

## Annexure 2

### Stakeholder Consultation and Partnerships

Key stakeholders for RDANI include local communities, Federal, State and Local Governments, business enterprises, government departments, quasi-government agencies or groups, educational, health and other institutions.

In developing the plan, RDANI chose four consultation methods to ensure an accurate picture was painted of the region. These were a series of community meetings throughout the region to learn of the aspirations of residents, an analysis of existing RDANI plans and projects, demographic research, and review of all Local, State and Federal plans, Catchment Management Authority Plans, various government department and agency plans.

The Federal Government is strengthening the RDA network so committees can contribute actively to regional development planning and coordinated initiatives, alongside programs developed by each RDA for its region. RDA Plans are expected to be built on 'ground up consultation with local communities and stakeholders' and to incorporate community issues and priorities, as well as data and analysis to identify infrastructure and major project priorities and proposes future actions for each RDA to undertake in coordinating economic development for their region.

RDANI has engaged heavily with key stakeholders after the past 12 months to work collaboratively on numerous projects and initiatives, including:

- Working with DBCDE and local communities to ensure a smooth transition from analogue to Digital TV;
- A series of workshops in conjunction with DIAC and NSW Trade & Investment to promote our Skilled Migration Program;
- A forum for local energy users in conjunctions with the NSW State Government to explore opportunities for leveraging gas reserves in the region;
- In conjunction with schools and the University of New England, we held a 'Live, Train and Work' careers expo;
- RDANI led a successful bid on behalf of 7 LGAs to obtain \$600k to replace street lights with energy efficient bulbs;
- A Digital Rural Futures conference in partnership with the University of New England; and
- A regional industrial land survey in partnership with our 13 LGAs

### **List of Key Stakeholders consulted as part of this Plan:**

- Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Department of Trade and Investment
- NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Northern Local Aboriginal Lands Councils
- NSW Business Chamber
- Local Business Chambers
- Regional Australia Institute
- Northern MDB Advisory Committee
- New England North West NSW Business Chamber
- TAFE New England
- University of New England
- Armidale-Dumaresq Shire Council
- Glen Innes Severn Shire Council
- Gunnedah Shire Council
- Guyra Shire Council
- Gwydir Shire Council
- Inverell Shire Council
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council
- Moree Plains Shire Council
- Narrabri Shire Council
- Tamworth Regional Council
- Tenterfield Shire Council
- Uralla Shire Council
- Walcha Shire Council
- Namoi ROC
- Border ROC
- State Member for the Northern Tablelands (Adam Marshall MP)
- Federal Member for Parkes (Mark Coulton MP)
- Federal Member for New England (Barnaby Joyce MP)
- State Member for the Upper Hunter (George Souris MP)
- State Member for Tamworth (Kevin Anderson MP)
- State Member for Barwon (Kevin Humphries MP)
- New England Medicare Local
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
- Hunter New England Area Health Service
- NSW Department of Education and Communities

- State Training Services

### **RDANI Community Consultation Process**

Consultative mechanisms include consideration and integration of many existing stakeholder plans, community dialogues, and meetings with government officers. RDANI intends to continue close consultation and feedback initiatives.

In 2010/11, RDANI conducted 21 community meetings across the region, as exploratory conversations or dialogues. Participants were asked to identify their community's key strengths, assets, successes, challenges, opportunities, and then consider key priorities, first steps and key performance measures that would indicate progress. RDANI also conducted audits of physical facilities in 35 towns.

Communities can at times be sceptical that 'they are consulted on plans' but nothing much seems to come of them. This dialogue process aimed to achieve buy-in and to shift from consultation to genuine collaborations of stakeholders including local councils, and to help shift communities from 'passive recipients of services' to active partners and collaborators in community development.

Community leaders were able to, in many cases, outline innovative local solutions to their problems. They generally understand what is needed in their communities, local economies, towns, and what will likely work on the ground with effort.

Key shared regional issues, priorities and local solutions emerging from these dialogues were grouped on a regional, sub-regional and community scale. This analysis informed the RDANI committee on key regional communities' issues.

The RDANI committee then considered gaps in existing policies and programs to identify strategic initiatives that could be best progressed by RDANI.

### **Contribution to Plan**

In summary stakeholders, including local and regional level government agencies, have been involved with and contributed to this RDANI Regional Plan through:

- Providing existing local community plans for consideration
- Identification of issues and priorities in community and other meetings
- Contributing data to town physical audits for use in vision benchmarking
- Continuing RDANI strategic initiatives and sub-region initiatives
- Ongoing consultation and feedback

### **Key Learnings from Regional Planning Documents**

Twenty-four regional planning documents were analysed to itemise and under-stand priorities, determine current actions, and consider complementarities and alignments among these, and with insights from community planning dialogues.

Documents analysed included: Federal and NSW State plans, local government strategic plans and economic development plans, community strategic plans, the Hunter New England Area Health

strategic plan, New England Medicare Local Plans, Catchment Management plans, Shire visions, Land Council economic development plans, UNE strategic plan, and the Rural and Regional Taskforce plan with priorities for this state.

Of note, is the deal of consistency across the region in terms of priorities and alignments in issues and development themes that together can be viewed as an interlinked and self-reinforcing system where the priorities and needs compound. Seven themes, all important, are summarised below:

### **Education and skills training – capacity building and pathways to employment**

Education, training and employment options are one part of a larger system for tackling youth unemployment, youth retention, and enhancing capacity of all across the region including to shift away from old industries and old agriculture.

These changes depend on the reconfiguration and regeneration of new, and community-aligned, education, cross skilling and training options and facilities, in order to enable a more flexible workforce. A whole-of-region approach is needed for education, skills training and job pathways with collaboration around education, trade training and job pathways.

Localities are aware of their training needs and their training capacities, particularly core areas of expertise. In many cases, adequate and more than adequate facilities exist to house trade and training centres but these are under-utilised or resources are duplicated. There appears to be need for an audit of existing training and education options and a reconfiguration and decentralisation of the existing options so that smaller communities can service their youth and those from other communities in their core areas of education and training expertise.

### **Transitions for Regeneration**

Erosion of existent industry, recentralisation of industry and difficulties attracting new industry to smaller population centres is a key theme. Many communities see the need to attract new forms of industry and agriculture but also recognise their options for doing so are limited due to lack of business support services and adequate transport and health systems to service new workers. There is urgent need to access new technologies, particularly broadband, and this is a key theme in every population cluster.

There is potential for the region to become a model for renewable energy – there are already systems in place and the cultural shift is underway.

Opportunities for industry development in the region, according to the NSW Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services include:

- Advanced manufacturing (water technology innovation, fabrication)
- Food processing, value added agriculture and animal genetics
- Energy (bio-fuels, alternative energy including wind farms, natural gas)
- Transport and logistics
- Continued growth in tourism and events
- Niche food and wine value adding
- Government collaboration on agribusiness R&D with UNE
- Aviation industry
- Aged care services
- Environmental services (waste, design, sustainability)

### **Aboriginal employment, education and industry**

All population clusters recognise the rich heritage of Aboriginal communities, but are at a loss to know how best to service their Indigenous populations in terms of access to training, employment and educational opportunities. There has been a shift from seeing aboriginal underemployment and social exclusion as a burden to recognising Aboriginal communities as an asset.

### **Integrated approach to relocation and tourism**

Community planning meetings and several planning documents identified the need to strategise and support relocation to the region by raising the profile and visibility of the region and its communities. Many smaller population centres have tourism potential but lack the facilities and transport options to be able to service that potential.

### **Health**

Northern Inland population clusters, particularly smaller localities, identify lack of access to regular and basic health and community services as one of their great needs. Lack of GPs willing to relocate to small centres plus lack of viable and regular transport options means these populations are not serviced adequately.

There is need for an audit of existing health and community services across the region, to calculate their reach and presence in the smallest population clusters. There also appears to be potential for one stop access points in mid-size clusters so communities can have one point of information access and referral for health and community services. Even if services exist many people do not know because the system is not integrated or visible.

### **Transport infrastructure**

Transport needs are identified in many key documents. The recentralisation of train and airline services, lack of choice in providers and timing, and lack of frequent access to regional hubs and metropolitan areas from smaller population centres are all issues in the Northern Inland.

Communities have seen erosion of train, air and bus access to large centres or cities. Even large centres have experienced a shrinking of transport options, such as, loss of planes to Inverell and Gunnedah and infrequent bus services to Brisbane and Sydney from key Northern Inland centres. A number of towns in the region do not have taxi services.

The erosion or non-existence of transport infrastructure has spin-off effects on many other areas of community life: the lack of and/or limited transport options have severe ramifications for the servicing of education, employment and healthcare, and contributes to out-migration of young people relocating for education.

### **Partnerships and Champions**

As planning documents identify, addressing these priorities requires innovative and collaborative approaches. Community dialogue sessions extended the idea of strategic, integrated, regional and sub-regional partnerships between localities, sectors and councils. Partnership approaches are recommended in the Rural and Regional Taskforce and NSW Aboriginal Land Council Northern Region reports.

The formation of strategic partnerships, whether at regional or community level, should reduce duplication and increase visibility in health and community services, align and extend education and transport priorities and allow whole-of- region and sub-region approach to addressing issues.

RDANI could provide a partnership brokering service (it does to an extent now) that links communities along regional and sub-regional corridors, and industry sectors. This could be done face to face or through an e-portal. Furthermore, many communities recognise they have local champions who are leaders in their field or have innovative approaches to industry, training, community services etc. There is great potential to support these local champions or local solutions and to create mechanisms for cross fertilisation of ideas and approaches across the region to help communities replicate solutions that may be useful in their context.

### **Learnings from Community Meetings**

The aims of the RDANI community consultation process are outlined above. The conversations and ideas at each meeting were mapped into a SEED (social, economic, environmental) diagrams

Many issues raised at the 21 regional community meetings are referenced throughout this plan. Key messages are further outlined below and add to building understanding of key priorities for Northern Inland NSW, pointing to projects that can be progressed by RDANI.

### **Regional themes from community planning meetings**

The key theme emerging across each of the regional community meetings was the importance of regenerating regional communities by building on existing strengths, local businesses, attracting tourists and devising strategies to enable the relocation of new people, especially families, and new enterprises. Northern Inland communities are keen to revitalise their towns and local economies, are welcoming to newcomers and support value-adding business enterprises. They are looking for support through strategic partnerships with their LGAs and State and Federal agencies and associated development funding.

### **Key shared regional community priorities**

- Health and Aged Care Services – better access to GP consultations especially in the smaller communities and expansion of Aged Care facilities to cope with aging populations. An integrated Health, Aged Care and Allied Services strategy especially for the ageing population with a focus on GP consultations, health agencies, community service and investment partnerships.
- Skills Development and Employment; Opportunities for Youth - Communities want to support and retain their youth, provide recreational and educational spaces, build skills, and include youth in regional enterprises and economies. Expanding schools into community skill development centres providing local training, job readiness programs, traineeships, apprenticeships and meaningful work partnerships with local business networks are prominent priorities. New initiatives around this are widely regarded across the communities.
- Over-Reliance on Volunteers and Ageing Community Leaders – a majority of communities spoke of how volunteering efforts, the life-blood of their communities, are tiring. Support and succession planning for volunteers is needed. Innovative ideas include co-mentoring and providing a space for young people to engage in meaningful work projects and community building.

- Supporting Relocation by Raising the Profile of Regional Communities – communities are keen to build on the strengths of local business enterprises and tourism for local events and concurrently encourage ‘relocation’ of tree changers, young families and retirees to ‘regenerate and achieve critical mass’. A small but significant number of communities see value in **regional tourism corridors** to attract and retain visitors for longer periods and as a strategy to build local connections and invitations to re-locate.
- Enterprise Development, Service Hubs and Employment – Communities need and want to diversify industries and **attract investment into value-adding processing or new niche enterprises**. Communities want to build on signs of this direction across the region, for instance, at Moree, Inverell, Glen Innes, Manilla, Ashford, Tenterfield, Warialda and Bingara.
- Strategic Infrastructure Investment – Regional communities feel constrained by lack of infrastructure investment particularly in roads, telecommunications and air transport. Current policies are seen to centralise infrastructure and key services to a few regional centres rather than supporting and regenerating regional communities. Particular communities need focused grants. Broadband is seen by a majority as an opportunity to attract and value-add to existing enterprises.

Figure 14 below, summarises Northern Inland community priorities based on population clusters to feed into development of RDANI priorities and initiatives.

<i>Population Cluster</i>	<i>Towns and Cities</i>	<i>Community ISSUES/priorities/key initiatives</i>
<b>Small Rural Towns (CLUSTER A)</b>  500-1000 residents	TINGHA, CURLEWIS, WALLABADAH, BOGGABILLA, ASHFORD, MUNGINDI, DELUNGRA, DRAKE, EMMAVILLE, BELLATA, BELLATA, DEEPWATER, WOOLOMIN, BUNDARRA, CARROLL, SPRING RIDGE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health – GP/Dental services for wider community</li> <li>• Integrate GP service with Aboriginal Medical Service.</li> <li>• Industry generation for employment and enterprise.</li> <li>• Regenerate social infrastructure.</li> <li>• Create land for housing/‘Lifestyle’ blocks</li> <li>• Youth social inclusion strategies</li> <li>• Health Aged Care precincts</li> <li>• Business Enterprise Employment Strategy</li> <li>• Casual work and crisis programs for youth.</li> <li>• Improvement of access to health services.</li> <li>• Rural and urban road upgrades/repairs.</li> <li>• Local business enterprise development/retain and attract</li> <li>• Main Street regeneration</li> <li>• Promote tourism.</li> </ul>
<b>Small Regional Towns (CLUSTER B)</b>  1000-3000 residents	URALLA, MANILLA, GUYRA, WALCHA, WEE WAA, WERRIS CREEK, KOOTINGAL, WARIALDA, BARRABA, BINGARA, BOGGABRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and tourism – expansion of attractions</li> <li>• Business development.</li> <li>• Youth education, unemployment and social inclusion strategy.</li> <li>• Accommodation strategy</li> <li>• Revitalisation of main street</li> <li>• Promoting a ‘Whole of Region Package’.</li> <li>• Attract new families and businesses-critical mass</li> <li>• Educational partnering opportunities for youth.</li> <li>• Farm and Business start-ups</li> <li>• Water infrastructure</li> <li>• Marketing strategy for relocation and repopulation</li> <li>• Develop social capital traineeships.</li> <li>• Secure LGA funding</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community projects</li> <li>• Festivals and events.</li> </ul>
<b>Medium Regional Towns (CLUSTER C)</b>  <b>3000-7000 residents</b>	GLEN INNES, TENTERFIELD, QUIRINDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting travellers to stop in town</li> <li>• Focus on expansion of broadband.</li> <li>• Water, health, roads and community infrastructure.</li> <li>• More aboriginal employment within main street businesses</li> <li>• Effective branding strategy for tourism</li> <li>• Integrated health, youth and community services.</li> <li>• Growth of local economy through new and existing businesses.</li> </ul>

Population Cluster	Towns and Cities	Community ISSUES/priorities/key initiatives
<b>Large Regional Towns (CLUSTER D)</b>  <b>7000-10000 residents</b>	INVERELL, MOREE, GUNNEDAH, NARRABRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Health Service and facilities, including aged care</li> <li>• Transport Audit</li> <li>• Access hub for high-quality community services</li> <li>• Attract building and construction enterprises</li> <li>• Attract high-speed broadband</li> <li>• Change public perception of towns</li> <li>• Education initiatives/Effective skills development</li> <li>• Develop a tourism 'corridor' with neighbouring towns/LGAs.</li> <li>• Solar thermal energy enterprises</li> <li>• Training and employment strategy</li> <li>• Decentralisation - attract people and businesses to relocate.</li> </ul>
<b>Small Regional Cities (CLUSTER E)</b>  <b>10000-20000 residents</b>	ARMIDALE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong resilient economy</li> <li>• Build on strengths</li> <li>• Environmental Services and renewable energy</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• Creative initiatives</li> <li>• Regional regeneration</li> </ul>
<b>Large Regional Cities (CLUSTER F)</b>  <b>Over 40,000 residents</b>	TAMWORTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Enterprise Development</li> <li>• Education, Skills and Training.</li> <li>• Transport Industry Cluster</li> <li>• Food Processing industry</li> </ul>

## Review Process

Overall, RDANI is confident of improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the more than 40 towns and surrounding districts of our region. This RDANI Regional Plan provides a strong strategic framework. It will be a living document, evolving with updates of base data, annual review and recalibration of priorities and initiatives.

Structured review is important to ensure useful results are being achieved and these align with community priorities, and build on and add value to remits, energies and activities of agencies, groups and enterprises across the region.

RDANI will set in place, in consultation with overarching agencies and key stakeholders, a systematic and arms-length review process to be conducted annually in advance of updating the Plan. This annual review will evaluate progress, achievements and otherwise, effectiveness of RDANI involvement, identifies issues, and proposes changes. The next review round should commence in early 2014.



It is envisaged key stakeholders will form part of the review process and RDANI will also be looking at ways of obtaining structured feedback on both Interaction and Project activity during the course of each year.

Review of the RDANI Regional Plan and performance against KPIs will also meet requirements of Government stakeholders as per the Annual Business Plan.