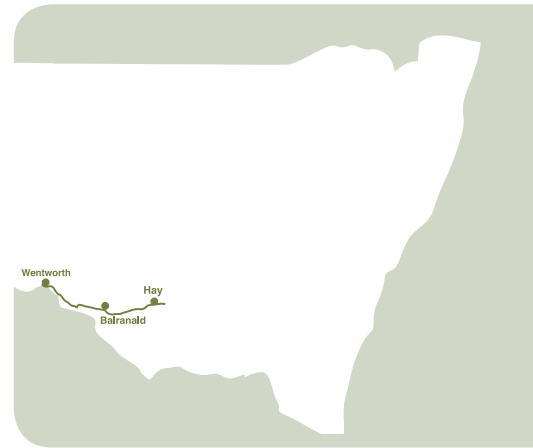


Economic Development Strategy

Investment Attraction Plan Hay, Balranald and Wentworth



Sustaining our Region for a Productive Future



- Front Cover: Sheep Mustering - Hay Shire
Inside Front Cover: Yanga Lookout - Balranald Shire (J.Maguire)
Inside Back Cover: Murray River - Wentworth Shire (Booth Associates)
Back Cover: Cattle Grazing - Hay Shire

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LIST OF ACRONOMYNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CMA	Catchment Management Area
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
FRS	First Release Sites
LGA	Local Government Area
NBN	National Broadband Network
RAMROC	Riverina and Murray Organisation of Councils
RDA	Regional Development Australia

1.0 Executive Summary



This Investment Attraction Plan is a companion document to the Economic Development Strategies prepared for the Balranald, Hay and Wentworth Shires. The Economic Development Strategies were developed in 2011 and in the process, identified four projects to be pursued collaboratively between the three Councils in a Cluster format. These projects are:

- Increase tourism;
- Development of a Lobby Strategy;
- Development of a Digital Economy Strategy; and
- Promotion of high value Agricultural Opportunities.

These four projects are described in the following sections.

2.0 Increase Tourism



Background

In the development of economic development strategies for the three councils, in conjunction with this report, tourism was rated as a high priority for economic development. The three LGAs share many attributes such as rich heritage, scenic rivers, location on major highways and on doorstep of the outback. Collaboration between the three Councils on regional tourism promotion offers the opportunity to maximise the value of tourism budgets and enhance the tourism industry across the region.

Strategy

To create and build on opportunities to work with kindred councils in a cluster alliance on specific regional tourism initiatives.

Action

To develop projects that enhance cluster wide tourism opportunities including:

- Interpretive Centres;
- Creation of Lake Mungo Outback Route; and
- Promotion of the region.

Each of these projects is described in more detail in Section 2.1 to Section 2.3 below.



2.1 Collaborative Interpretive Centres

Benefits

- A collaborative approach will provide continuity of Interpretive Centres across the three Councils for ease of operation and consistency for tourism;
- The three Interpretive Centres can collaborate to promote the wider region. Travellers heading east to west (or vice versa) will typically pass through the three Shires. The Interpretive Centres can promote all tourism attractions across the three Shires to visitors to increase the stay and spend per visit; and
- A collaborative approach will provide knowledge sharing to ensure each Interpretive Centre can adapt and adjust layout, information and operation to maximise its reach.

Current Status

There are no Interpretive Centres currently in the three cluster shires. Balranald Shire has received funding for an Interpretive Centre in Balranald through the Riverina Red Gum Regional Employment and Community Development Fund. The location, design and operation of this facility are now being considered.

Wentworth Shire Council's Economic Development Strategy recognised the development of an Interpretive Centre as a key project to support tourism in the Shire. The first stage is to assess the feasibility of an Interpretive Centre. Hay Shire did not select an Interpretive Centre as a project in their Economic Development Strategy, but did adopt regional promotion (including tourism) as a project to progress.

Hay has a unique position on the eastern side of the Cluster, on the junction of three major highways and the marquee facility of Shear Outback on the Sturt Highway. It is essential an Interpretive Centre compliments rather than competes with Shear Outback. A passive Interpretive Centre could link in with this facility at this prime site, or in the CBD.



Steps

Each Council considers the status of and/or potential for an Interpretive Centre.

If considered worth pursuing then:

- The Tourism and Economic Development Teams from each Council should meet and discuss the opportunity for collaboration on Interpretive Centres;
- Wentworth and Hay tourism and Economic Development Teams assess the feasibility and potential funding streams for Interpretive Centres;
- If considered feasible then form an alliance and seek funding to build Interpretive Centres in Hay and Wentworth, via the Lobbying Strategy; and
- Balranald Shire to finalise and construct their Interpretive Centre.

Once operating, the Tourism and Economic Development Teams from the three Councils should meet quarterly to review progress and share knowledge.

Timeline

- Assess the opportunity including collaborative approach and feasibility by 30 June, 2012;
- Finalise design of Balranald Interpretive Centre by 30 June, 2012;
- Secure funding and complete design of Hay and Wentworth Interpretive Centres by 30 June, 2013;
- Complete Balranald construction and open facility by 30 June, 2013; and
- Complete Hay and Wentworth construction and open facilities by 30 June, 2014.

Lead Entity

- Councils' Tourism and Economic Development Teams.

Partners/Potential Resources

- Murray and Riverina RDAs;
- National Parks and Wildlife Services
- Tourism operators; and
- NSW Tourism.

Success Indicators

- Opening of Interpretive Centres;
- Increased tourism numbers; and
- Increased tourist spend per day.

2.2 Creation of the Lake Mungo Outback Route

Benefits

- Development of all weather access to Lake Mungo from Balranald and Wentworth;
- Attract more visitors to the region; and
- Collaborative approach to a cornerstone tourism asset.



Current Status

Access to Lake Mungo from Balranald and Wentworth is by dirt road which is frequently closed by wet weather. Lack of assured access to Lake Mungo is constraining tourist numbers and discouraging tourism operators from developing Lake Mungo packages.

Lake Mungo is an internationally recognised region that has the potential to attract significantly more visitors if access year round can be provided.

The project could be undertaken in conjunction with proposed mineral sand mining operations in Balranald and Wentworth Shires.

Steps

- Councils from the cluster and adjoining shires including Broken Hill, Mildura and Swan Hill should meet and determine potential to form an alliance and the best means of collaboration on this project.
- Develop a business case for the upgrade of existing roads to Lake Mungo to all weather roads;
- In conjunction with all stakeholders develop the Lake Mungo Outback Route concept/brand;
- Lobby State and Federal Governments for funding; and
- Implement project.

Timeline

- Meet with potential council collaborators – May 2012;
- Develop a business case for road upgrade 31 July, 2012;
- Secure funding for road upgrade 31 December, 2012;
- Develop brand 31 December, 2012;
- Upgrade roads 31 December, 2015

Lead Entity

- Councils' Tourism and Economic Development Teams.

Partners/Potential Resources

- Mildura Rural City, Swan Hill Rural City and Broken Hill City Councils;
- National Parks and Wildlife Services
- Murray and Riverina RDAs;
- NSW Tourism;
- Mineral sands mining industry; and
- Tourism operators.

Success Indicators

- Formulation of an alliance between councils;
- Upgrading of the Lake Mungo access roads to an all weather standard;
- Development of the Lake Mungo Outback Route brand; and
- Growth of visitors to Lake Mungo.

2.3 Promotion of the Region

Benefits

- Maximise regional outcomes from tourism investment;
- Share resources; and
- Increase exposure of each Shire.

Current Status

There is currently minimal collaboration of regional tourism promotion across the three Councils' Tourism and Economic Development Teams. The opportunity exists to collaborate on regional promotion to maximise awareness of the region and grow tourism. This could include advertising, web presence and road signage. For example, traffic heading east should be encouraged to "Cross the River and See Hay" whilst passing through the Wentworth and Balranald Shires. Likewise traffic heading west through Hay Shire should be encouraged to "Cross the River and See Balranald", and traffic heading west through Balranald Shire should be encouraged to "Stay in NSW and See Wentworth".

Steps

- Tourism and Economic Development Teams for the three Councils should meet and form an alliance and refine the concepts for regional promotion;
- Council should develop a common theme and determine nature and extent of road signage;
- Councils can assist each other by identifying suitable land for road signage, especially private or Council owned land to minimise RTA restrictions;
- Develop a collaborative online presence and approach to regional tourism promotion including utilising social media;
- Lobby RTA and NSW Tourism for support to implement;
- Install road signage; and
- Implement other promotion strategies including online presence.

Lead Entity

- Councils' Tourism and Economic Development Teams.

Partners/Potential Resources

- Murray and Riverina RDAs;
- National Parks and Wildlife Services;
- RTA and NSW/ Tourism; and
- Tourism operators.

Success Indicators

- Formulation of a regional promotion alliance;
- Development of regional promotion program; and
- Installation of road signage across region.

3.0 Lobbying Strategy

Background

The three Councils have identified that lobbying of State and Federal Governments has been poorly executed in the past. This must change to maximise opportunities for collaboration with all levels of government. The three Councils feel neglected by all levels of Government, and they would like to build a positive focus on their region that assists them with more appropriate lobbying strategies into the future.

Councils tend to only engage with governments and departments when they require funding or assistance. Often when Councils meeting with government the targeted audience is unaware of the projects being presented. This less than optimal presentation structure requires the department to conduct research into the designated project, often without a true appreciation of the Councils' desired outcomes and provide feedback to the Minister's office before any further discussion can be conducted. A Lobby Strategy provides Councils with a structured pathway to improve engagement with governments.

Strategy

To develop a more structured and consistent approach to lobbying of State and Federal Governments and their agency staff.

Action

Utilise a consistent and strategic approach to build a stronger more cohesive relationship with government departments and Ministers' offices to encourage a reciprocal approach.

The Lobbying Strategy is based on a strategic cluster wide approach to engaging with State and Federal Government departments and ministerial offices to maximise Council's future opportunities. The Strategy is based on consistent dialogue and interaction between all parties and that interaction is both informative and beneficial for all parties.

The lobbying strategy provides a structured process to building a relationship with the appropriate people in all sections of Government. This relationship will allow more constructive dialogue when the Minister is finally engaged into discussions. A key component to the strategy's effectiveness (especially early in the process) will be for the three Councils to continue to work together in a cluster approach to allow maximum exposure for the region as a whole.

Steps

- Form an alliance to undertake lobbying of government and agency staff with kindred councils;
- Identify appropriate projects or challenges within the region and develop a Government 'Briefing Paper' on each item. The 'Briefing Paper' should be developed in the following format;
 - Issue – A short paragraph on the project or challenge;
 - Background – Information relating to the project/challenge;
 - Discussion Points – What you would like to discuss with the Minister regarding the project/challenge. This can be done in bullet points and allows for further discussion;
 - Note: the whole briefing paper should be limited to two A4 pages in normal font to allow for easy but informative reading;
- To provide initial focus for the three Councils, the Lobbying Strategy could work towards establishing key government relationships by raising awareness of and identifying key contacts for the development of;
 - Interpretive Centres;
 - Lake Mungo Outback Route;
 - Regional tourism promotion (including road signage);
- Identify relevant Ministers (and their advisors) and Departments (and their relevant staff) relating to each project and challenge. There may be several Ministers identified for each of these;
- Allocate a budget to allow travel to both Sydney and Canberra on a regular basis to engage with appropriate departments and ministerial offices. Quarterly trips on a staggered basis during Parliamentary sitting days should be sufficient;
- Identify the most appropriate person within Council to conduct the engagement phase – this could be the Economic Development Manager (or equivalent) as they are usually across all of Councils' departments. It is recommended that any Councillors, Mayor or General Manager are not engaged at this early stage as they are best engaged once a meeting with the Minister is established;
- Develop a relationship with an appropriate Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) at a State Level and Federally, the local Member or Senator. These representatives are best able to assist with introductions and on-going organisation with departments and ministerial offices;

- Begin by meeting appropriate departments and Ministerial offices and providing a background to the region, as well as some of the defined projects and/or challenges. Continue to build the relationship with each department/office by keeping them updated on the status of the project/challenge;
- When discussions have progressed to a stage for the appropriate Minister to be engaged, organise for Mayor and/or General Manager to meet with the Minister; and
- This process is to be completed on a regular basis to ensure a focus is kept on the region and the happenings in the region.

Timeline

- Immediate and ongoing.

Lead Entity

- Council's Economic Development Team.

Partners and Potential Resources

- Riverina and Murray Organisation of Councils (RAMROC);
- Murray and Riverina RDAs;
- Local Members of Parliament;
- Members of Legislative Council;
- Federal Senators; and
- Departmental Offices.

Success Indicators

- More productive meetings at higher levels of Government by General Managers and Mayors.
- More funding opportunities attracted to the region.

4.0 Digital Economy Strategy

Background

In 2009 the Federal Government released the Paper “Australia’s Digital Economy:Future Directions”. This paper recognises the importance of the internet, the digital economy and supportive infrastructure. The Australian Government considers the provision of world class, high-speed broadband as an enabler which will increase engagement with the digital economy. It is essential the three Councils are part of this engagement.

Strategy

Councils have identified in their economic development strategies the significant potential of the internet and digital economy to deliver socially inclusive wealth generation and significant productivity gains within local industries. The digital economy will reduce geographic disadvantage and result in a more robust community fully engaged within the local, national and international economies.

Early attraction of NBN to the region will facilitate the development of the digital economy.

Action

Present a strong Cluster Group case to NBN Co demonstrating the intent to capitalise on the NBN rollout and position the region’s businesses, schools and residential communities to access the infrastructure, tools and capacity so as to take full advantage of a resurgent global economy.



Steps

Step 1 – Engagement

Understand what a “Digital Economy” is and what the benefits are. Engage closely with communities to develop a picture of understanding the acceptance of the internet and the NBN rollout.

Engagement will be conducted in several ways:

- Surveys;
- Focus Groups;
- One on One meetings; and
- Industry meetings.

Step 2 – Education

Compile information from Step 1 to develop a stream of educational projects to up-skill the communities for the future.

If the community is to embrace the strategy and utilise new technology - then they need to understand its benefits.

Identify education and training required by both business and community members to increase their knowledge and usage. Work with the community to support them in developing knowledge which maximises opportunities arising from new telecommunications technology and improves utilisation of the processes.

Step 3 – Infrastructure

Understand our current telecommunications infrastructure and its capacity to deliver the level of service expected in the future by business and the community. Identify the extent and the limitations of our existing telecommunications network, by preparing a “Telecommunications Capability Study”. This Study will assess the capacity of wireless, satellite, fibre and copper network and develop a strategic plan for the installation of the NBN.





Step 4 – Attraction

Take Strategy to NBNC Co to support the attraction of the NBN to the region. Work with NBNC Co to optimise the installation and roll out process.

Step 5 – Take-up

Once the installation of the NBN is complete, work with NBNC Co and internet service providers to promote adoption of the NBN.

Council checklist

As demonstrated by the rollout in Tasmania and the five First Release Sites (FRS) on the mainland, NBNC Co is committed to working closely with local government on the design and deployment of the NBN in their area, ensuring a lasting positive legacy for the local community.

The following checklist provides a guide for local councils as to the information NBNC Co, its contractors and agents may need to assist in the NBN planning and privatisation processes.

- Zoning maps and planning controls;
- Identification and location of heritage conservation areas and/or heritage items (both indigenous and non-indigenous);
- Location of environmentally significant areas eg conservation/protected areas, national parks/nature reserves, wetlands, bushland, significant street trees;
- Any specific local planning controls, policies or codes that may apply specifically to telecommunication facilities;

- Confirmation of any local exemptions, restrictions or prohibitions for telecommunication facilities;
- Development application requirements (if necessary), including likely timeframes, processes etc;
- Location of Commonwealth land and education, health or government facilities; and
- Location of major development proposals and areas (eg greenfield sites), major infrastructure locations or areas that require major upgrades to infrastructure.

Councils could work with NBNCo and its contractors/agents to rent facilities necessary for use during the rollout, such as depots, warehouses, temporary site offices, shopfront information offices etc.

Timeline

- Immediate

Lead Entity

- Councils

Partners/Potential Resources

- Business and the community;
- Murray and Riverina RDAs; and
- NBNCo.

Success Indicators

- Early attraction of NBN; and
- Strong adoption of NBN by business and community.

5.0 Promotion Of Agricultural Opportunities

Background

In the preparation of Economic Development Strategies for the Balranald, Hay and Wentworth Shire Councils the opportunity for the development of new agricultural businesses, in particular high value irrigation was identified.

The region has available land well suited to a range of high value irrigation cropping systems, and secure access to water via the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers underpinned by the combination of highly reliable high security irrigation entitlements in New South Wales and the high proportion of “come and go” general security entitlements also in this State. There is an opportunity to attract investment in irrigated agriculture across the region to access these key inter-linked resources.

Strategy

To attract investment in high value irrigated agriculture to the region.

Action

Undertake a targeted marketing program to attract investment in high value irrigated agriculture. The industries would include:

- Table grapes;
- Dried fruit;
- Cotton;
- Dairy;
- Nuts; and
- Speciality products (eg pomegranates).



Steps

- Prepare a prospectus which identifies opportunities and available resources across the three shires;
- Ensure the prospectus integrates as much of the value chain as feasible;
- Prepare a Marketing Strategy for the prospectus;
- Identify target markets and promote a prospectus to these markets; and
- Facilitate investor inquiries and the investment process.

Timeline

- Medium.

Lead Entity

- Councils and agricultural industry groups.

Partners/Potential Resources

- Western Murray Irrigation;
- Murray and Riverina RDAs;
- Lower Murray Darling CMA;
- NSW DPI; and
- Local business/Chamber of Commerce.

Success Indicators

- Investment in high value irrigated agricultural systems throughout the three Shires.





Sustaining our Region for a Productive Future

