pathways are further supported by a range of regional and local actions which link back to the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience, aligning with the Queensland Government's state-wide priorities and commitments for disaster resilience. These strategic pathways and actions will be moved forward under the direction of RAPAD as well as individual stakeholder groups.

Queenslanders are disaster resilient when...



Above: The four objectives of the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience.







<b>Maintaining local knowledge</b> Our way of life and the sustainability of our landscape depends upon inter-generational local knowledge and legacy. We celebrate and share our local and historical knowledge for the benefit of the wider community and future generations	<b>Fostering mateship and wellbeing</b> A prized attribute of life is strong community ties and outback loyalty. How we collaborate and support each other is unique. It underpins our resilience and identity. We come together to look after one another's wellbeing	<b>Protecting our cultural heritage</b> We value our rich Aboriginal and pioneering cultural heritage. We protect important Aboriginal and pioneering heritage sites, artefacts and histories and work with traditional owners, locals and historians to educate others
<b>Network reliability</b> Our towns, economy and wellbeing depend on energy, access to water and telecommunications for growth and stability. We recognise serious weather events will cause disruption, and we prepare for this as a matter of course	<b>Quality local service provision</b> Health, education, employment and human services are critical to the ongoing resilience of our bush communities. We act to enhance capability and capacity of our communities and attracting quality services and people to our region	<b>Supporting the local economy</b> Supporting local businesses during tough times ensures their survival and ability to service the regional community. Deliberate actions to maintain population, and support local businesses will continue to underpin the sustainability of our towns
<b>Driving road-related education</b> Driving vast distances and on black soil and red soil is a skill, and from time to time our tourists are unfamiliar with its perils. Even locals sometimes take a gamble. We work to educate visitors and newcomers to our region on staying safe on our road networks	<b>Managing road networks during flood</b> Much of our economic and community resilience is linked to road access. Managing regional road closures in a coordinated and easily communicable way will help our landholders, businesses, communities, emergency services and suppliers	
<b>Showcasing the Outback</b> We have so much to offer! We will continue investing in drive and fly tourism across the region. We will focus on seasonal smoothing, product development and connectivity across the central west, supporting local business and the region's economy	<b>Focusing on liveability as an economic foundation</b> The holistic attractiveness and opportunity of our towns and communities underpins our region's economic vitality. The resilience of our communities is directly and indirectly tied to our liveability	<b>Investing in economic enablers</b> Economic enablers are the foundation of strengthened resilience in the central west. Access to efficient renewable energy, reliable telecommunications and local water supply solutions will underpin a strong and vital community across the central west
<b>Focusing on integrated sustainability</b> Our economic and broader community resilience is intrinsic to the sustainability of our land. We know caring for country, supporting rangelands health, weed and pest management contributes to our economic longevity and environmental goals	<b>Understanding our landscape</b> We make it our business to learn, understand and share how the landscape around us, and its systems, work. We welcome newcomers into the region by sharing key knowledge and tools, inducting people into our way of life	<b>Managing our natural resources</b> We work to enhance the multitude of benefits and values of our rivers, landscapes and our stock route network. They are the lifeblood of our region with key economic, transport and biodiversity values, and form the foundation of our regional identity



## Delivering the strategy

### Working together to implement the Strategy

New Possibilities will be implemented as a partnership across the seven local governments of the Central West. The Strategy actions will be driven through local leadership and regional resourcing under the direction of the RAPAD Board, with appropriate support from other coordinating bodies and entities such as District Disaster Management Groups (DDMGs), the Central West Rural Wellness Network, the Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group, Desert Channels Queensland, not-for-profit collaborations, and the like.

This approach recognises that while actions are best delivered locally, multi-disciplinary regional level support is also required to encourage cross jurisdictional collaboration, provide technical assistance and proactively assist project implementation. The following opportunities exist to strengthen community and climate-related disaster resilience in the Central West:

- supporting a resilient society through community networks and an inherent ability to adapt to changing circumstances
- enhancing economic resilience through industry diversification, leveraging cascading economic opportunity, encouraging business diversity, focusing on collaboration and partnerships across public and private sectors, enabling infrastructure and business continuity planning
- enhance infrastructure through pathways for improved communications and transport linkages for societal and economic benefit
- supporting community-led recovery opportunities and operations following events
- improve funding certainty through proactive planning, prioritisation and coordination for collective benefit.

### Enduring governance and funding arrangements

New Possibilities provides an opportunity to examine and support how local governments, community and service organisations work together to achieve common resilience outcomes for the Central West. New Possibilities will inform strategic and coordinated approaches to community and climate-related resilience activities across the region so that funding and action is aligned to a common intent.

Under this model, the Strategy acts as the regional 'blueprint' for coordinated and sustained action. A RAPAD-agreed governance arrangement will support the implementation of the Strategy and an enduring commitment to championing resilience into the future.

Stakeholder-identified key requirements for the successful implementation of New Possibilities are as follows:

- a broad, multi-disciplinary approach to resilience building
- sustaining governance arrangements, funding, and resource capability for implementation of resilience actions over time
- a clear understanding of how resilience arrangements interplay with Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements
- greater collaboration between government and non-government organisations to optimise resilience service delivery and efficiency
- clarification of the proposed resilience implementation arrangements at state, regional and local levels so that local actions can be programmed and delivered accordingly.

### Local leadership

Local governments and non-government organisations are encouraged to establish their own multi-disciplinary resilience working groups to transition community and climate-related disaster resilience to front-of-mind in all local government functions. This could be achieved by combining existing recovery group arrangements with an ongoing resilience focus over the calendar year.





## Regional coordination

Regional coordination is proposed to fall under the existing governance of the RAPAD Board, with a strong link to other existing related governance arrangements such as the relevant District Disaster Management Groups (DDMGs) of Longreach and Mount Isa.

An opportunity also exists to establish an officer-level working group or Regional Resilience Committee, including external third parties such as emergency services, members of the Central West Rural Wellness Network, industry group representatives and State agency representatives. This group could provide direction and decision making for the implementation of the Strategy and efforts of those tasked to deliver it.

## State facilitation and support

As a locally-led and regionally coordinated Strategy, the role of the State is intended to be one of provision of enabling measures such as administration of grant funding programs, delivery of core governmental functions that interface with resilience building, and facilitation/coordination of support that can assist implementation.

Implementation of New Possibilities provides the opportunity to communicate resilience needs to the State Disaster Coordination Group. This is a multi-agency committee which convenes to discuss State-level resilience and disaster-related challenges, activities and opportunities across Queensland.

The Queensland Resilience Coordination Committee, which reports to the Queensland Disaster Management Committee, has also been convened as an implementation action under Resilient Queensland 2018-2021. Its role is to oversee initiatives and measures necessary to enhance disaster resilience.

## Coordinated funding approaches

New Possibilities seeks to utilise existing funding streams in a more efficient and strategic way.

A suite of resilience actions have been provided to RAPAD and its member local governments, synthesised against existing strategies prepared by RAPAD and its member local governments, as a means to deliver on the strategic pathways set out in this Strategy. Local governments will collaborate via the RAPAD Board or relevant DDMG to develop project business cases based on these resilience actions in advance of funding rounds so that they are ready to be 'pulled off the shelf' to assist funding and grant application processes as they become available.

## Monitoring and evaluation - measuring success and pivoting approaches over time

A key aspect of New Possibilities moving forward is to establish a clear standards-based implementation framework for integrated resilience planning. This approach focuses on deriving specific, regionally-based and fit-for-purpose benchmarks for resilience implementation that is cross referenced to roles, responsibilities and funding. A benchmarking approach aims to provide a range of metrics that reflect the diversity of the region. It is proposed the identification and establishment of maturity benchmarking be further developed as implementation occurs over time.





[www.qra.qld.gov.au/centralwest](http://www.qra.qld.gov.au/centralwest)