

BALRANALD SHIRE COUNCIL HOUSING STRATEGY

DRAFT SEPTEMBER 2025



Balranald Shire Council

70 Market Street, Balranald
PO Box 120, Balranald, NSW 2715

03 5020 1300
council@balranald.nsw.gov.au

balranald.nsw.gov.au

Contact

Habitat Planning

409 Kiewa Street
Albury NSW 2640
02 6021 0662
habitat@habitatplanning.com.au

habitatplanning.com.au
Habitat Planning Pty Ltd
ABN 29 451 913 703
ACN 606 650 837

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2		
1. INTRODUCTION	3	4. DEMOGRAPHICS	28
1.1. Overview	4	4.1.1. Population	30
1.2. Objectives	5	4.1.2. Population Changes and Distribution	32
1.3. Positioning and Context	6	4.1.3. Population Distribution and Density	33
		4.1.4. Distribution by Age	34
2. ABOUT BALRANALD	7	4.1.5. Population Migration	35
2.1. Study Area	9	4.1.6. Housing	38
2.1.1. Far West Region	10	4.1.7. Household composition	38
		4.1.8. Dwelling Types	39
3. STATUTORY & STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT	11	4.1.9. Unoccupied Dwellings	40
3.1. The Government in context	12	4.1.10. Housing Tenure	41
3.1.1. Legislation	13	4.1.11. Housing Payments	42
3.1.2. Ministerial Directions	13	4.2.1. Housing Sales	43
3.1.3. NSW State Environmental Planning Policy	13	4.2.2. Rental Availability	43
3.1.4. State Plans	13	4.2.3. Family Income	44
3.1.5. Regional Plans	14	4.2.4. SEIFA	45
3.2. Local Strategic and Statutory Context	15	4.2.5. Social Assistance and Housing	46
3.3. Balranald Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement	16	4.3. Employment	47
3.4. Local Environmental Plan	17	4.4. Unemployment	48
3.5. Land Use Zoning	18	4.5. Journey to work	49
3.6. RU1 - Primary Production	19	4.6. Education	49
3.7. RU3 Forestry Zone	20		
3.8. RU4 Primary Production Small Lot Zone	20	5. ENVIRONMENT	50
3.9. C1 - National Parks and Nature Reserves Zone	20	5.1. Climate	52
3.10. RU5 Village Zone	21	5.1.1. Flooding and Water	53
3.11. W1 Natural Waterways Zone and W2 Recreational Waterways Zone	21	5.1.2. Bushfire	54
3.12. Minimum Lot Size	22	5.2. Transport Networks	56
3.13. Development Control Plan	23		
3.14. Contributions Plans	23	6. CONSULTATION	57
3.15. Heritage	24	6.1. Consultation outcomes	59
3.16. Indigenous Context and Heritage	25		
3.17. European Settlement and Heritage	26	7. STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	61
		7.1. Summary of findings	62
		7.1.1. Temporary and Seasonal Workers	65
		7.1.2. Rural Worker's Dwellings	65
		7.1.3. Short Stay Tourist Accommodation	66
		7.1.4. Construction Workers' Accommodation	66
		7.1.5. Relocatable, Modular and Flat Pack Homes	67
		7.1.6. Co-Living Housing	68
		7.1.7. Boarding Houses	69
		7.1.8. Medium Density Housing	69
		7.1.9. Secondary Dwellings	70
		7.1.10. Master Planning and Contributions for Key Investigation Sites	70
		7.1.11. Key Investigation Sites	71
		7.1.12. Balranald Key Residential Investigation Sites	72
		7.1.13. Euston Key Residential Investigation Sites	73
		7.2. Action before advocacy	74
		7.2.1. Building community capacity - readiness for future opportunities	75
		7.2.2. Council as developer - an affordable housing portfolio and industry support	78
		7.2.3. Incentivising Infill Housing	79
		7.2.4. Development Control Plan	79
		8. CONCLUSION	80
		8.1. Summary of Key Actions	81
		8.2. Monitoring and evaluation	82

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Balranald Shire is at a pivotal moment in its social and economic development. While the community faces the challenges typical of small and remote local government areas, including a modest and ageing population, limited housing diversity, and infrastructure constraints, it is simultaneously experiencing unprecedented investment in agriculture, renewable energy and mineral extraction. The Balranald Housing Strategy responds to this duality: ensuring land use planning and housing delivery meet existing needs while positioning the Shire to capitalise on future growth opportunities.

Context and Challenges

Balranald's population has remained relatively stable over the past two decades but is shaped by seasonal fluctuations, temporary workforces and significant out-migration of younger people. An ageing demographic and a high proportion of single-person households underpin a mismatch between the housing stock which is dominated by detached dwellings on large lots and the needs of residents. At the same time, new agricultural ventures and resource projects such as mineral sands and solar farms, are generating demand for temporary and permanent workforce housing. The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with construction cost escalation and rental shortages, has sharpened affordability pressures across the Shire.

Strategic Alignment

The Strategy builds on current policy environment and responds to objectives for housing diversity, resilience, climate adaptation and complements the 2023 Settlement Strategy, which identified immediate needs for worker accommodation, smaller dwellings, and infrastructure upgrades in Balranald and Euston.

Key Themes

Several themes recur across the evidence base and consultation:

- **Housing diversity and affordability:** Stronger provision of smaller dwellings, rental options and supported seniors housing to meet demographic needs.
- **Temporary and seasonal workforce accommodation:** Flexible planning tools to enable movable dwellings, modular housing and managed worker villages to prevent distortion of the local rental market.
- **Infrastructure and servicing:** Upgrades to water, sewer and transport networks are essential to accommodate projected population increases of 850–1,500 permanent residents, alongside peaks of up to 1,000 temporary workers.
- **Climate resilience:** Recognition of flood, bushfire and water security risks in determining growth directions and development standards.
- **Cultural and environmental values:** Protection and celebration of First Nations heritage, nationally significant landscapes and the rivers that shape the Shire's economy and identity.
- **Cross-border dynamics:** Leveraging the economic integration with Robinvale–Euston and wider Murray corridor to address shared housing and labour market challenges.

Recommendations

The Strategy sets out a suite of pragmatic and place-based recommendations:

- Community led audit to creatively catalyse the development of under-utilised land and dwellings.
- Amend local planning controls to enable a greater mix of housing types, including medium density formats.
- Establish policy settings for temporary worker housing to support agriculture, mining and renewable energy without undermining community amenity.
- Prepare business cases for seniors living options and affordable rental initiatives.
- Align settlement planning in Balranald and Euston with infrastructure investment, ensuring water and sewerage upgrades are prioritised.
- Strengthen collaboration with Victorian authorities on cross-border housing and service provision.

The Balranald Housing Strategy provides a clear framework for navigating the tension between stability and change. It recognises the Shire's vulnerability to demographic decline and service shortfalls while embracing the opportunities presented by transformative industries. Through careful land use planning, housing diversity, and infrastructure readiness, Balranald can position itself as a resilient, inclusive and attractive place to live, work and invest over the next 20 years.

1 | INTRODUCTION

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1. OVERVIEW

This Strategy links Council's visions for housing and employment land within the townships of Balranald and Euston and importantly responds to Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) 20 year vision for land use planning throughout the local government area (LGA).

The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the *'Local Housing Strategy Guideline: A step-by-step process for producing a local housing strategy'* (2018) and the *'Employment Land Strategy Guidelines Discussion Paper'* 2021, both prepared by the Department of Planning and Environment.

The Strategy is underpinned by the earlier completed background report, community and stakeholder consultation. The recommendations in it balance Balranald and Euston as they are now, the changes have been undergoing, future challenges and a vision for housing in the future.

From a policy perspective, there are a number of documents prepared by Council that have set the foundation for this Strategy, including the LSPS, Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and recently completed settlement strategies for Balranald and Euston.

This Strategy includes consideration of demographic factors, local housing supply and demand, and local land-use opportunities and constraints. The Strategy details where additional housing can be provided and how Council will ensure appropriate infrastructure provision.

This Strategy is an enabling document. It seeks to provide the strategic foundations and practical pathways for legislative and policy changes to implement the vision for Balranald LGA.



1.1. OBJECTIVES

Land use planning is one of the structures that underpins a thriving community. It encompasses strategic, regulatory and spatial frameworks for the way we interact with our living and built environment.

The objective of the Strategy is to build upon the recommendations of the LGA's local policy framework and implement the relevant vision and directions for housing and accommodation throughout Balranald and Euston.



The Strategy will:

- Analyse residential land and housing diversity demand and supply and make recommendations to enable future opportunities
- Analyse development constraints and opportunities including growth drivers, hazards and biodiversity
- Consider infrastructure and servicing availability and requirements for future development



This will be achieved by:

- Understanding and analysing the context of the LGA's current planning framework.
- Identifying the key demographic themes to address.
- Identifying opportunities for future innovation and growth.
- Establishing the principles to guide a land use strategy and any future planning proposals.

1.3. POSITIONING AND CONTEXT

The Balranald Shire Housing Strategy sits within a series of documents prepared by Council and can be contextualised with a contextual 'line of sight'.

The outcomes of this Strategy are supported by and can be read in conjunction with the background report. As a high level document, it provides pathways forward to more detailed, qualitative work with a fine grained approach.

1. Balranald Housing Strategy Background Report

A comprehensive background report containing contextual demographic, social, economic and policy research relating to land use throughout the LGA.

2. Balranald Housing Strategy

- Addresses the issues identified in the Background Report from a land use planning perspective
- Develops a clear set of principles, achievable strategies and actions to enable a vision for land use throughout Balranald LGA, with a particular focus on Balranald and Euston townships.
- Serves as the strategic basis for ongoing technical work, eventual planning proposals and LEP amendments.
- Identifies Key Investigation Sites to be comprehensively analysed in ongoing Strategic work.

3. Implementation of Recommendations

- Fine grained analysis of key recommendations
- Staged implementation through additional and aligned policies, plans, technical reports to support future planning proposals and LEP amendments.

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ABOUT BALRANALD

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The town of Balranald was gazetted in 1851 and became a Municipality in 1882. The local government area, as it is known now, was established in 1956. Local governance initially centred on municipal councils, but broader regional administration evolved under New South Wales' Western Division framework.

In 1956, the present Balranald Shire Council was formed through local government reorganisation, consolidating municipal and shire functions under one authority. Federal engagement has historically been indirect, occurring mainly through infrastructure, land management, and rural industry policy that shapes local governance priorities.

Balranald Local Government Area (LGA) lies in the south-west of New South Wales, covering 21,693 km² within the Far West Region. The LGA's southern boundary is defined by the Murray River, forming the state border with Victoria. It is a sparsely populated area with a 2021 Census population of 2,207, concentrated mainly in the towns of Balranald and Euston, and surrounded by rural localities such as Clare, Hatfield and Kyalite. The environment is diverse, spanning rangelands, wetlands, and productive agricultural lands, with a climate shaped by its semi-arid setting and river systems.

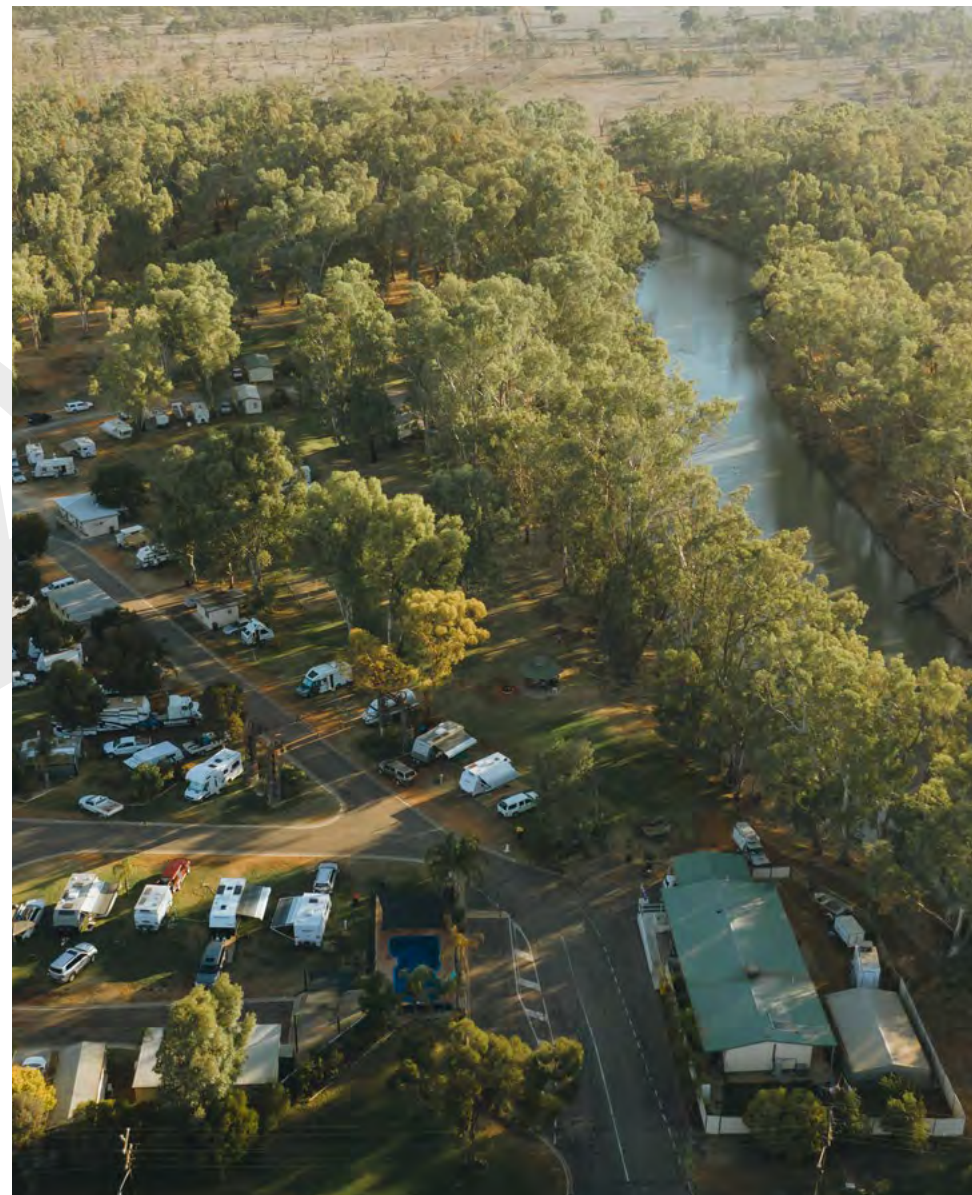
Balranald Shire sits on Country traditionally cared for by several Aboriginal groups, including the Muthi Muthi and Latje Latje peoples, with significant cultural sites such as the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area. Aboriginal heritage remains central to the identity of the region, with 8.61% of residents identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

European settlement began in the mid-19th century, driven by river transport along the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers, later supplanted by rail and road.

The town of Balranald, gazetted in 1851, developed as a transport hub, from punt crossings to the Sturt Highway connection. Euston, proclaimed in 1885, prospered as a Murray River port and maintains close economic and social links with Robinvale in Victoria, with which it shares a cross-border community.

Administratively, Balranald Shire Council governs the LGA under NSW local government legislation, with almost 90% of land designated as Crown Land, leased mainly for agriculture. The economy is anchored in irrigated horticulture, dryland farming, and grazing, with emerging industries in renewable energy and mineral sands mining.

Seasonal and itinerant workforces are critical, particularly in agriculture and construction, influencing housing demand and service provision. Tourism, centred on natural and heritage assets, also contributes to local employment and identity.



2.1 STUDY AREA

The Study Area for this Strategy is the entire Local Government Area of Balranald Shire, comprising a total area of 21,693 km² in the south west of New South Wales. It is located on the border of NSW and Victoria, approximately 460 kilometres north of Melbourne, 340km west of Canberra and 560 kilometres west of Sydney.

The main centres of the LGA are the towns of Balranald and Euston, as well as the rural localities of Clare, Condoulpe, Hatfield, Kyalite, Oxley and Penarie.

While housing is scattered throughout the LGA, the scope of the Strategy is to focus on Balranald and Euston as the main centres of housing provision.



2.1.1 Far West Region

For the purposes of land use planning and administration, regional NSW is split into nine planning regions. Balranald LGA is situated in the Far West region, covering around a third of New South Wales.

It includes the LGAs of Balranald, Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Central Darling, Cobar, Walgett, Wentworth and Unincorporated NSW.

The Far West is NSW's largest region and one of the most geographically and environmentally diverse. Landscapes range from the outback semi-arid desert areas to rich farmlands, rangelands, and wetlands.

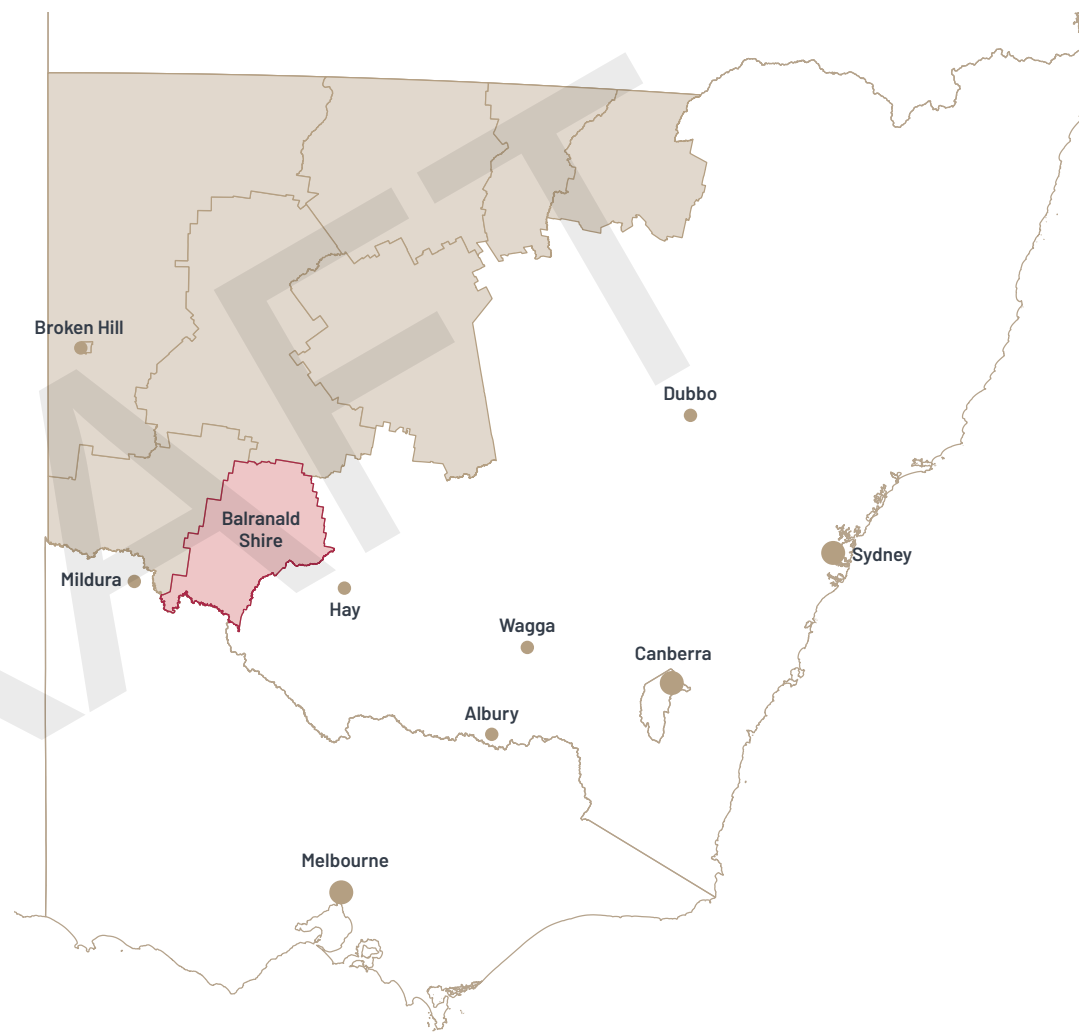
It is traversed by one of Australia's longest river systems, the Barwon-Darling, home to some of the world's oldest heritage sites and dotted with historic mining and agricultural towns that have strong links to the surrounding states and regions.

The remoteness of many Far West communities coupled with mining and agricultural history has resulted in the development of unique towns and villages. Significant opportunities exist for tourism, taking advantage of accessible outback experiences, dynamic communities, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture.

The region has some of Australia's most significant cultural sites and landscapes and is home to part of the oldest continuing civilisation in the world.

Major intra-state and interstate transport routes connect the region to Sydney, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, allowing for efficient freight and passenger transport to the rest of the country and to ports for global export. Improving transport links and access to reliable telecommunications will provide economic and social benefits for the region's industries, residents and visitors.

Draft Far West Regional Plan 2041



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STATUTORY & STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

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3.1. THE GOVERNMENT IN CONTEXT

Local Government works most closely with members of the community in land use Strategy throughout Australia. When planning and advocating from a local level, it is important to recognize the three interrelated levels of government and their shared roles.

As a Local land use strategy, some actions (such as zoning or lot size minimums) will be most directly achieved via amendments to the LEP. Other broader policies such as taxation and social welfare are addressed at state and federal levels and will require strong advocacy to promote good regional land use outcomes.



The Federal Government's role includes:

- Policy and Funding Allocation
- Financial Assistance to states and territories
- Social housing programs and financial assistance
- Taxation policies
- National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.



The NSW State Government's role includes:

- Housing and land availability and supply
- Addressing homelessness and social housing
- Planning and Development legislation
- Major infrastructure provision and funding
- Regulatory protection (ie. tenancy laws and construction standards)
- State and regional strategy provision
- The State planning context is provided by way of legislation, policies, directions (both under the EP&A Act and at a more general level) as well as guidelines and practice notes.



Local government's role includes

- Urban planning and zoning, including the development, implementation and administration of Local Environmental Plans (LEP) and Development Control Plans (DCP).
- Local strategies (including housing, and community)
- Rate setting and infrastructure contributions
- Development assessment
- Cultural and built heritage
- Infrastructure provision
- Community engagement

AT A STATE LEVEL, LEGISLATION AND POLICIES THAT GUIDE LAND USE INCLUDE:

3.1.1. Legislation

- The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)
- The Crown Land Management Act 2016 (NSW)
- The *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (the BC Act)
- The *Local Land Services Act 2013* (LLS Act)
- *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW)
- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 ("the NPW Act")
- *Water Management Act 2000* ("the WMA Act)
- *Fisheries Management Act 1994* \
- *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (PEO Act)

3.1.2. Ministerial Directions

Section 9.1 of the EP&A Act allows the Minister for Planning to give directions to councils regarding the principles, aims, objectives or policies to be achieved or given effect to in the preparation of draft LEPs

Whilst it is not mandatory to address these directions during preparation of strategic documentation, it is considered appropriate to ensure that any recommendations made throughout the project have proper consideration for the directions.

Any relevant Ministerial Directions will be addressed in detail at the time of preparation of recommendations for land use changes in CGRC .

3.1.3. NSW State Environmental Planning Policy

State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) are guidelines and controls relating to specific issues significant to the State. Commencing in March 2022, the 45 existing SEPPs were consolidated into 11 new "thematic" SEPPs. The following are applicable to the GCRC.

- State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Industry and Employment) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Primary Production) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Resources and Energy) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Sustainable Buildings) 2022

3.1.4. State Plans

- NSW State Plan 2011-2021
- A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW (2018)
- The NSW Government has prepared the *Future Transport 2056* Plan ("the Transport Plan")
- NSW Right To Farm Policy (2015)
- Better Placed
- The Urban Design Guide for Regional NSW
- Design Guide for Heritage
- Greener Places Guide
- Connecting With Country

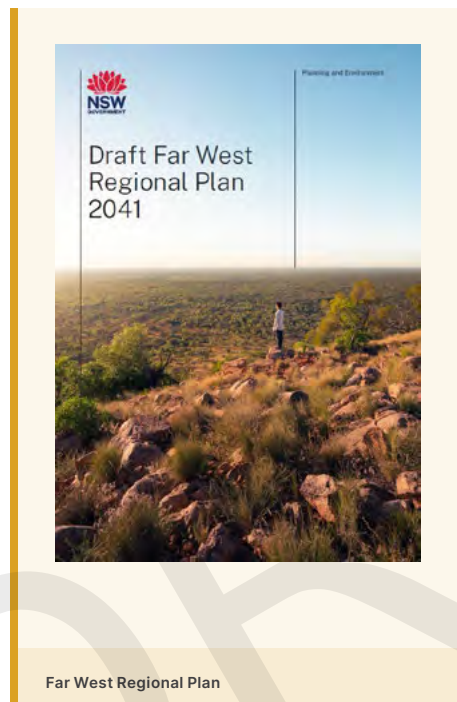
3.1.5. Regional Plans

Far West Regional Plan

Balranald Shire is included in the Far-West Region and is covered by the draft Far West Regional Plan 2041 ("the Regional Plan").

The Regional Plan is the overarching guide to land use planning in the area. Divided into three parts (Environment, People and Communities and Ongoing Prosperity), the Regional Plan contains 16 Objectives, related strategies and actions.

A breakdown of the Regional Plan's applicability is provided in the supporting background paper.



Western Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy - 2023 Update

The Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) is published by the Department of Regional New South Wales

Within the Western Murray functional economic region; priorities include

- Drive growth in high-value agriculture and value adding in agricultural product manufacturing
- Recognise the role of the visitor economy in developing a more resilient and diverse economy
- Grow the mining and construction industries to capitalise on the region's renewable energy generation, storage and transmission opportunities
- Leverage cross border and training accessibility to diversify and grow key industries
- Major infrastructural investment and employment opportunities within Balranald shire since 2018 include
 - Mineral Sand mining
 - Major solar farms (Limondale, Sunraysia)



3.2. LOCAL STRATEGIC AND STATUTORY CONTEXT

Local land use planning in NSW is generally administered by Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and supported by Development Control Plans (DCPs).

In NSW, the planning system is structured so that Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), Development Control Plans (DCPs) and broader planning policies work together in a hierarchy.

The LEP is a statutory document under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. It establishes land use zones, permissible uses, development standards and minimum lot sizes, and is legally binding on all development proposals.

DCPs sit beneath the LEP: they are non-statutory but provide detailed local guidelines to shape the form, character and performance of development, helping interpret and implement LEP provisions.

Above both are State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs), regional plans and Ministerial Directions, which articulate the State's priorities for housing supply, infrastructure, design quality, environmental protection and resilience.

Together, this framework ensures that local decisions are consistent with state and regional objectives, while allowing councils to respond to local character and community needs.

The contextual relationship is one of cascading influence: State policy informs LEPs, which in turn set statutory controls, with DCPs providing finer-grained development guidance. This integrated system enables alignment across scales and balances strategic intent with local implementation.



3.3. BALRANALD SHIRE COUNCIL LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT

As of 2018, all LGAs throughout NSW must prepare and endorse a Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS). The LSPS is a unifying strategic document that brings together the planning priorities and planned actions for a particular LGA. Importantly, the priorities and actions outlined in the Balranald LSPS help to shape the Strategy.

The Balranald Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020 (LSPS) sets out a 20 year vision for land use planning throughout Balranald Shire. It seeks to balance the principles and objectives of the higher order regional strategies with local plans and provide a contextual future-driven approach to planning within the Shire.

A full analysis of the themes and relevant actions can be found in the supporting Background Paper. Those actions have land use requirements which this Strategy seeks to address and align with.

LSPS Vision:

- Strengthen the capacity and opportunities for the economy
- Make Balranald shire the best-possible place to live, work and invest
- Achieve outstanding results in managing, enhancing and improving our natural and built environment

The LSPS is divided into three main categories, each supported by planning priorities and actions, the most instructive and relevant to housing are listed here:

Our Economy

Industry

The growth in renewable energy and regional transport will necessitate housing opportunities for workers with a range of needs and length of residencies.

Agriculture

Ensuring land use conflicts between large scale agriculture and housing are minimised

Resources

Support for workers and residents for growing and large scale agricultural, extractive and renewable energy projects.

Utility Infrastructure

- Upgrading and maintenance of sewer infrastructure
- Water sensitive urban design at a strategic stage of planning.
- Understand the capacity of water infrastructure

Tourism

- Protection and celebration of natural assets including National Parks, waterways
- Urban design and functioning of townships, understanding their importance of regional tourism.

Society

Sustainable Settlements

Actions which relate to this Housing Strategy include

- Prepare a Land Release Strategy for Euston and Balranald
- Economic Development Strategy to identify market accommodation needs
- Continue to develop aged care facility options
- Transient population study

Vibrant Places

Balranald and Euston are the major township in the shire. The provision of community and open space, the places where activities occur is vital to supporting the vibrancy of place.

The actions will be supported by through the development and completion of this Strategy:

- Design and execute township masterplans implementation for both Euston and Balranald incorporating place and spaces that are healthy to live in, work in and visit
- Design and execute Greenham Park and Euston Recreation Complexes masterplans
- Review and expand the pedestrian access management policy to permit sustainable transport options

Environment

While there are no directly applicable actions, it is important for the Strategy to be informed by an understanding of the built and living environments throughout Balranald and the relationships between them.

The ongoing health of ecosystems are vital to supporting the economy, tourism, as well as addressing the drivers of climate change.

3.4. LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN

A Local Environmental Plan is a type of Environmental planning instrument (EPI) and a statutory plan. It is one of primary planning tools for a Local Government Area (LGA) which sets out the planning regulations as well as the criteria to assess any proposed development. It is written in a standardised format, common to all LGAs across New South Wales.

The LEP is an instrument where strategic intent is applied and is informed by a range of planning strategies and seeks to provide quantifiable criteria the whole community can understand and apply to their individual circumstances.

Balranald Local Environmental Plan 2010 ("the LEP") was gazetted on 09th July 2010.

The LEP is based on the Standard Instrument Order 2006 and contains provisions that reflect the local context of Balranald, including controls for land use, zoning and lot size, environmental and heritage protections.



3.5. LAND USE ZONING

Land use zoning in New South Wales (NSW) is a regulatory framework that controls how land can be used and developed. It is primarily defined through the Balranald Shire LEP, which spatially organises land into different zones with specific permitted and prohibited uses, ensuring orderly development.

Zoning is crucial for sustainable urban growth, protecting community interests, and balancing economic, environmental, and social needs. It helps prevent land use conflicts, such as industrial activities near residential areas, and supports strategic planning goals, including housing supply, infrastructure provision, and environmental protection.

Effective zoning ensures efficient land use, safeguards heritage and environmental assets. It provides certainty for developers, businesses and residents. Additionally, it aligns local development with broader state and regional planning objectives, guiding future growth and seeking to improve community well-being.

While this Strategy focuses on housing, its relationship to other land use zones (between where people live and work), is vital.

Zoning Matrix

Land Use Type	Environmental, Recreational	Rural Agricultural Productivity	Residential Dwelling, Habitation	Employment Service, Amenity, Support	Employment Industrial Productivity
Dwelling as primary purpose ↑ Dwellings supporting a use ↓ Dwelling Prohibited	<div>W1 Natural Waterways</div> <div>C1 National Parks and Nature Reserves</div> <div>W2 Recreational Waterways</div>	<div>RU1 Primary Production</div> <div>RU4 Primary Production Small Lot</div> <div>RU3 Forestry</div>	<div>RU5 Village</div>		

3.6. RU1 PRIMARY PRODUCTION

The RU1 Primary Production zone represents the areas of the Shire which are intended for use as primary industry production, including extensive agriculture, intensive livestock and intensive plant agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, mining and extractive industries. The zone is aimed at utilising the natural resource base in a sustainable manner.

The zone is not a default zone for non-urban land. The zone is allocated to land where the principal function is primary production.

The Primary Production zone forms 88% of the zoned land throughout shire. The vast majority of this land is used for agriculture, which is also the largest economic driver in Balranald Shire, underlining its importance for both land use and the local economy, employment.

Issues that can be addressed in this strategy include safeguarding productive land from fragmentation and the encroachment of less productive land uses, including housing.

In absolute numbers, agriculture and farming is the largest employer in the LGA; the temporary and the seasonal nature of the housing required presents challenges to farmers and to communities.

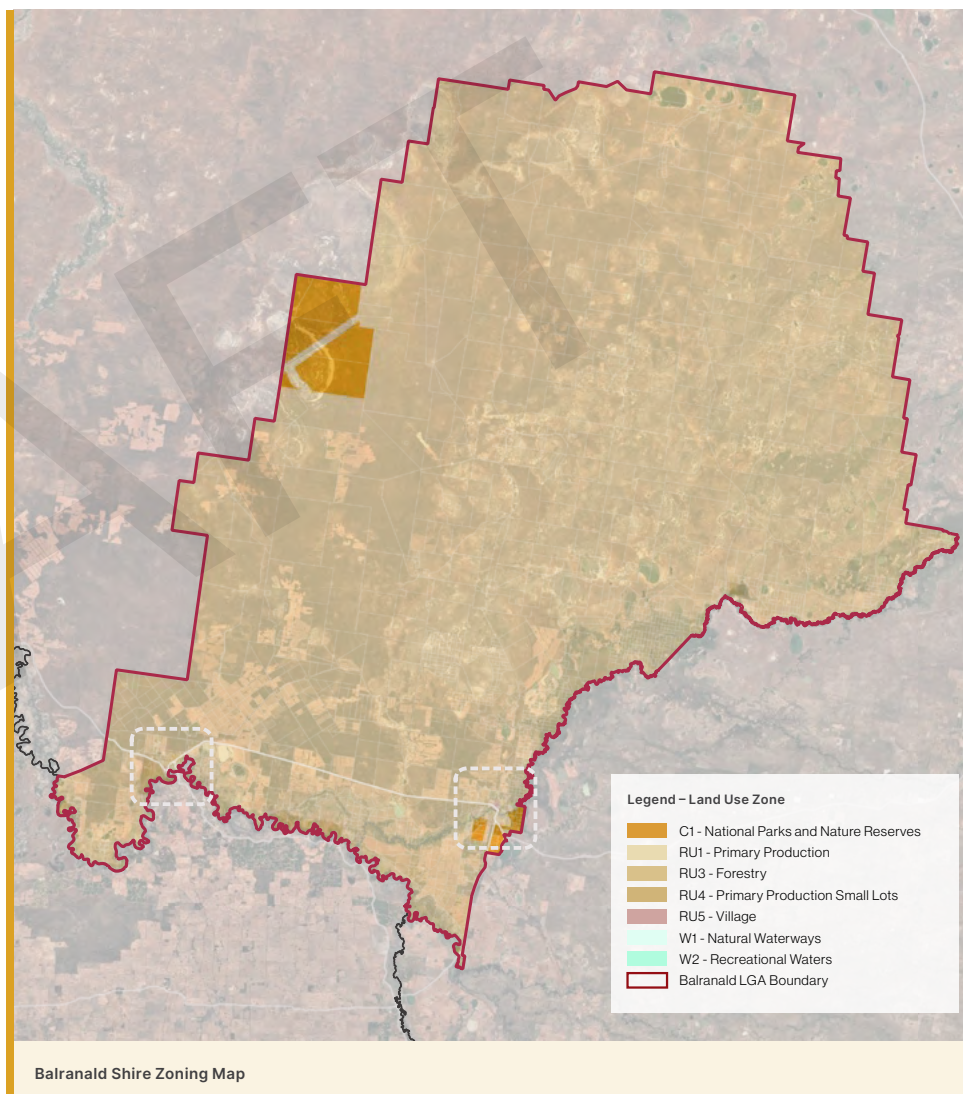
The other major, growing industry and employment drivers within the RU1 Zone are extractive industries and renewable energy projects, Balranald shire being in the NSW Renewable Energy Zone.

Within the Balranald LSPS the economic importance of agriculture, industry, extraction and energy production activity within the RU1 Zone outlines its importance to the LGA

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment has produced a draft guideline – *Temporary and seasonal workers' accommodation (2023)* seeking to provide advice to on the provision of housing for seasonal and construction workers in rural zones as well as renewable energy zones. For this Strategy, it will be important to identify the types of projects, workers, the types of accommodation required, the opportunities and constraints within the NSW land use planning system.

Zone Objectives

- To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base.
- To encourage diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area.
- To minimise the fragmentation and alienation of resource lands.
- To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones.
- To encourage development that is in accordance with sound management and land capability practices, and that takes into account the environmental sensitivity and biodiversity of the locality.
- To support rural communities.
- To ensure the provision of accommodation for itinerant workers.



3.7. RU3 FORESTRY ZONE

U3 Forestry Zone, is set aside specifically for long term forestry uses and uses authorised under the *Forestry Act 2012* or under Part 5B (Private native forestry) of the *Local Land Services Act 2013*

Within Balranald LGA, these zones are located along the Murray River and are generally not a risk, or at risk to housing.

Zone Objectives

- To enable development for forestry purposes.
- To enable other development that is compatible with forestry land uses.

3.8. RU4 PRIMARY PRODUCTION SMALL LOT ZONE

The RU4 Primary Production Small Lot is generally intended to a productive zone where dwellings are allowed, though at a smaller scale than a RU1 Primary Production Zone.

It is often used as a transitional zone between more urbanised areas and large scale agricultural production, hosting higher density and diversity of operations or hobby farm uses.

Within Balranald LGA, the RU4 Zone is located at the northern periphery of Euston and many of the lots have water allocations for irrigation. For this reason, it is important that the conflicts between intensive horticultural use and residential uses are managed pragmatically.

Zone Objectives

- To enable sustainable primary industry and other compatible land uses
- To encourage and promote diversity and employment opportunities in relation to primary industry enterprises, particularly those that require smaller lots or that are more intensive in nature.
- To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones.

3.9. C1 - NATIONAL PARKS AND NATURE RESERVES ZONE

Environmentally Zoned land is zoned to protect environmentally and ecologically sensitive land, living and natural systems, flora and fauna.

Suitable buffers should be retained from other high impact land uses, including housing, to ensure the land is suitably protected.

This zone is generally intended to cover existing national parks and nature reserves, and new conservation areas proposed for reservation that have been identified and agreed by the NSW Government. All uses currently authorised under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 will continue to be permitted without consent in this zone.

Environmentally Zoned land is zoned to protect environmentally and ecologically sensitive land, living and natural systems, flora and fauna.

Suitable buffers should be retained from other high impact land uses, including housing, to ensure the land is suitably protected.

- C1 Zoned land is concentrated in two areas:
- Lake Mungo National Park
- Yanga National Park

Zone Objectives

- To enable the management and appropriate use of land that is reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* or that is acquired under Part 11 of that Act.
- To enable uses authorised under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.
- To identify land that is to be reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and to protect the environmental significance of that land.

3.10. RU5 VILLAGE ZONE

The urban areas within the shire are concentrated in the townships of Balranald, Euston and Kyalite which both are zoned with the multi-purpose RU5 Village Zone. Village zones exist where settlements are generally not big enough to warrant discretionary zoning to separate conflicting uses.

That being the case, it is still important to primary goal of housing with other complementary uses, its the spatial context and density, and relationship to other land uses within the LGA.

Proximity to services and amenity is vital to all types of housing as is the efficient provision of infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, public spaces, water, gas, electricity and telecommunications, effluent and rainwater disposal.

This zone is a flexible zone for centres where a mix of residential, retail, business, industrial and other compatible land uses may be provided to service the local rural community.

The RU5 zone caters for a variety of uses:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Health
- Retail
- Amenity
- Accommodation and Tourism
- Education

Zone Objectives

- To provide for a range of land uses, services and facilities that are associated with a rural village.
- To define the town boundaries of Balranald, Euston and Kyalite.
- To encourage and provide opportunities for population and local employment growth.
- To ensure development maintains and contributes to the character of the zone.
- To protect the amenity of residents.
- To ensure that development does not create unreasonable or uneconomic demands for the provision or extension of services.
- To retain and facilitate expansion and redevelopment of the existing central business districts of the townships of Balranald and Euston and to further strengthen the core retail functions of those areas

3.11.

W1 NATURAL WATERWAYS ZONE AND W2 RECREATIONAL WATERWAYS ZONE

The waterway zones throughout Balranald LGA are tied to the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers.

The main difference lies in the purpose, and the amount of development encouraged adjacent to and on the waterway. For this reason, the W2 Zone is restricted to the urban areas of Balranald and Euston.

Zone Objectives W1 Natural Waterways

- To protect the ecological and scenic values of natural waterways.
- To prevent development that would have an adverse effect on the natural values of waterways in this zone.
- To provide for sustainable fishing industries and recreational fishing.

Zone Objectives W2 Recreational Waterways

- To protect the ecological, scenic and recreation values of recreational waterways.
- To allow for water-based recreation and related uses.
- To provide for sustainable fishing industries and recreational fishing.

*While the zones extend across the entirety of the LGA, for clarity, maps highlight the relationship to Balranald and Euston.

3.12. MINIMUM LOT SIZE

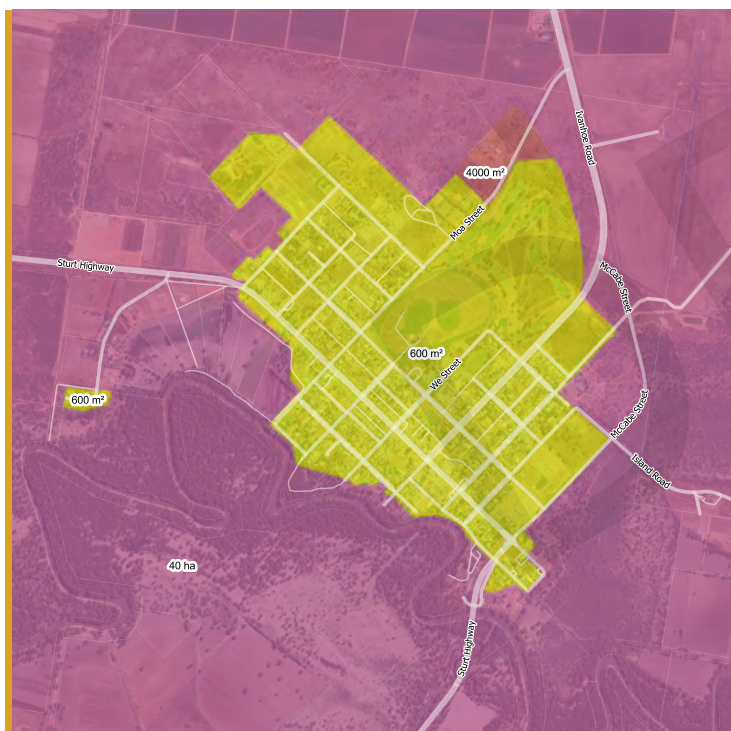
The minimum lot size is an additional control that can affect the density, allowable development and resulting character of an area. Though with different outcomes and effects, it applies to RU1 Primary Production lots, where there is a 40 hectare minimum down to a 600m² minimum in the RU5 Village Zones of Balranald and Euston.

In the RU1 Primary Production Zone, the lot size map can have a major impact on agricultural operations as it effectively allows a dwelling per lot. Subdivision to a lot size below the minimum is permitted (with consent) to achieve the objectives of the RU1 Zone, though it does not allow a dwelling entitlement.

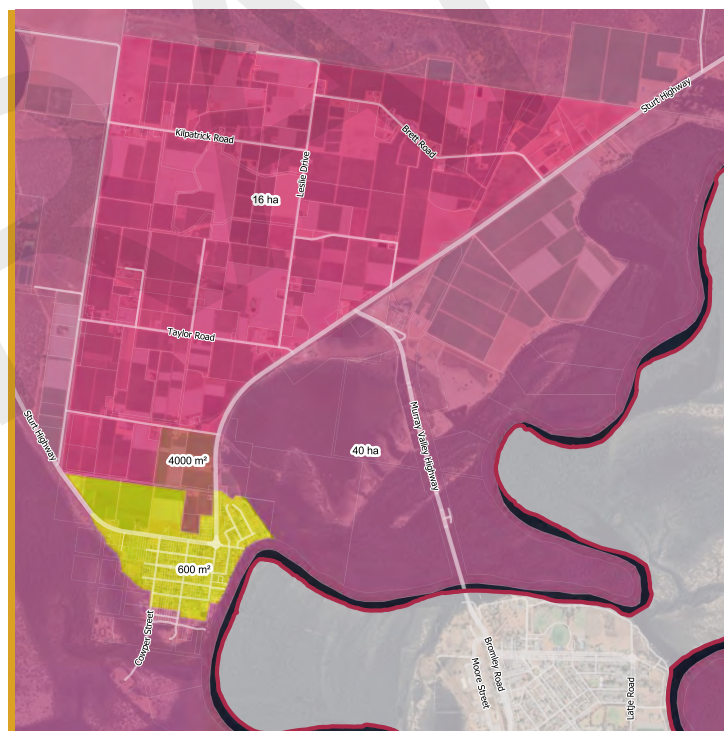
Consideration must be given to the “in-between” zones, which perform an important transitional purpose from the more urbanised town centres to productive, broadacre agricultural use. The RU4 Primary Production Small Lots Zone, north of Euston hosts more intensive agriculture (particularly table grape production), a 16 hectare minimum applies.

The minimum lot size can seek to encourage or discourage development at a particular density and works in tandem with land use zoning. For a torrens title, a minimum lot size also dictates an entitlement of one dwelling per lot.

In the RU5 Village Zone, individual lot sizes can be effectively reduced through strata or community subdivisions.

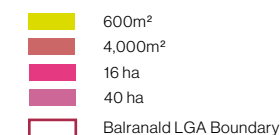


Zoning Map - Balranald



Zoning Map - Euston

Legend - Minimum Lot Size



3.13. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN

The Development Control Plan (DCP) is a non-statutory document produced by each LGA that guides and facilitates development. The DCP contains local planning rules, developed by individual Councils, and assists in providing certainty on the aims and objectives set out in the EPIs.

It is a fundamental part of the suite of documents that inform land use planning in NSW at a local level, providing fine grained design and detailed guidance for built form and urban design.

Balranald does not have a consolidated DCP though does have a number of policy documents relating to built form, including:

- Building setback policy
- Fencing Code policy
- Nature strip landscaping policy
- While towns of Balranald and Euston's size don't always benefit from overly prescriptive controls, some further direction, including building on recently completed Settlement Strategies will assist to provide an overarching approach to the urban areas of the towns.

3.14. CONTRIBUTIONS PLANS

A Section 7.12 Development Contributions Plan is vital for small, underfunded regional towns because it enables Council to collect fair, transparent levies from new development to help fund essential local infrastructure.

In places like Balranald, where rates revenue is low and grant funding is uncertain, these contributions can be one of the more reliable income streams for upgrading roads, footpaths, drainage, parks, and community facilities that directly support growth.

Without such a plan, the financial burden of new infrastructure often falls on the existing community, exacerbating disadvantage. A 7.12 plan also ensures that development pays its fair share, maintaining equity between incoming residents and established ratepayers. Where Balranald and Euston host seasonal workforce surges, ageing infrastructure, or undercounted populations, it provides a mechanism to respond to increased demand on services. Over time, the plan helps underpin liveability, attract investment, and sustain the town's long-term growth.

Council updated Balranald LGA's contributions plan in 2024 (Section 7.12 Development Contributions Plan). Until recently, development contributions have not been levied which has partly contributed to the under funding of public infrastructure and community facilities.



3.15. HERITAGE

European and Indigenous heritage listings play a vital role in land use planning in Balranald LGA, ensuring the protection and recognition of historically and culturally significant sites. These listings, under the Heritage Act 1977 and Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, help safeguard buildings, landscapes, and places with cultural, social, or architectural value.

For Indigenous heritage, listings preserve Aboriginal cultural sites, landscapes, and sacred places, maintaining connections to Country, identity, and traditions. Protecting these sites is crucial for cultural continuity and reconciliation.

The Balranald Shire Heritage Review (2013), provides a more comprehensive account of both Aboriginal and European Heritage, the most relevant information has been outlined in this Strategy.



3.16. INDIGENOUS CONTEXT AND HERITAGE

The Local Aboriginal Land Council is the Balranald Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC).

As at the 2021 Census, 8.61% of the LGA identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

*Based on Tindale's language area ("tribal") map, the Balranald Shire is the junction or boundary of a number of Aboriginal pre-European language groups. The river is thought to have been the boundary between the **Muthi Muthi** people of present-day Balranald Shire and **Latje Latje** people of present-day Swan Hill Rural City Council.*

Balranald Shire Heritage Review.

Balranald Shire's Aboriginal history is deeply tied to its ancient lake and river systems. Part of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area, the region has been inhabited for at least 50,000 years, with Lake Mungo holding the world's oldest known ritual cremation site.

The Muthi Muthi and Latje Latje peoples occupied lands divided roughly by the Murrumbidgee River, centring life around waterways for food, ceremony, and trade. Significant sites include Lake Benanee Aboriginal Burial Site, "The Rocks" fish traps, and the Diplo Ceremonial Ground. While early European records mention Aboriginal guides such as Turandurey, Aboriginal people were often marginalised in settlement life, living and working on stations or at a gazetted reserve from 1892. The reserve evolved into an Aboriginal residential precinct, later managed by Aboriginal Housing Corporations and the Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Listed sites of significant Aboriginal cultural importance within Balranald Shire include Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area, Lake Benanee Aboriginal Burial Site and Diplo Ceremonial Ground.

A recent update to the Balranald LEP has added a number of Aboriginal Heritage Items, in accordance with the Balranald Shire Community Heritage Study:

- Balranald Island, Balranald
- Aboriginal Church, Endeavour Drive Balranald
- Fish Traps, Murrumbidgee River, downstream of Balranald

While the extensive area of Willandra Lakes sit well outside of the urban study area and scope of this Strategy, many of the listings are within close proximity to urban Balranald.

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 ("the NPW Act") and managed jointly by Heritage NSW and the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE). Part 6 of the NPW Act provides specific protection for Aboriginal objects and declared Aboriginal places by establishing offences of harm, which includes destroying, defacing or damaging an Aboriginal object or place, or moving an Aboriginal object from the land.

Connecting With Country

The NSW Government Architect has published an introductory guide for understanding the value of Aboriginal knowledge in the design and planning of places.

"Connecting with Country will support design and planning industry engagement with Aboriginal culture and heritage. Its principles for action will help to realise projects that:

- protect the health and wellbeing of Country and therefore of Aboriginal communities, and by extension all communities
- embed Aboriginal knowledge into the design and planning of our built environment to make NSW a better place for all its citizens"

Considering the importance of natural systems to supporting the economic and environmental welfare of Balranald Shire (ie agriculture, the Murrumbidgee and Murray River Systems), it is an extraordinary opportunity to incorporate different systems of knowledge and understanding of place.

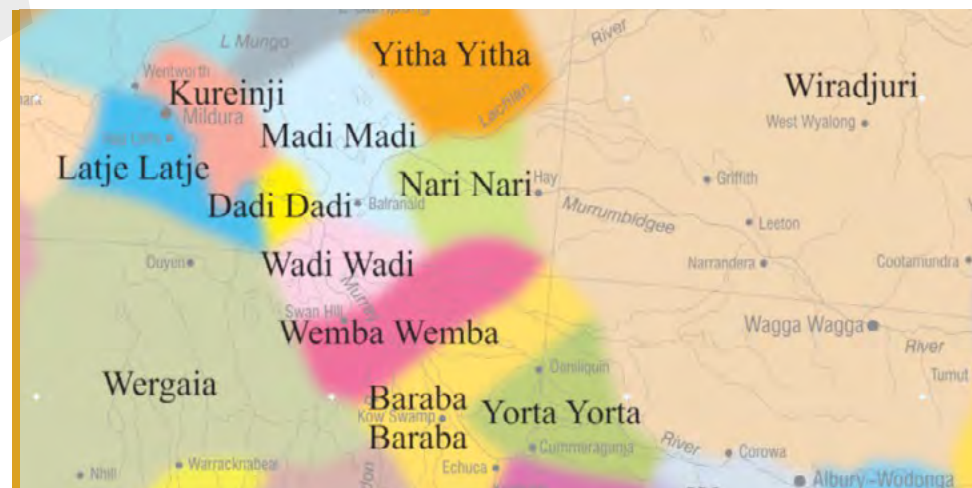


Figure 2 - Extract from the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia

3.17. EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT AND HERITAGE

Initial European expeditions occurred from 1817, and regularly thereafter. As early as 1842, well funded squatters *“in the colony took the opportunity to grab land beyond the reach of government rule”* especially near the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers where water was available.

Balranald's first developments were a general store and inn, established in 1848, and the town quickly established to be of strategic importance to river based transport. The river crossing at Balranald was essential for stock and transport crossings across the Murrumbidgee River.

Likewise, Euston was settled as a river port to take advantage of freight and people movement along the Murray River.

Since 1849, when Lands Commissioner McDonald named Balranald after his Scottish birthplace, the town's existence has been maintained and reinforced through the importance of location and transport.

European settlement of Balranald began in the early 1840s when squatters moved into the lower Murrumbidgee district, attracted by pastoral opportunities.

The first town site was surveyed in 1849, taking its name from a Scottish village connected to pioneer Major Mitchell. Initially, Balranald functioned as a service hub for surrounding sheep and cattle runs, with the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers enabling riverboat transport.

By the mid-19th century, the town grew as a river port, supporting the wool industry and supplying goods to inland stations. Infrastructure such as inns, stores, and a courthouse emerged to serve pastoralists, carriers, and riverboat crews.

However, the arrival of railways elsewhere reduced river trade's importance, shifting Balranald toward a more locally focused service role. Despite isolation and environmental challenges such as floods and droughts, the European settler community maintained a small but stable population, grounded in grazing, agriculture, and its strategic river crossing location.

European settlement at Euston began in 1846 when 17-year-old Edmund Morey, guided by an Aboriginal companion, travelled from Canally Station along the Murray River to occupy land later known as Euston Station. The place slowly evolved to be a proclaimed town in 1885.

The township developed into a busy river port, with a large wharf and ferry servicing both cargo and passenger paddle steamers until around 1900. Its facilities included a courthouse (with whipping post), police station, hotel, boiling down works, eucalyptus oil factory producing “Bosisto's Parrot Brand Eucalyptus,” and a coach change station. Euston was a key stop for passenger and mail coaches linking Swan Hill, Wentworth, and Broken Hill.

The decline of river trade led to economic stagnation, but the town revived in 1924 with the construction of a bridge over the Murray River connecting it to Robinvale, Victoria. This improved road access secured Euston's role in regional transport and commerce

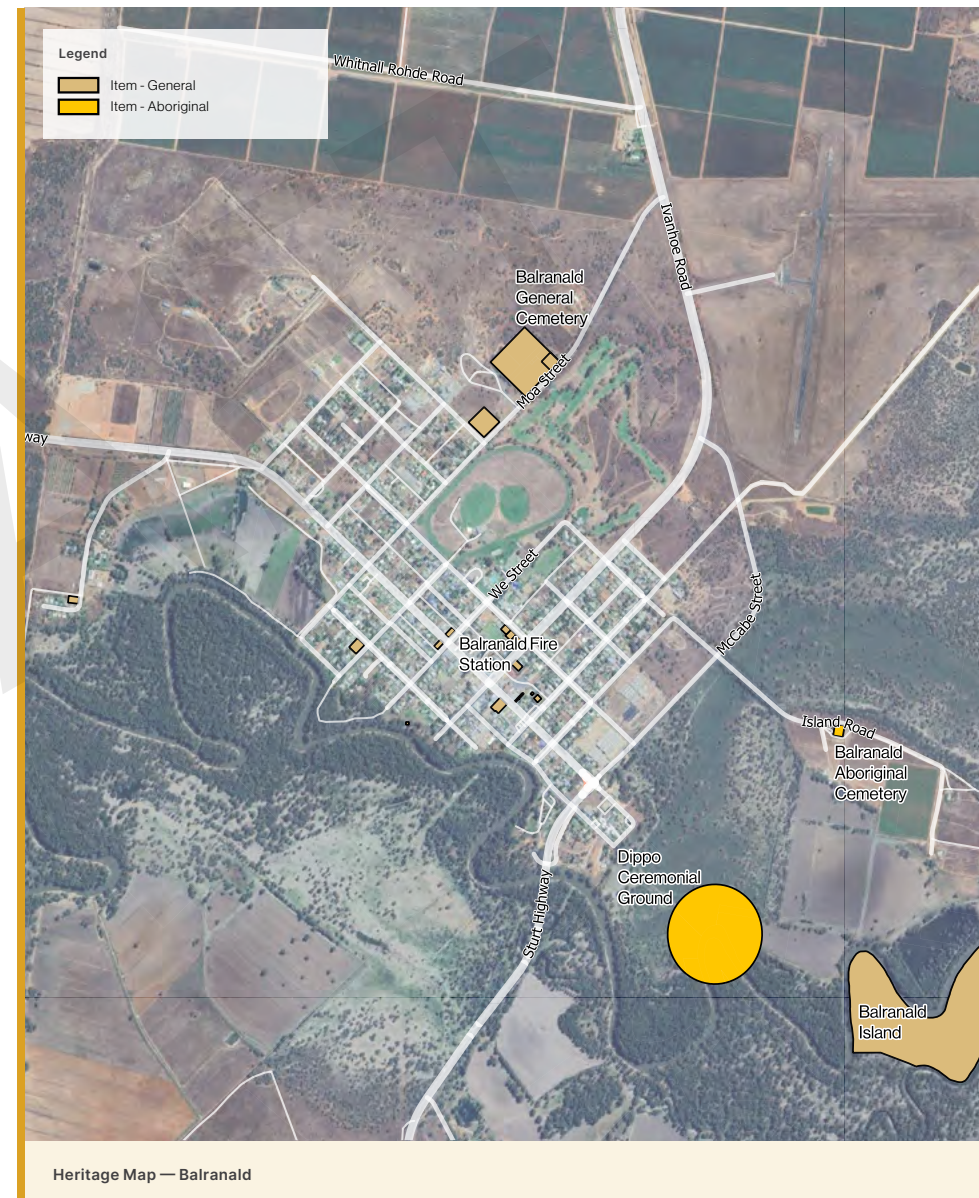
Administrative History

The town of Balranald was gazetted in 1851 and became a Municipality in 1882. The local government area, as it is known now, was established in 1956.

Almost 90% of Balranald's land is administered by the NSW Western Division and is designated Crown Land. This land is leased under the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*, for specific purposes, such as agriculture and grazing.

Local governance initially centred on municipal councils, but broader regional administration evolved under New South Wales' Western Division framework.

In 1956, the present Balranald Shire Council was formed through local government reorganisation, consolidating municipal and shire functions under one authority. Federal engagement has historically been indirect, occurring mainly through infrastructure, land management, and rural industry policy that shapes local governance priorities.



4

DEMOGRAPHICS

DRAFT

Balranald Shire's demographic profile reflects both the challenges and opportunities of a remote, agriculturally focused local government area in south-west New South Wales.

The population is small and dispersed across two main centres—Balranald and Euston—and several rural localities, with overall numbers declining in recent decades.

An ageing population is a defining characteristic, with a growing proportion of residents aged 65 years and over, influencing service, housing, and health needs. Seasonal and temporary workforces linked to agriculture, horticulture, and renewable energy projects contribute significantly to the Shire's fluctuating population.

Understanding demographic structures and population mobility is essential for planning housing supply, infrastructure, and services that respond to both permanent and transient population demands, while supporting long-term community sustainability.



4.1.1 Population

The population of Balranald is vastly under reported, which can make planning for future scenarios difficult. Results reported to and by the Australian Bureau of Statistics through the five-yearly Census, are being currently evaluated by the ABS to understand the true population and likely pressure for housing throughout the area.

Understanding the true population of the area, from transient to permanent will help to make better recommendations.

While this is the case, it is nonetheless important to start with the published data.

The Balranald LGA supports an estimated residential population of 2207 persons (ABS, 2021) (based on usual place of residence), with an almost even split between males and females of 50.38% and 49.68% respectively.

Balranald Shire's population is concentrated in the towns of Balranald and Euston, and spread sparsely elsewhere.

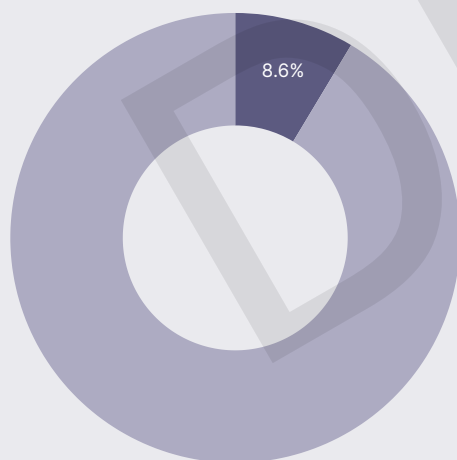
Of the total population, 8.61% of the Shire identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The makeup and location of the population, their preferences and requirements will inform future land use and planning strategies. While over the last twenty years, the official population has slowly declined, its makeup and distribution has fluctuated.

Any future population change is not likely to be evenly distributed. Regionally, people are consolidating closer to urban centres for the lifestyle, employment, services, healthcare and amenity.

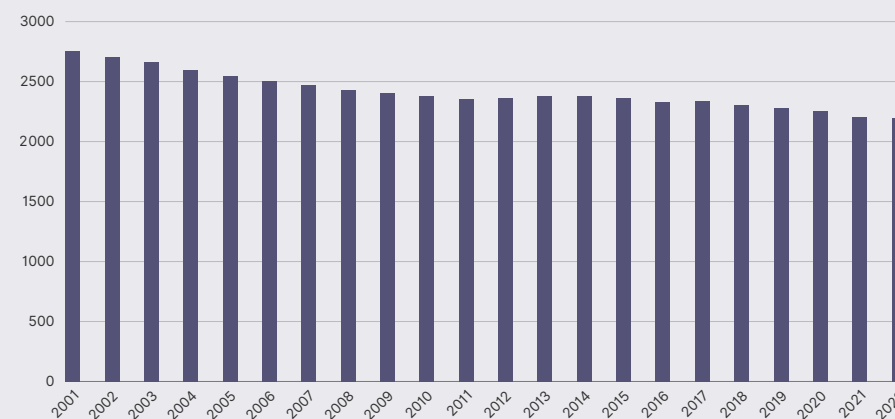
The implementation of the NSW Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) is anticipated to affect the Balranald population in the near future. While projects are being constructed further east in the REZ, strategic transport routes are anticipated to flow through Balranald shire.

Figure 3 - ATSI Population Percentage 2021



● Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Figure 4 - Estimated Residential Population (2001-2022)



● Population

Case Study:

THE ROBINVALE POPULATION DETERMINATION: BRIEFING PAPER

Located on the Victorian side of the state border, Robinvale is a cross-river town to Euston. It has a similar economy based in agricultural production with the requisite seasonal and temporary workforces.

Swan Hill Council commissioned a study to understand the “true year-round” population, as distinct from the official Estimated Resident Population (ERP). Anecdotal reporting from the community indicated there was a likely higher population than first thought due to;

- Greater use of private services and businesses in the area;
- Census aversion – many permanent and temporary residents avoid the Census.
- A higher than expected demand for housing

Two primary quantitative methods were used:

- Bank transaction analysis – Identified regular, non-resident cardholders spending locally, adjusted for commuters and dependents
- Residential water usage – Applied per capita rural water consumption benchmarks to total residential water use.

A weighted average produced a mean service population of around 7,900, fluctuating between 7,000 in November to 8,800 in March.

Key insights from the paper included:

- Overcrowded housing is common, with visible makeshift accommodation.
- Many seasonal workers (predominantly Malaysian) remain uncaptured in the Census.
- Housing shortages force essential workers (e.g., teachers) to live outside the town.
- Demand on services (e.g., schools, clubs, pharmacy) exceeds ERP-based expectations year-round, with moderate seasonal peaks.

The findings have empowered ongoing advocacy for fairer resource allocation, influencing council submissions about electoral representation and government funding needs for infrastructure and services

The robust population evidence underpinned successful applications for several major government and philanthropic partnerships—including the establishment of the “Our Place” education and health service hub, and increased support from organisations such as Homes Victoria and Haven Home Safe for housing supply projects.

The Robinvale Population Determination Paper led to the development and funding of multiple housing strategies and tangible built form projects including affordable and worker housing, new early years facilities and a community hub. The robust evidence base has catalysed ongoing government, council, and industry investment, ensuring infrastructure aligns with actual population needs and shaping a replicable model for similar rural towns confronting hidden population growth and housing shortfalls.

The study provides a robust, data-backed measure of the service population that can better inform housing, infrastructure, and service provision planning.

For **Balranald and Euston**, commissioning a similar study would:

- Quantify the real population, including temporary and seasonal workers.
- Provide evidence to address housing supply gaps and overcrowding.

Strengthen advocacy for funding and infrastructure based on actual demand rather than underestimated ERP figures.

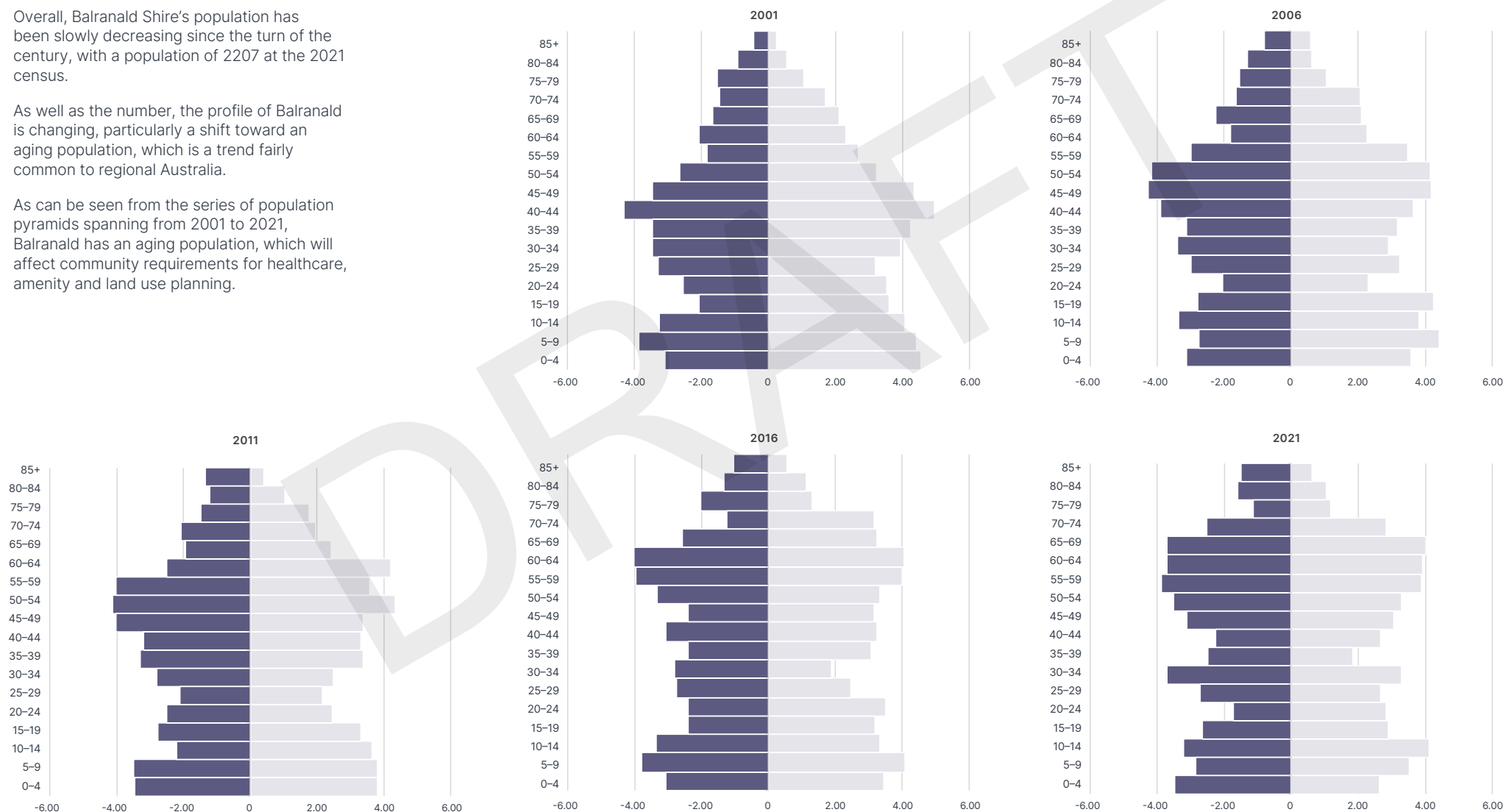
4.1.2 Population Changes and Distribution

Overall, Balranald Shire's population has been slowly decreasing since the turn of the century, with a population of 2207 at the 2021 census.

As well as the number, the profile of Balranald is changing, particularly a shift toward an aging population, which is a trend fairly common to regional Australia.

As can be seen from the series of population pyramids spanning from 2001 to 2021, Balranald has an aging population, which will affect community requirements for healthcare, amenity and land use planning.

● Female % ● Male %



4.1.3 Population Distribution and Density

The population density for Balranald and Euston varies between one to four people per square kilometre.

The average density for Regional NSW towns is 3.62 people per square kilometre, which puts Balranald at the lower end of the spectrum.

Balranald's relative size and remoteness also

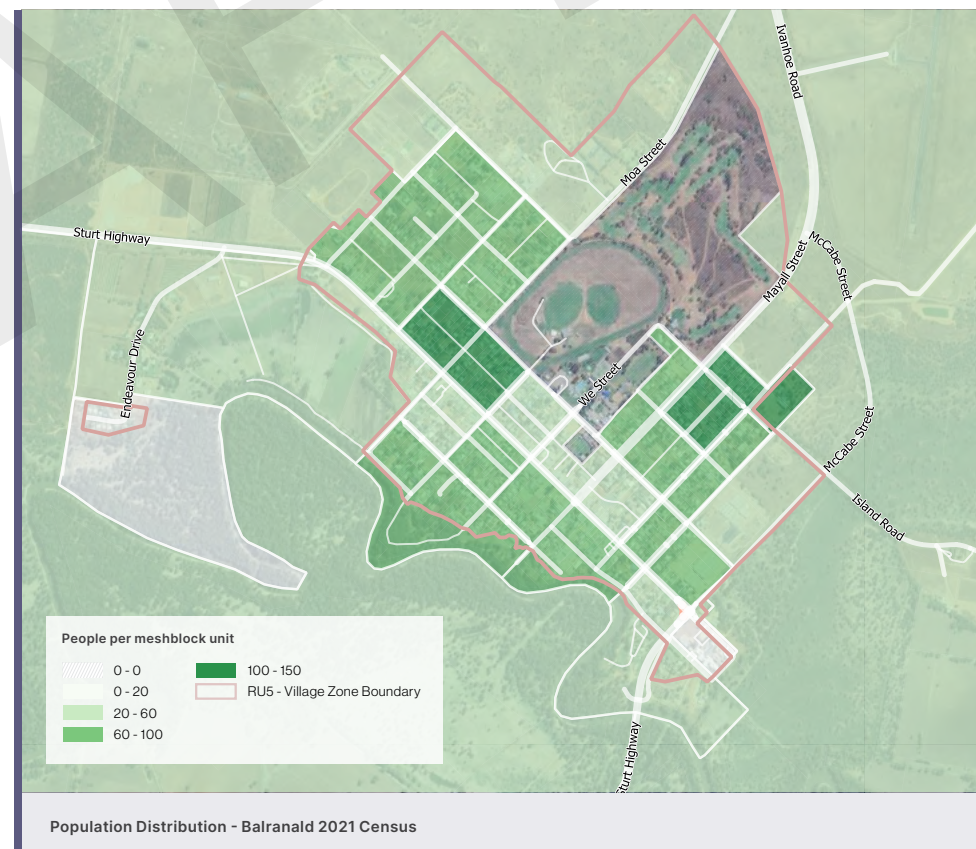
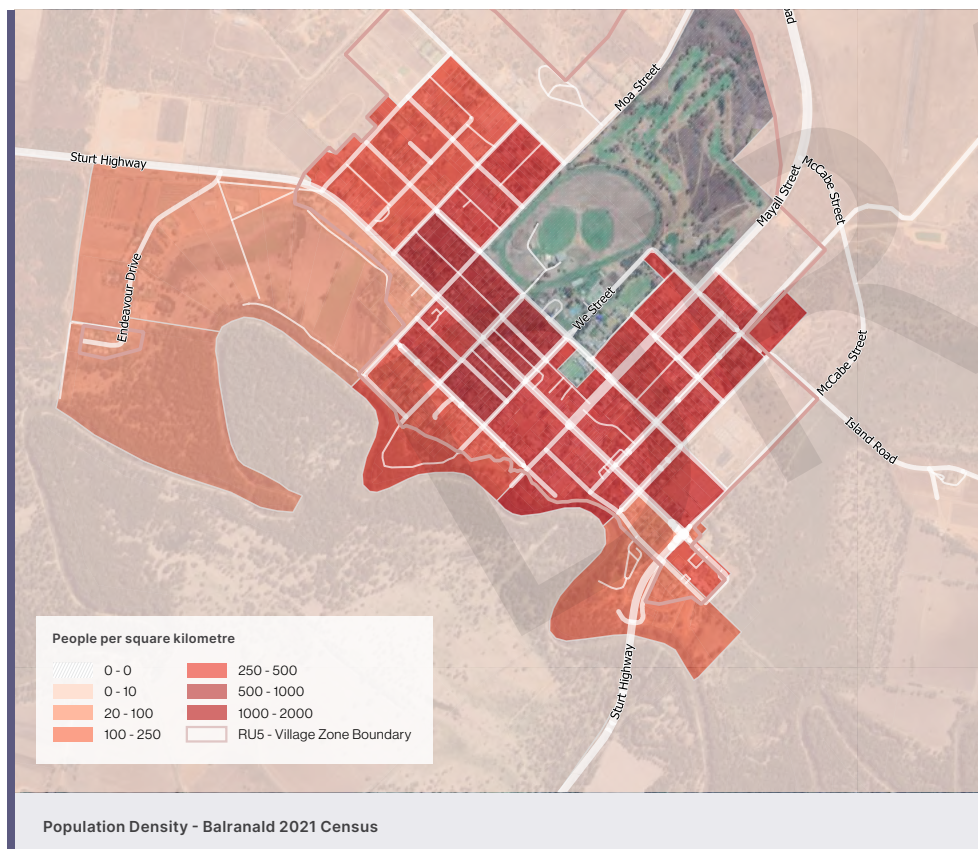
contribute to this.

While low density living is often part of the appeal of a regional lifestyle, and a reason for many who choose to live there, it is important to balance this with inefficient land uses, such as embedding car dependency due to long travel distances by maintaining that low density.

While the population density in and of itself may not prove insightful, understanding it in conjunction with other demographic categories such as age, migration or family groups can be useful.

As a cross-border community, it is helpful to understand Euston population in the context of Robinvale, across the Murray River and NSW/Vic border.

It has developed more as a small satellite or suburb rather than a standalone town with the requisite infrastructure and amenity. As such, the below maps show both urban Euston and Robinvale.



4.1.4 Distribution by Age

Understanding where particular cohorts are choosing to live can give an indication of the types of housing that are required for certain areas.

Understanding the needs of different age groups and family groups can help to cater to their requirements. For instance, what compromises do they make or opportunities do they seek when choosing where to live?

Very generally,

- Younger people have less want for large dwellings or space and may prioritise accessibility, walkability and amenity. Though likely not to the same extent as urban areas, younger people are driving less than previous generations.
- Family seeking larger dwellings and lots will move further away from amenity and services to get that at a manageable cost.
- Retirees, empty nesters and couples without children may choose to be closer to services, healthcare and amenity.
- Older people seeking to downsize will do so, as long as there are viable options for higher density living which align with lifestyle and access to the aforementioned services.

Balranald's population skews much older than Euston, which may reflect some of these preferences and opportunities. In the future, the provision of aged care services; supporting health care and amenity, and particularly key worker accommodation will be vital.

Community feedback throughout the development of the strategy has indicated a lack of housing for health and community workers has inhibited suitable employees.



4.1.5. Population Migration

In Migration

The largest cohorts of internal in-migrants come from fairly close origins, which is largely true for their location one year ago and five years ago. The lack of overseas migrants between 2020 and 2021 is likely be attributable to COVID. That the largest cohort is 'not stated' is not understood, though telling – those Census respondents may reside in the LGA or prefer not to say.

The proportion of overseas migrants is also notable, though importantly this statistic does not cover temporary, seasonal or those on working visas, who are understood to comprise a substantial group of workers.

Figure 5 - In Migration – Place of Usual Residence (LGA) One Year Ago

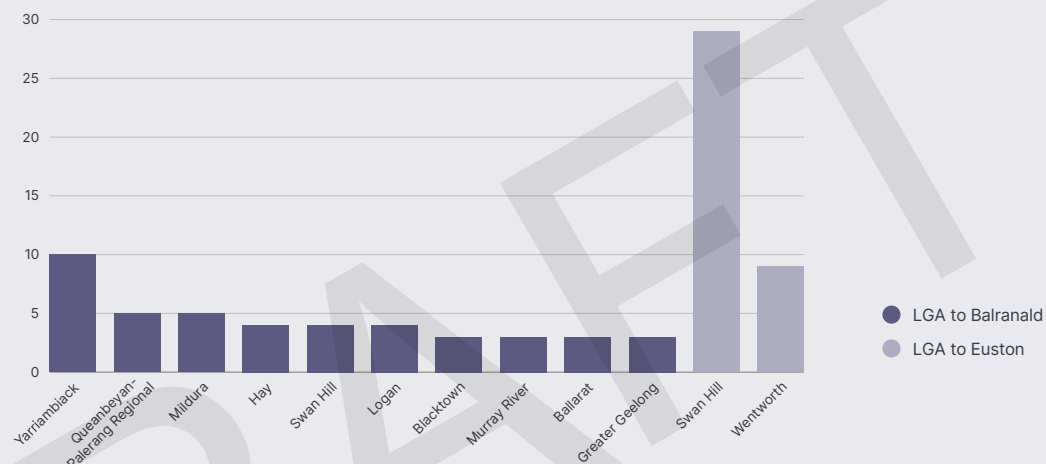
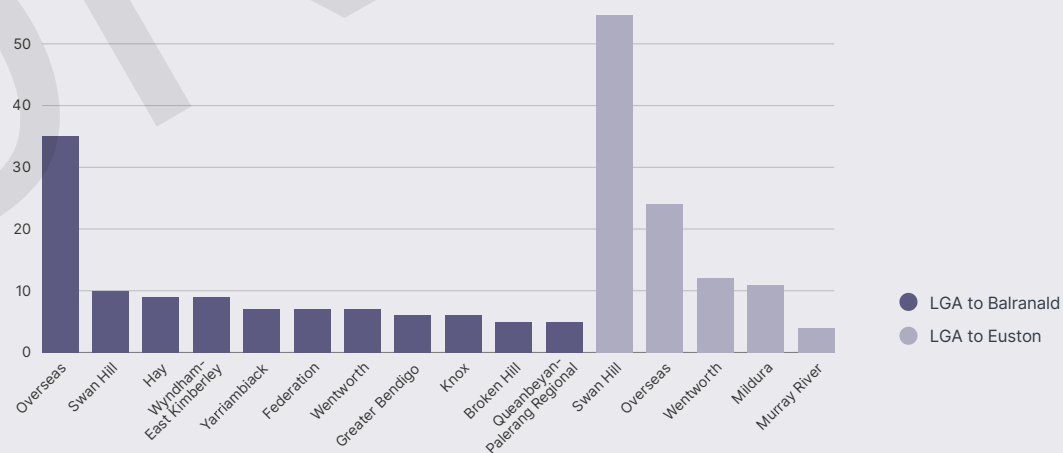


Figure 6 - In Migration – Place of Usual Residence (LGA) Five Years Ago



Internal Out Migration

The largest cohorts of internal (within Australia) out-migrants are also moving to relatively close LGAs, though the size of the locations people are migrating to might indicate people may be moving for employment or greater opportunity.

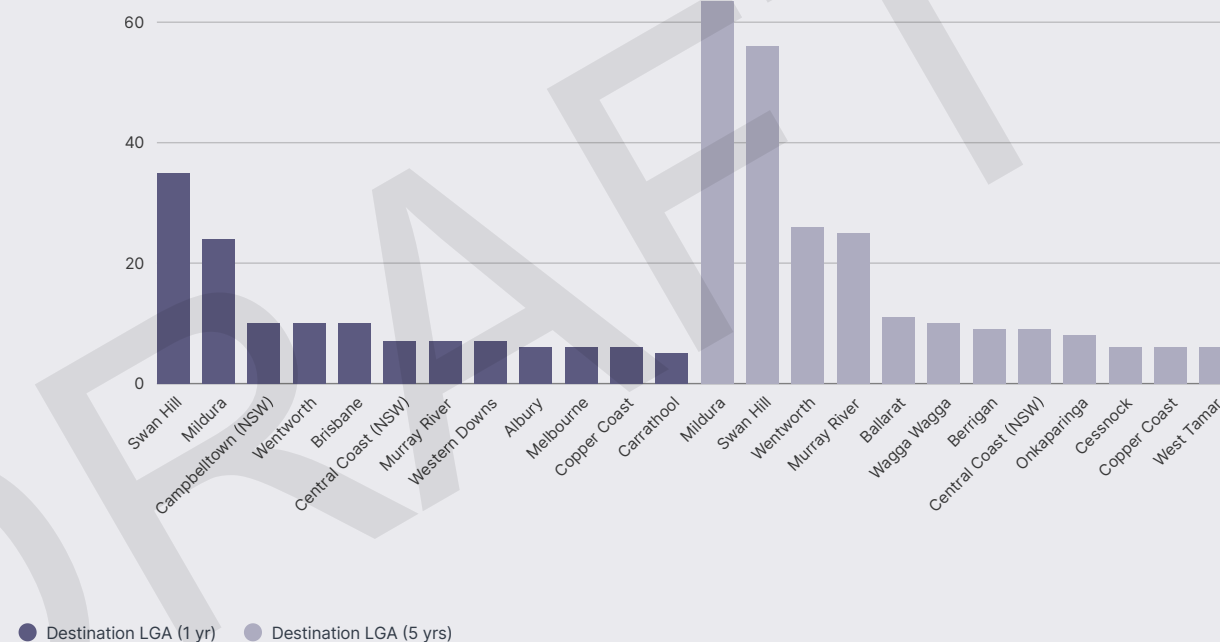
Local Population Movement

To and from the neighbouring LGAs of Swan Hill, Mildura, Wentworth, Hay has experienced high amounts of both in and out migration, indicating people moving around the region.

Migration by Age group

A loss of young adults (18-24 year cohort) is the most significant outward migration trend, which may reflect a lack of opportunity, employment or education.

Figure 7 - Out Migration – Where Balranald LGA was Place of Usual Residence One and Five years ago



Cultural diversity

For a small regional LGA, Balranald has a modest proportion of the population born outside of Australia (8.61%)

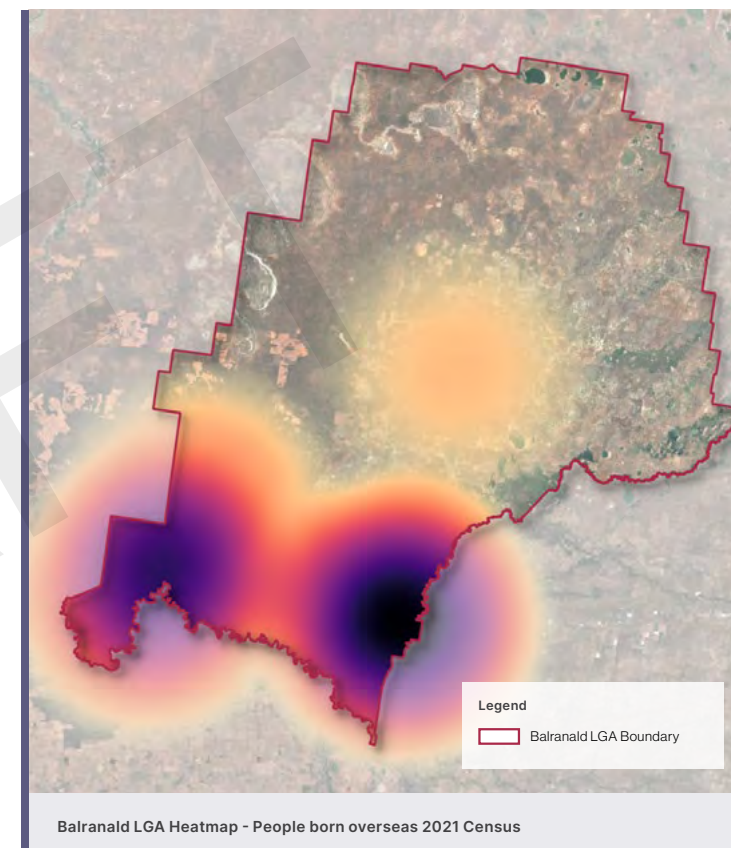
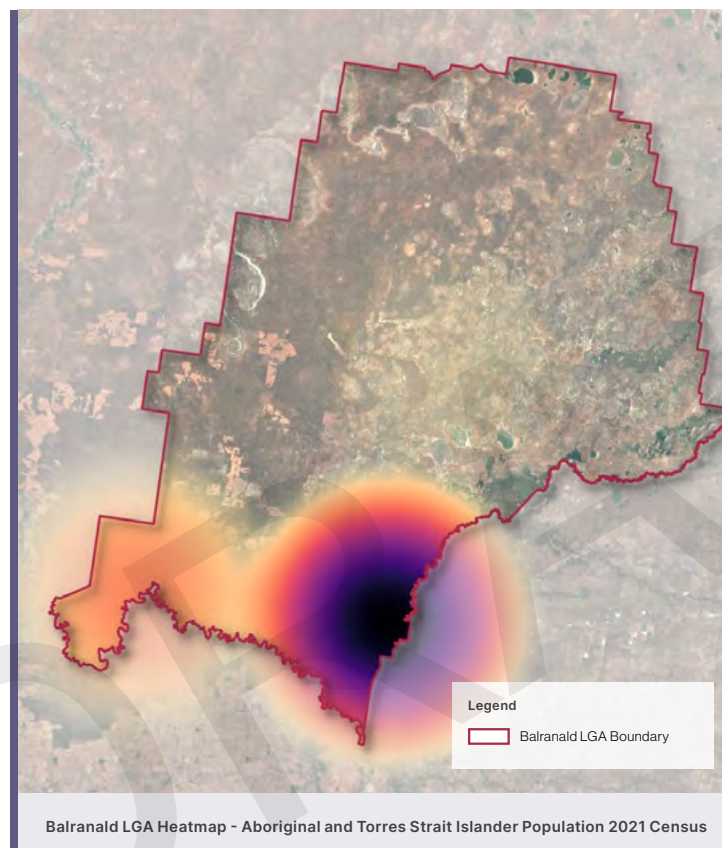
In the immediate region, LGAs with higher proportions of people born outside of Australia include Swan Hill (16.67%) , Carrathool (14.03%), Mildura (13.64%) and Hindmarsh (10.48%).

ABS (Country of Birth by Person)

There is a concentration of people born outside of Australia in the towns of Balranald and Euston/Robinvale particularly which are phenomena useful to unpack. The reasons for settlement, community, affordability and housing preferences and alignment to employment opportunities are important.

Likewise, there is a concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens in the Balranald township. This data can be important for the provision of services, specific healthcare and preferred housing types.

Note: these heatmaps are designed to show the spatial concentration of a particular cohort, relative to other areas



4.1.6. Housing

Housing is one of the most influential factors in determining how the planning instruments should be framed for the future.

Anecdotally, demand for housing is high throughout Balranald with particularly strong demand for rental stock and affordable housing. Housing activity is not necessarily a result of historical planning or decisions made by Council though is more likely linked to larger scale migration flows locally, regionally and nationally.

The changes to the makeup of the population will place significant demands on housing stock in the future, particularly;

- The capability of the existing dwelling types to cater to changing household types
- The rise of lone person households
- Smaller family units and one parent families
- Housing stock suitable for an aging population
- The degradation of current housing stock.
- Appetite for development
- Pressures from seasonal and temporary workforces.
- At the 2021 Census, there were 733 occupied private dwellings recorded in the LGA: 90.4% were separate houses, 3.41% were semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc, 1.64% were flat, unit or apartment and 0.82% were other dwellings.

4.1.7. Household composition

As at the 2021 census, there were 737 "households" throughout the LGA, comprised of groups outlined in Table 1.

Changes in household size (how many people occupy a dwelling) over the past fifteen years shows an increase of lone person households, and can be analysed in conjunction with the change in age groups (see Population pyramids). For instance, it is a safe assumption to make that many of lone person households are older persons, who will have particular needs with regards to amenity, community services and access to healthcare.

The rise in five and six person households might indicate an increase in shared housing arrangements.

The change in household type broadly aligns with the change in household size. The rise in one and two person household are reflected in the growth of couples without children and lone person households.

The decrease in 'Couples with children', and three/four person households (likely the same cohorts) may indicate people moving for access to schooling, or other employment opportunities.

Number of persons usually resident	Households
1 person	208
2 persons	268
3 persons	93
4 persons	75
5 persons	55
6 or more persons	38

Figure 8 - Percentage Change in Household Size 2011-2021 (ABS)

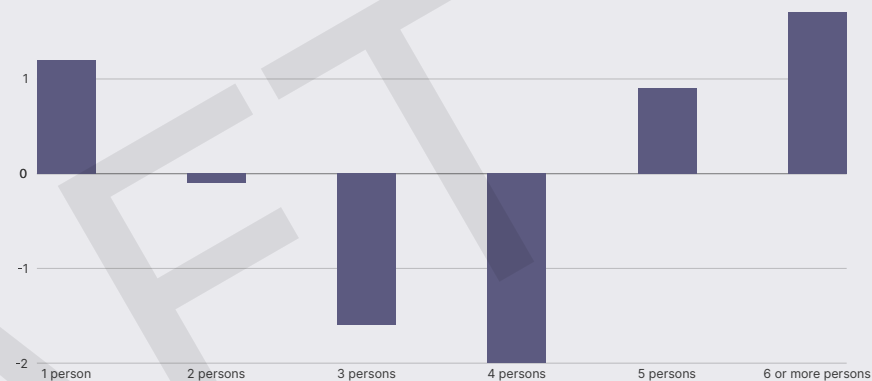
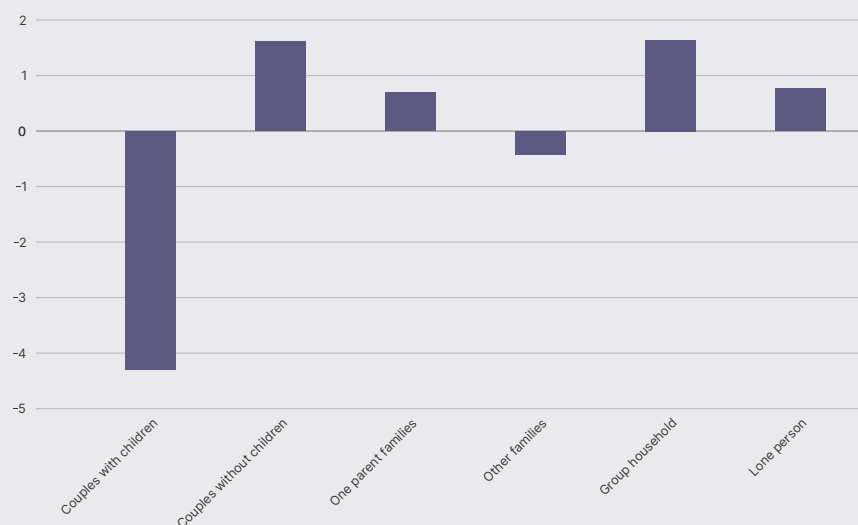


Figure 9 - Percentage Change in Household Type 2006-2021 (ABS)



4.1.8. Dwelling Types

Throughout the Balranald LGA, the dominant housing type is a detached three-bedroom dwelling. There is also a high proportion of four, five and over bedroom houses, and a small number of one and two bedroom dwellings, which is increasingly mismatching with the changing household compositions.

At the time of the 2021 census – there were 208 lone person households, 170 of whom are residing in separate dwellings.

The majority of dwellings containing three bedrooms and over indicate there is an increasing mismatch between the housing stock, and the rapidly changing household makeups.

Figure 10 - Dwelling Structure (2021), ABS

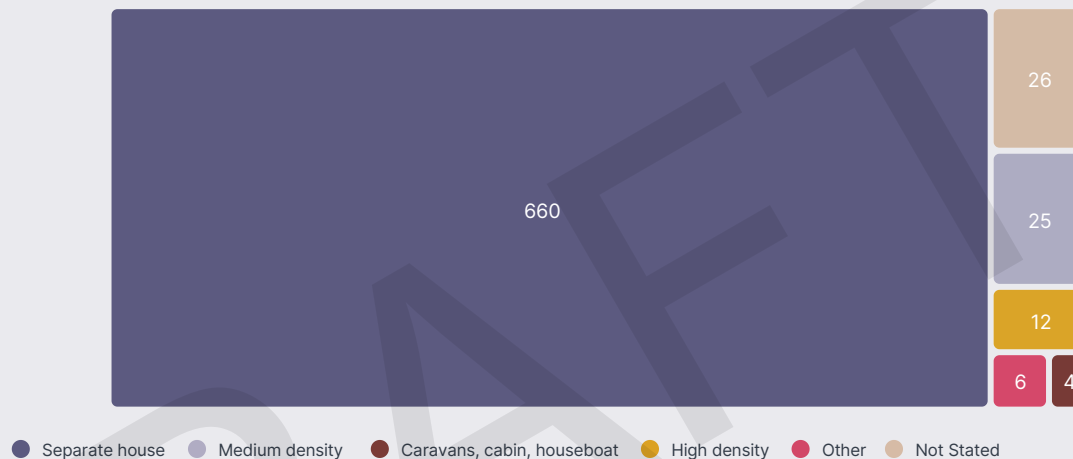


Figure 11 - Bedrooms Per Dwelling (2021), ABS



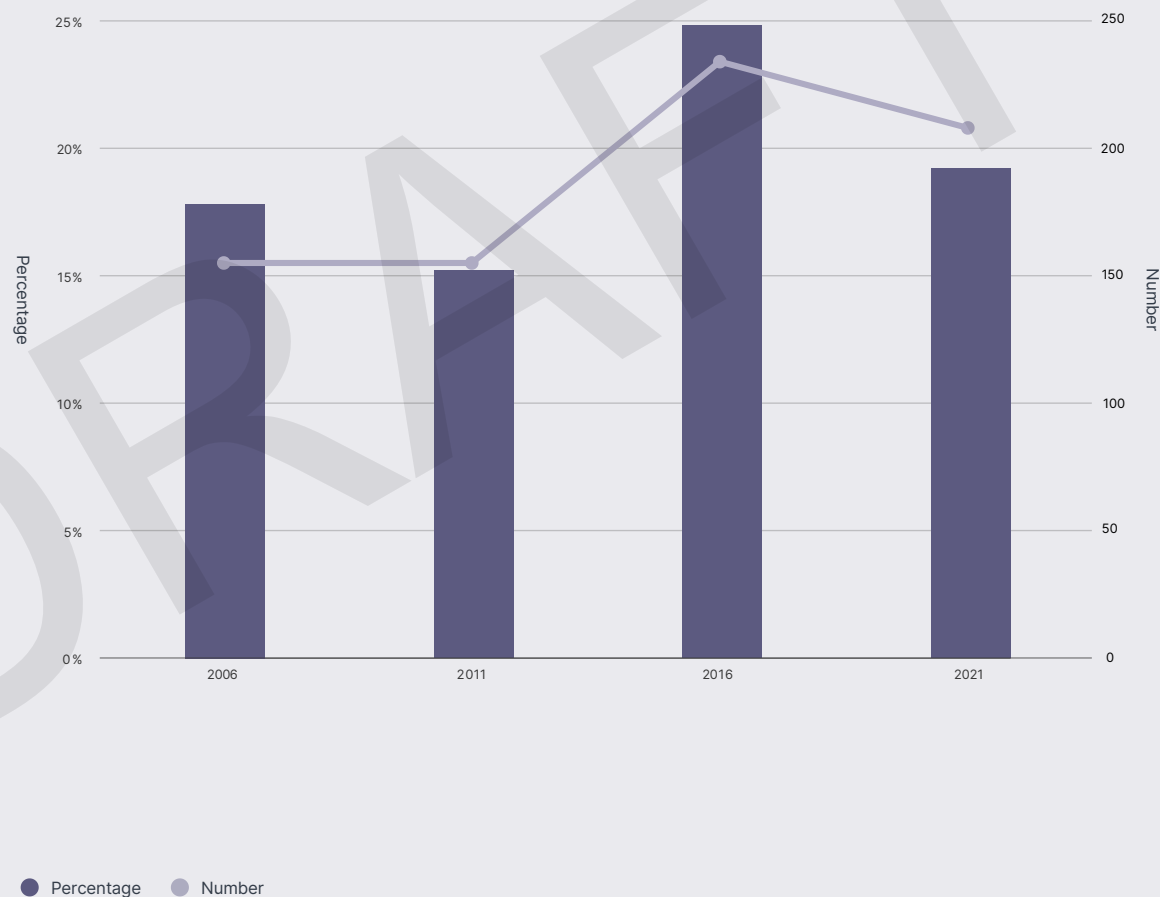
4.1.9. Unoccupied Dwellings

In 2021, of a total of 192 private dwellings were considered unoccupied – **20.76%**, which represents 150-200% of the Australian regional average. Often this can be explained by people not being at home during a census, houses in the process of being sold or rented, or being used for short term rentals.

This is a notable number as it can quite drastically affect much of the other data around housing tenure and occupation, particularly considering the short-term changes.

Feedback from residents also indicate an unusually high level of properties, particularly within Balranald are derelict and have fallen into disrepair, which contributes to this unusually high figure.

Figure 12 - Unoccupied dwellings (2006-2021), (ABS)



4.1.10. Housing Tenure

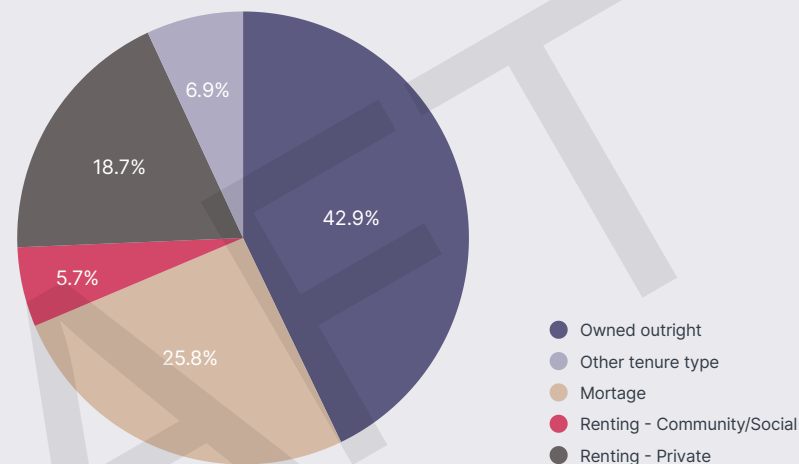
Due to the low population numbers, it can be hard to identify clear trends in housing tenure though it may be instructive to analyse them in conjunction with population dynamics.

Changes between 2006 and 2021 show the number of fully owned properties has increased slightly and mortgages decreased, however this can't be considered a simple transition of one tenure to another.

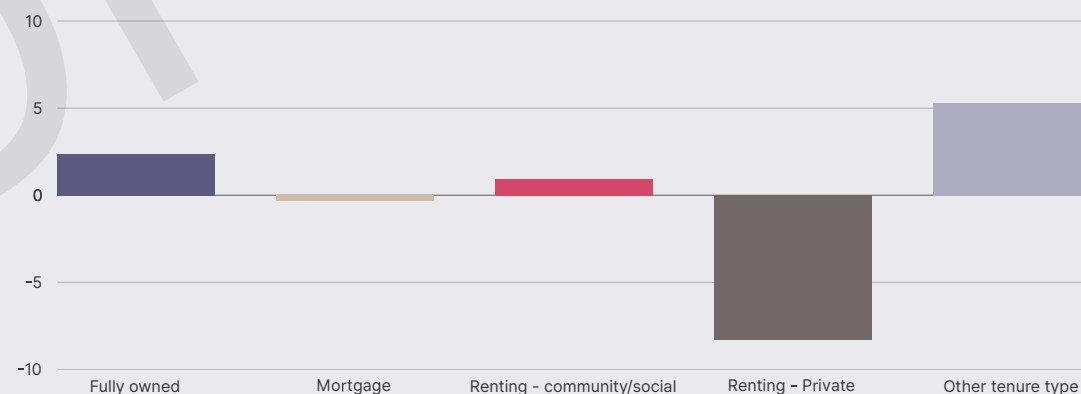
As a percentage of the total dwellings, the decrease of private renting, 10% is quite stark and may be tied to the reported unoccupied dwellings.

Community feedback has indicated a large number of properties and rooms within them are being rented informally and on a short term basis to seasonal workers, which is fallout outside of recorded census numbers.

Figure 13 - Housing Tenure, Balranald (2021)



14 - Change in Housing Tenure (%), Balranald (2006-2021)



4.1.11. Housing Payments

Mortgage and Rental payments have been most recently reported at the 2021 census.

Of the 25.8% of households paying mortgages, the majority are paying between \$6,00 and \$1,399 per month. This has likely increased as interest rate rises have occurred since the census. There are also a notable number of households in the lowest bracket, which could indicate properties with very low mortgage balances, subsidised housing, or other unique financial arrangements.

While the Census figures may be slightly dated, data suggests that rental costs are still relatively low, with the majority of households paying less than \$350 per week, well below the NSW Regional median of \$540 for houses.

Community feedback on informal and short term rental arrangements indicate that the prices people are being charged may be significantly higher than the reported figures.

Figure 15 - Monthly Mortgage repayments, ABS

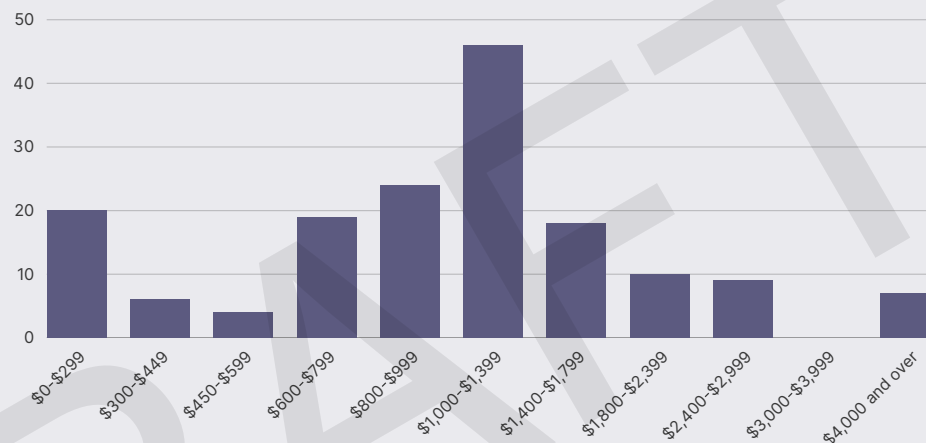
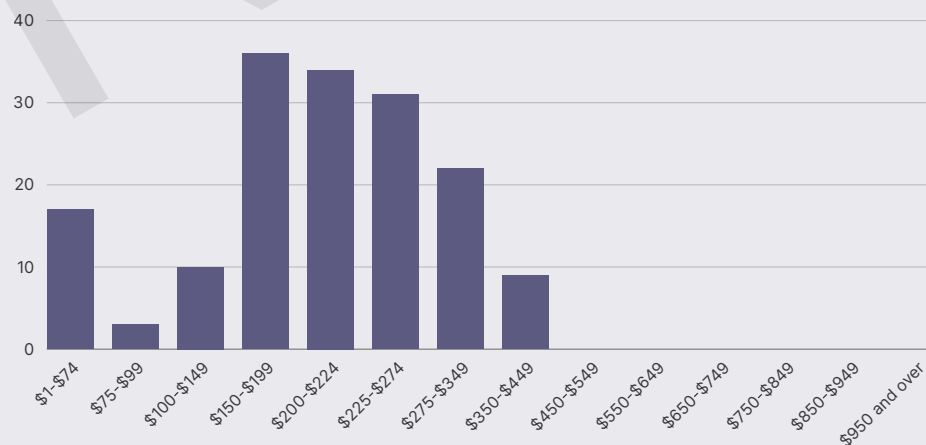


Figure 16 - Weekly Rent Payments (2021), ABS



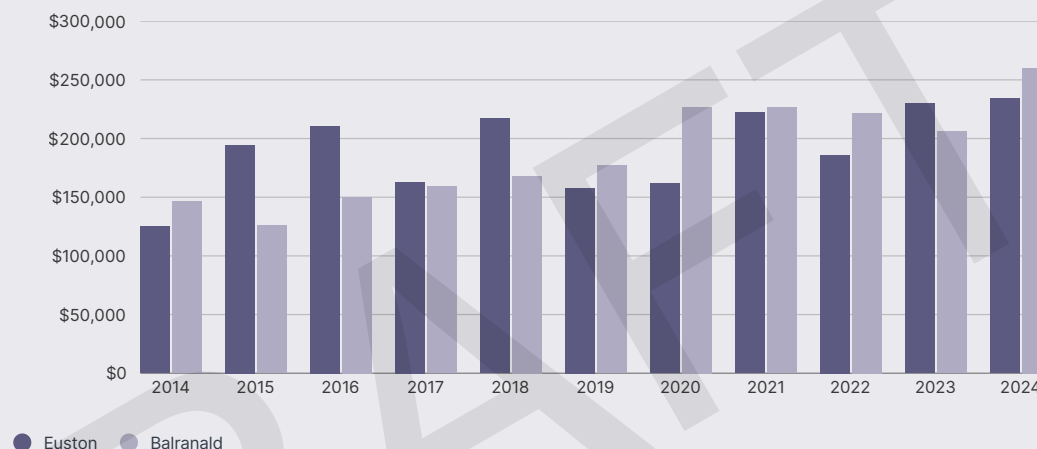
4.2.1. Housing Sales

Access to affordable housing is perhaps as important culturally as it is economically, in Australian society. As a fundamental human right, housing is important for shelter as well as security. This often clashes with property's standing as asset class, due to its potential for capital gains.

Property sales throughout Balranald and Euston growing, both in volume and cost.

Figure 17 shows average property sales costs over the past ten years in urban Balranald and Euston (note: outliers such as peppercorn sales and large aberrations have been omitted). As has been experienced in many regional areas, prices have risen fairly steeply, post COVID.

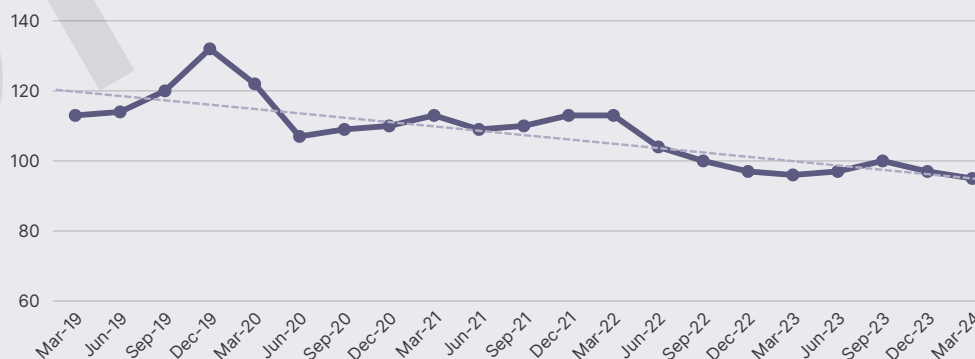
Figure 17 - Average Residential Property Sales 2014-2024, CoreLogic



4.2.2. Rental Availability

Figures held by the NSW Dept of Communities and Justice show, the number of bonds held are steadily decreasing which indicates there may be more housing stock becoming available for rent. This correlates with the decrease in renting figures shown in the previous section.

Figure 18 - Total bonds held (NSW Dept. Communities and Justice)



4.2.3. Family Income

The relationship between income and housing costs is crucial because it directly impacts an individual's or household's financial stability, quality of life, and ability to meet other essential needs.

Figure 19 shows the most recent income figures by family type from the 2021 Census – Couples with and without children and one parent families.

As at the 2021 Census, most households in Balranald are paying between \$600 and \$1,399 per month to service a mortgage, which is deemed manageable.

One-parent families are disproportionately represented in lower income brackets, which may indicate a need for targeted support to improve their financial stability and housing affordability.



Couples with children have the highest representation in the **\$2,000–\$2,499** weekly income bracket (36 households), indicating that many families with children fall into this middle-to-upper income range. They also have a significant presence in higher income brackets (e.g., **\$4,000 or more**), with 21 households earning this



Couples without children are more evenly distributed across income brackets, with a notable concentration in the **\$2,000–\$2,499** range (27 households) and **\$2,500–\$2,999** range (21



They are also well-represented in higher income brackets, with 7 households earning **\$4,000 or more**.



One-parent families are concentrated in lower income brackets, with the highest number (11 households) in the **\$500–\$649** range.



Very few one-parent families earn above **\$2,000 per week**, highlighting potential financial challenges for this group.

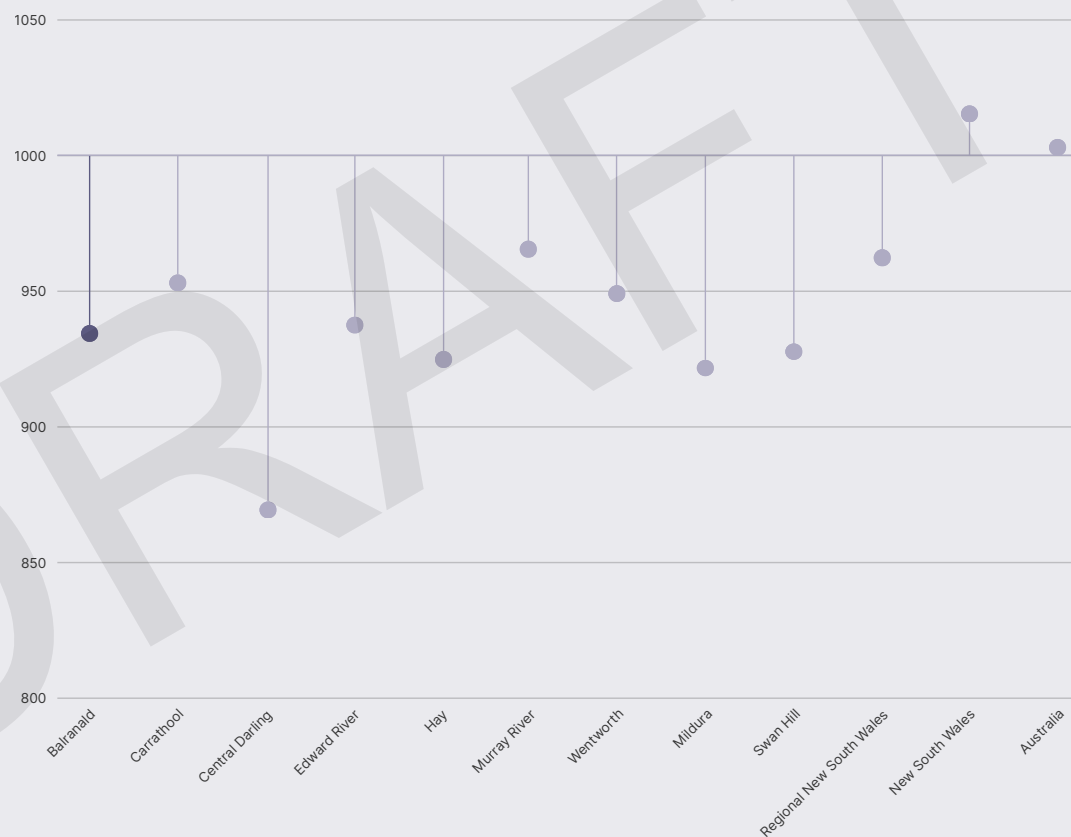
4.2.4. SEIFA

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a measure of relative advantage and disadvantage. It's not an absolute figure and can be a good indicator of accessibility to employment, education, amenity, healthcare, higher order regional towns, or where funding might be required.

1000 is the national, median rating for the index where the further deviation from 1000 indicates the relative advantage or disadvantage.

Listed in the 36th percentile (where only 36% of the areas are considered more disadvantaged), Balranald LGA's rating for the 2021 index is 934.

Figure 20 - Socio Economic Indexes for Areas (ABS, 2021)



4.2.5. Social Assistance and Housing









In Balranald LGA, there are 14 social housing dwellings and 100 people receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

For social housing, there are less than five priority applicants and eight general applicants in the Balranald Allocation Zone in 2024. Though these numbers are relatively small, expected wait times are up to two years for properties with up to three bedrooms. (DCJ, 2024)

Much of the direct control for social housing sits outside of Council's remit, such as the rates of rent assistance and income support.

At a minimum, effective advocacy to all levels of government will be required from Council to support housing for vulnerable groups in the community.

Table 2 - Assistance by LGA (Australian Dept. of Social Services)

 <p>240 Aged Pension Recipients</p>	 <p>55 Carer Allowance</p>	 <p>100 Commonwealth Rent Assistance</p>	 <p>100 Disability Support Pension</p>
 <p>105 Health Care Card</p>	 <p>55 JobSeeker Payment</p>	 <p>45 JobSeeker Payment</p>	 <p>420 Pension Concession Card</p>

4.3. Employment

Over the past twenty years, the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing and Manufacturing sectors have for a long time been the most populous employers in Balranald, and this number is increasing.

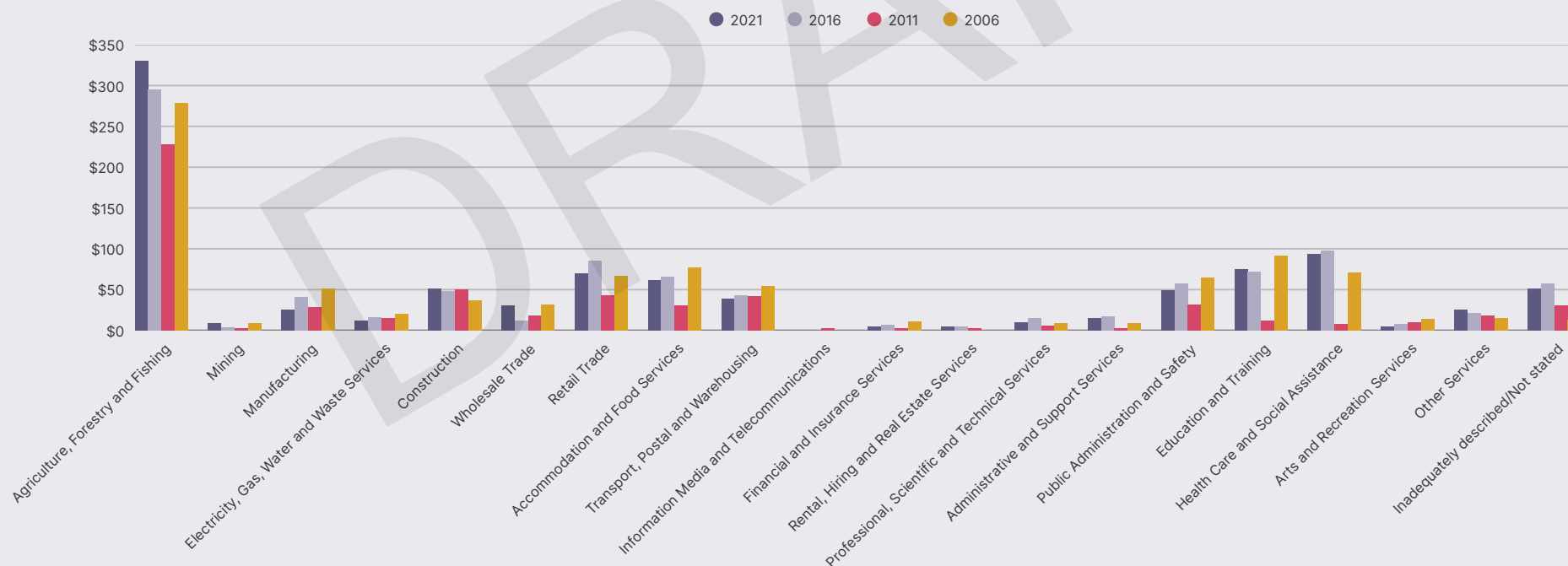
There has been a small growth in other industry sectors, that aligns well to the aging population including Health Care and Social Services

Where people are employed has an impact on land use planning. Emerging, service based industries benefit from co-location with other amenities and services in town centres, and within proximity to where the people are who require those services. Agriculture, however, is more dependent on the location of production and widespread.

There remains a level of uncertainty of the amount of workers in agriculture and horticulture throughout Australia and this may be contributing to some of the pressure felt for housing throughout Balranald LGA. Data around temporary and seasonal workforces, such as Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) is presented by the federal government at very broad levels.

As the number of workers is seasonal, it can make calculating the requirements for provision of housing a difficult proposition. In addition, infrastructure project, such as Project Energy Connect and the growing mineral sands mining industry, may place further pressures on the housing stock throughout Balranald.

Figure 23 - Employment Fields - Balranald LGA



4.4. Unemployment

Balranald currently has a relatively low unemployment rate of 2.4%, well below the current national average of 4.1%, itself at twenty years lows.

In Australia, **unemployment** is defined by the **Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)** as a situation where a person meets the following three criteria:

Not Employed: The person did not work at all during the reference week (the week when the survey is conducted).

Actively Seeking Work: The person actively looked for work during the previous four weeks, such as by applying for jobs, contacting employers, or attending job interviews.

Available to Work: The person was available to start work during the reference week if a job had been offered.

The **Labour Force Participation Rate** is defined as the percentage of the working-age population (typically aged 15 and over) that is either employed or actively seeking work (unemployed). It is a key measure of the proportion of the population that is engaged in or available for the labour market.

A higher participation rate generally indicates a greater proportion of the population is contributing to or seeking to contribute to the economy.

The latest figure of 1378 people in Balranald is a relatively high proportion of the working age population.

Figure 21 - Balranald Unemployment rate (Small Area Labour Markets, 2024)

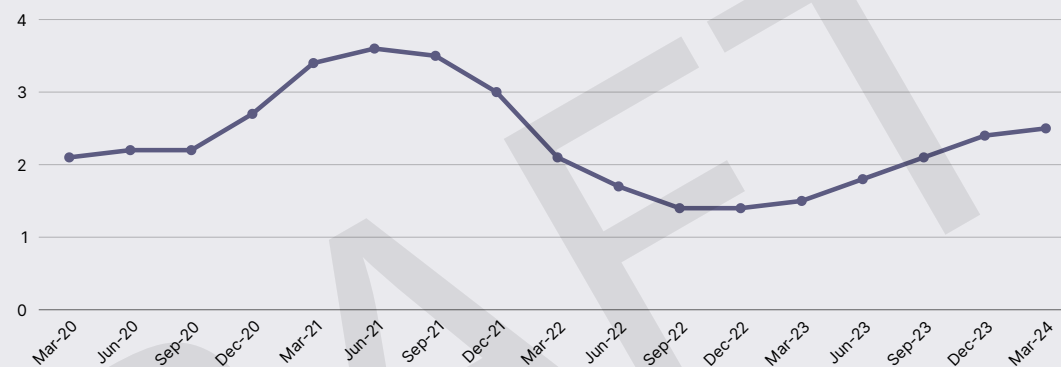
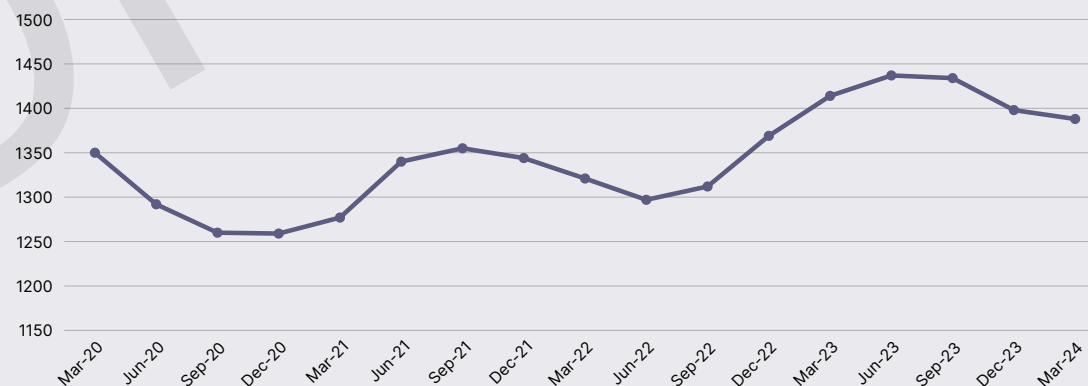


Figure 22 - Balranald Labour Force Participation (Small Area Labour Markets, 2024)



4.5. Journey to work

The spatial relationships between where people live and work are vital to land use planning structures. The geographic spread of both housing and employment lands, how far people travel and by what mode of transport all contribute to the urban and socio-economic structures.

By far, the most dominant transport mode is the private car. Public transport is for all intents, non-existent and there is a small cohort of people who walk to work in Balranald and Euston

Post COVID, as the prevalence of working from home has increased, there has been a fairly substantial quota of workers performing their jobs from home. This has implications for the spaces people live, as well as those they work in.

As a consequence, people may seek extra bedrooms in a dwelling for office or work space. As there is currently the combination of 3+ bedroom homes with shrinking family units, this is unlikely to create a substantial problem for housing supply in the short term.

At the 2021 Census, 421 from Balranald and 157 from Euston worked within Balranald LGA

The workers who travelled outside of Balranald LGA commuted to the nearby Swan Hill (156 people principally from Euston).

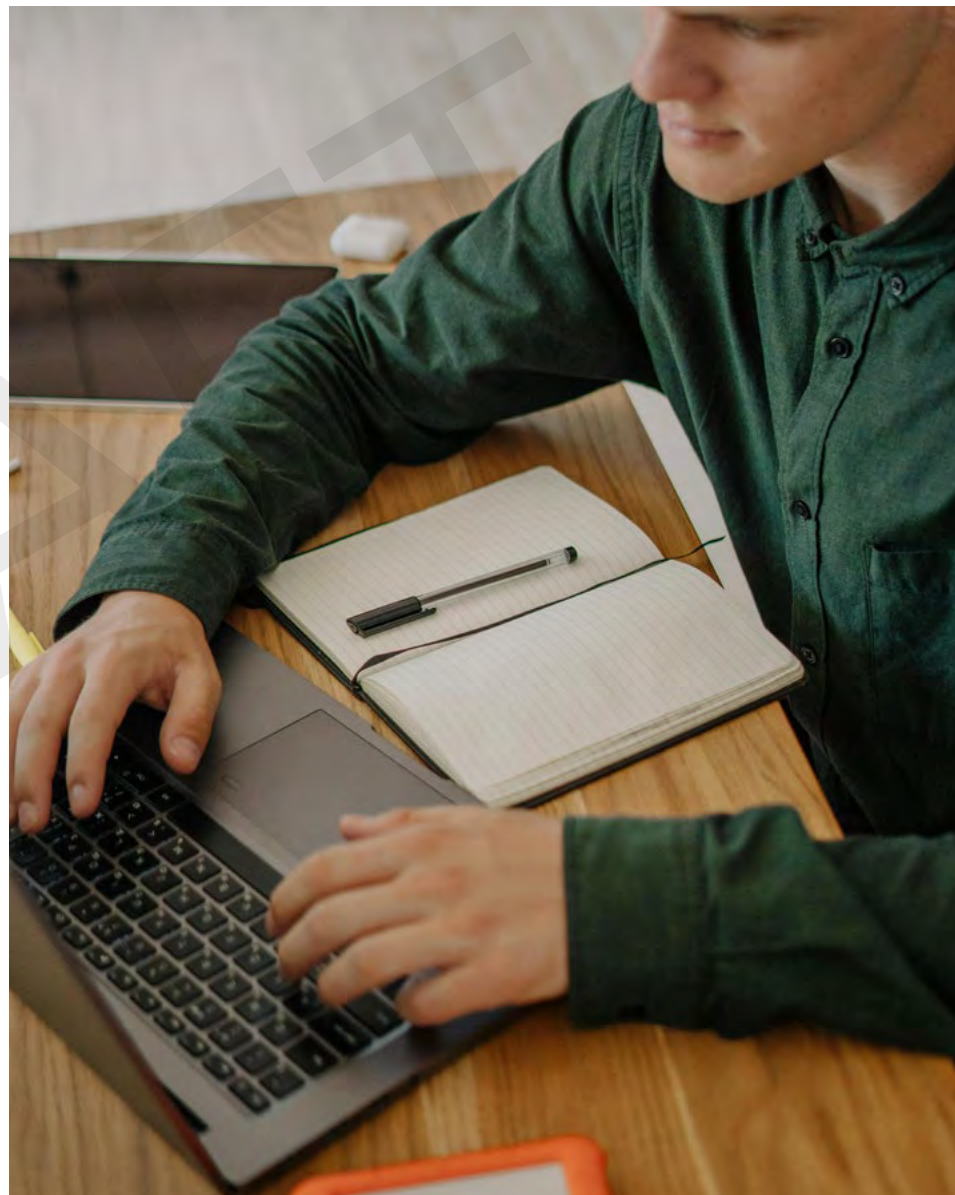
4.6. Education

There are a number of public and private schools providing primary and options through Balranald, Euston and Clare.

Balranald Central School provides secondary schooling and students in Euston need to travel to the adjacent Robinvale.

A Country Universities Centre is located in the nearby Swan Hill which provides a physical location for any enrolled tertiary student to access study spaces and internet. The CUC is government funded and provides an essential hub for students who may be studying externally, online and live in the area.

In 2021, 57 students were undergoing tertiary education and 29 in TAFE/vocational education.



5

ENVIRONMENT

DRAFT

This section of the strategic review addresses the environmental aspects that will influence the preparation of a housing strategy.

Areas of analysis in this section include climate, vegetation, environmentally sensitive land, threatened species, flooding and bushfire hazards, , air, noise, water, salinity, waste management, effluent disposal, land use conflict, heritage, local state of the environment reports as well as the implications and issues for planning.

The Balranald Shire LSPS vision pays particular attention to a “diverse natural environment that is valued by residents and visitors alike.”

The community values the inherent connection to the river systems, understanding its importance to Aboriginal and European cultural heritage values, connection to Country and an understanding of place.

Council understands the health of the environment is directly connected to the health of Balranald.

The Balranald LGA crosses two Bioregions – the Riverina to the south, and the Murray Darling Depression to the north.

“The Riverina bioregion lies in southwest NSW, extending into central-north Victoria. It goes from Ivanhoe in the Murray Darling Depression Bioregion south to Bendigo, and from Narrandera in the east to Balranald in the west.

The Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers and their major tributaries, the Lachlan and Goulburn Rivers, flow from the highlands in the east, westward across the Riverina plain.

The climate is dry and semi-arid with hot summers and cool winters. Most rain falls in winter.

Vegetation ranges from river red gums, along river channels, to saltbush on the plains. There are several threatened species of both plant and animal in this bioregion. Several significant wetlands occur in the Riverina bioregion, including NSW Central Murray Forests and Fivebough and Tuckerbil Swamps, and these support many waterbirds, including migratory species.”

Riverina Bioregion Snapshot, NSW DPE



5.1. CLIMATE

Climate modelling for the Far West region is important for the Balranald LGA, especially as it relates to agriculture, water availability, bushfire risk, human, flora and fauna health. Projections include:

- Maximum and minimum temperatures are projected to increase.
- Number of hot days will increase.
- Number of cold nights will decrease.
- Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI) - Average fire weather as well as severe fire weather days to increase in Spring and Summer.

"The long-term temperature trend indicates that temperatures in the region have been increasing since approximately 1950, with the largest increase in temperature variables coming the most recent decades."

Far West Climate Change Snapshot

Heat related stress is the biggest environmental cause of hospitalisations and death in Australia. As the population in Balranald ages, and the number of hotter days increases, the risk also increase.

"People aged 65 years and over are at increased risk of heat-related illnesses and need special care in hot weather."

Risk factors include living alone, chronic medical problems and certain medications."

Heat stress and older people – betterhealth.vic.gov.au

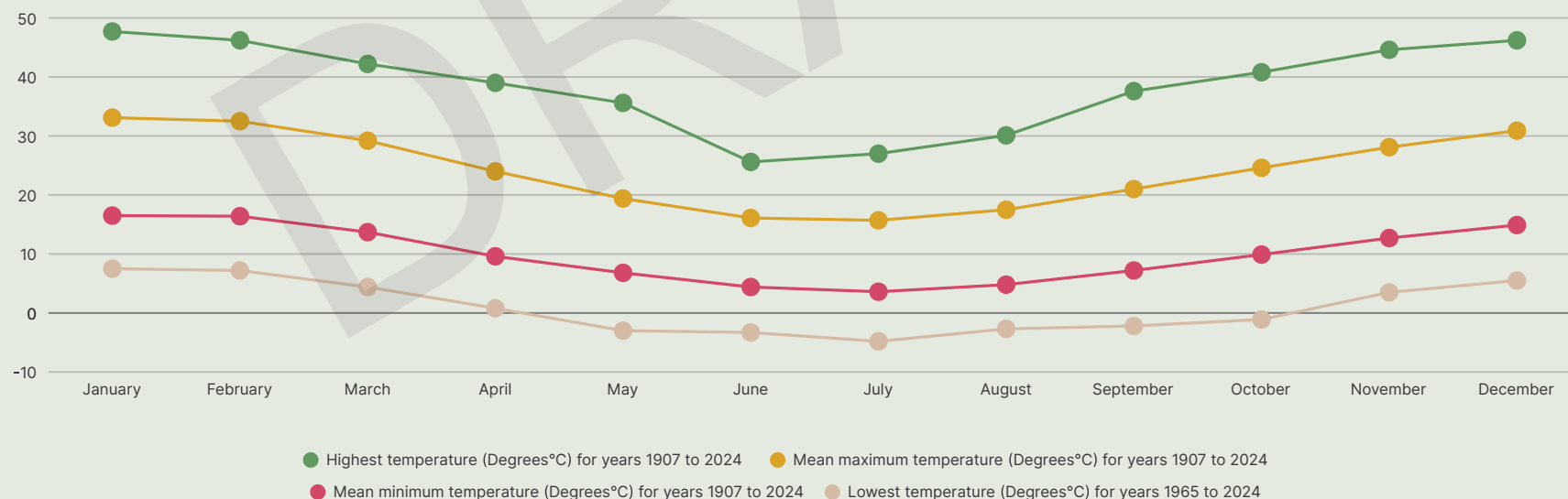
The NSW and Australian Regional Climate Modelling (NARCLiM) project summarises projections for severe weather changes and models high and low-emissions scenarios.

As of 2024, high emissions scenarios are more likely, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported the first twelve month period of 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels. NSW and the ACT have both already warmed by 1.4°C since national records began in 1910.

Balranald's agricultural, and tourist economies, community health, will likely be more at risk in the coming decades.

This will have effects on dwelling patterns, how and where people choose to live, and their relationships to the built and living environment.

Figure 24 - Balranald Annual Temperatures, Bureau of Meteorology



5.1.1. Flooding and Water

The impacts of climate change will result in more extreme weather events. Flooding has the potential to be more devastating than previously modelled or planned for.

As the average temperature increases, so too does the atmosphere's capacity to hold water, and precipitate larger volumes. While the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers is a highly controlled environment (through systems of levees, locks and weirs), Balranald and Euston is at risk from overland and riverine flooding and the proximity to riverine environments, wetland and riparian lands are also noteworthy.

Flood risk is a key impact to consider when developing a housing strategy, when assessing land that may be suitable for development, or considering land that is becoming more flood prone as the effects of climate change are more readily felt.

In certain geographic areas, insurance premiums are already beginning to rise in accordance with the increased risk.

Balranald LGA's flood risk has not been assessed recently. As of 2023, NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has amended the way it assesses flood risk, and considers not just the modelled 1% AEP risk, but the probable maximum flood (PMF) levels when assessing suitable places for land use, inhabitation, dwelling and infrastructure.

In 2025 and prior to the completion of this Strategy, Council received funding from the NSW State Government to conduct a Flood Study for each of the townships and surrounds of Euston and Balranald. The purpose of this study is to define flood risk in each town, both due to riverine flooding (from the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers), as well as the overland flow risk from local storms. This study will improve Council's understanding of flood behaviour and impacts to better inform the management of flood risk in Euston and Balranald.

Any recommendations made in this Strategy should be understood in this vital context.



5.1.2. Bushfire

Council is responsible for bushfire mapping, which is then reviewed by the Rural Fire Service before certification by the commissioner. Bushfire mapping is a key input into the development of a housing strategy, particularly when assessing land that may be suitable for development.

Bushfire prone vegetation maps are separated into categories, Category 1 and 2 and 3 currently apply to Balranald LGA.

Category 1

Vegetation Category 1 is considered to be the highest risk for bush fire. It is represented as red on the bush fire prone land map and will be given a 100m buffer. This vegetation category has the highest combustibility and likelihood of forming fully developed fires including heavy ember production. Vegetation Category 1 consists of:

- Areas of forest, woodlands, heaths (tall and short), forested wetlands and timber plantations

Category 2

Vegetation Category 2 is considered to be a lower bush fire risk than Category 1 and Category 3 but higher than any excluded areas.

It is represented as light orange on a bush fire prone land map and is given a 30 metre buffer. This vegetation category has lower combustibility and/or limited potential fire size due to the vegetation area shape and size, land geography and management practices. Vegetation Category 2 consists of:

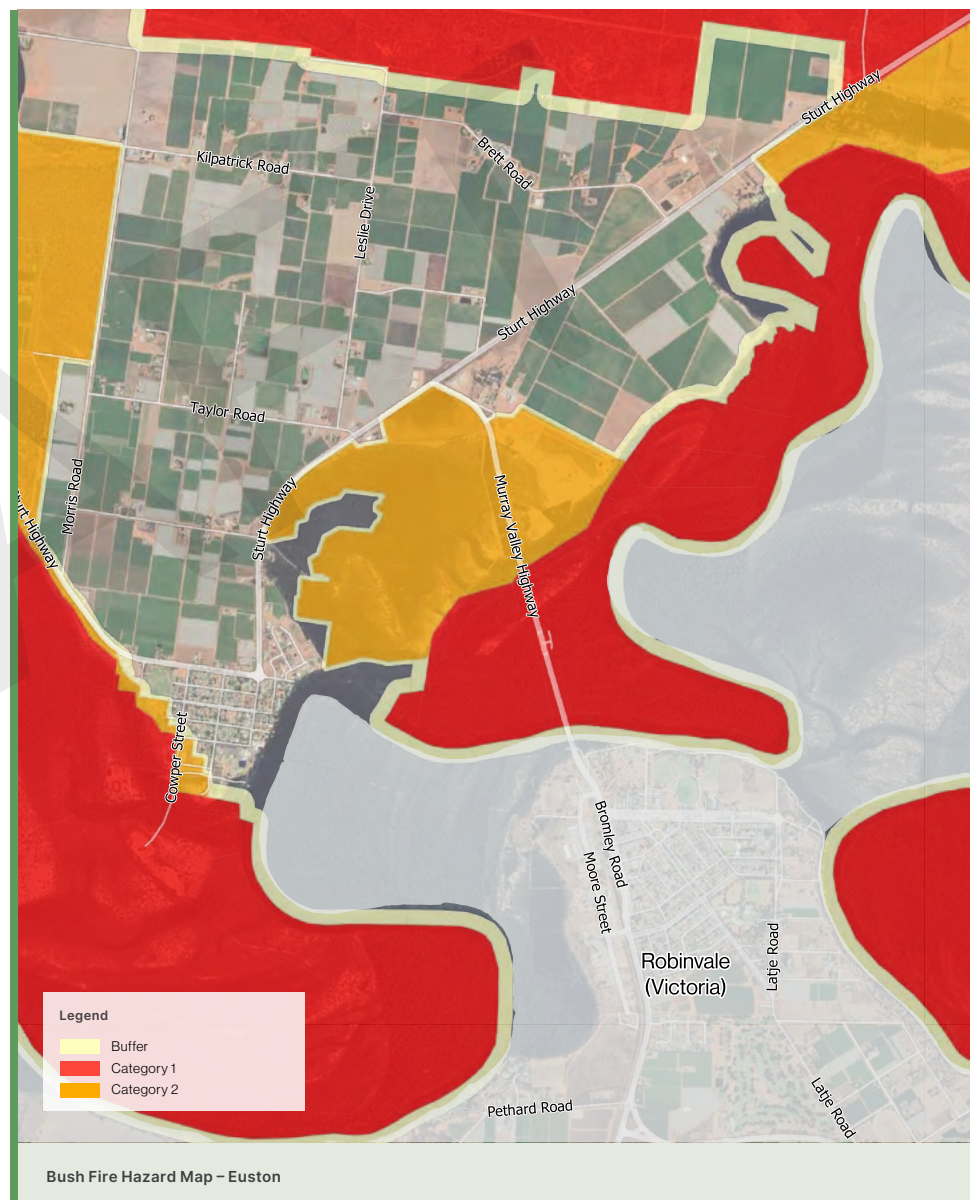
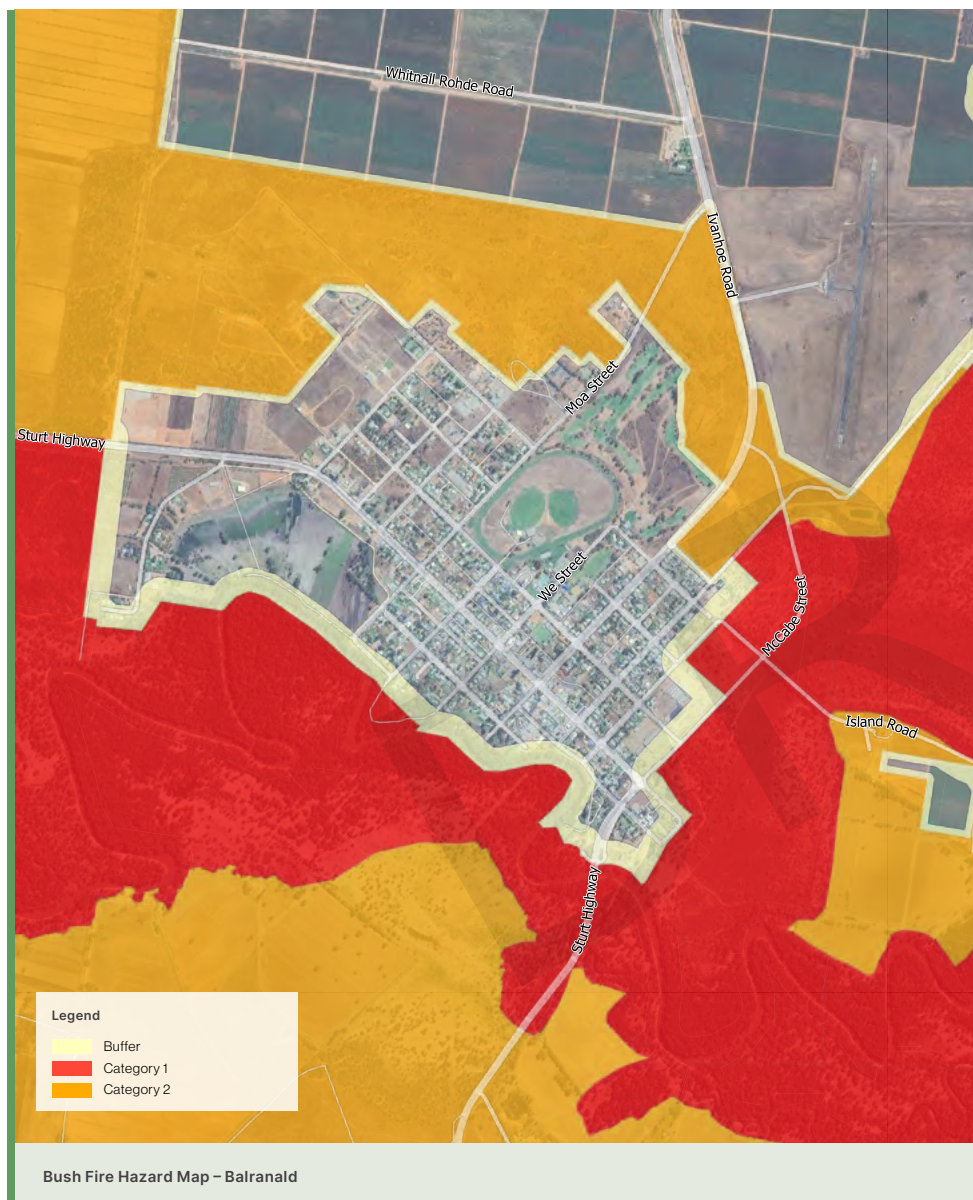
- Rainforests.
- Lower risk vegetation parcels. These vegetation parcels represent a lower bush fire risk to surrounding development and consist of:
 - Remnant vegetation;
 - Land with ongoing land management practices that actively reduces bush fire risk. These areas must be subject to a plan of management or similar that demonstrates that the risk of bush fire is offset by strategies that reduce bush fire risk; AND include:
 - Discrete urban reserve/s;
 - Parcels that are isolated from larger uninterrupted tracts of vegetation and known fire paths;
 - Shapes and topographies which do not permit significant upslope fire runs towards development;
 - Suitable access and adequate infrastructure to support suppression by firefighters;
 - Vegetation that represents a lower likelihood of ignitions because the vegetation is surrounded by development in such a way that an ignition in any part of the vegetation has a higher likelihood of detection.

Category 3

The recently introduced Vegetation Category 3 consists of

- Grasslands, freshwater wetlands, semi-arid woodlands, alpine complex and arid shrublands

Vegetation Category 3 is considered to be medium bush fire risk vegetation. It is higher in bush fire risk than category 2 (and the excluded areas) but lower than Category 1. It is represented as dark orange on a Bush Fire Prone Land map and is given a 30 metre buffer.



5.2. TRANSPORT NETWORKS

Major transport networks are intimately tied to employment and therefore housing within the shire Balranald LGA is a highly productive region, the more efficiently goods can be exported and transported, the more productive the region can become.

Historically reliant on river transport via the Murray and Murrumbidgee, the towns of Balranald and Euston are now serviced primarily by road. Both lie on the Sturt Highway, a vital interstate freight corridor linking Adelaide to Sydney and Melbourne, supporting the movement of agricultural goods, mining outputs, and renewable energy infrastructure components.

Euston additionally connects to the Murray Valley Highway, providing direct links to Swan Hill, Echuca, and the Victorian agricultural belt, underpinning its horticulture-driven economy and labour market. Yanga Way south of Balranald offers an emerging freight route to Adelaide via Tooleybuc and Ouyen, increasingly important for the growing renewable energy sector.

In the south, Balranald Shire is serviced by a sealed road network and is part of a broader NSW State Roads strategic transport network. The Sturt Highway is a major road, connecting Adelaide to the eastern states.

In the north, the road network is much more sparse and often dependent on weather conditions for access.

No major air services fly out of Balranald LGA, the nearest airport is Mildura, which has access to major capital cities.



6

CONSULTATION

DRAFT

This section of the strategic review addresses the environmental aspects that will influence the preparation of a housing strategy.

A multi-faceted approach has been taken to consultation with the community and stakeholders in order to meet people where they were most comfortable contributing to the Strategy.

- In person
 - Councillor Workshop
 - Open drop-in sessions
 - Targeted interviews with employers, real estate agents and Council staff
- Online survey (125 responses received)

Councillor Workshop

Councillors were presented with the breadth of background analysis and community feedback up to that point in the development of the Strategy and given the opportunity to consider the project and seek clarification on important issues.

Important to the session, *reported data* was presented to the Councillors, who were able to speak about their experiences within the shire and from anecdotal evidence presented, raised their concerns with its accuracy.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics are undertaking work in the area to understand population.
- Swan Hill Council has undertaken work in Robinvale (cross river from Euston), which was calculated to have a service population of between 7,000 and 8,800, far exceeding the reported 3,359.

Community Sessions:

Attendees were presented with information gathered through the research and background phase and their experiences of that were sought through structured conversation as well as being encouraged to consider the future of land use throughout Balranald LGA

Targeted Interviews

Interviews with stakeholders sought to understand housing and employment land use throughout Balranald LGA. The varied perspectives of the participants, including employers, real estate and Council staff helped to consolidate the Strategy's aims and offer specialised viewpoints to uncover unreported data and refine the approach.

Online Survey

An online survey was conducted and sent out to the community. An encouraging 125 responses were received.

Respondents were asked about their relationship to Balranald and Euston, living and employment statuses and what, if any, changes they would like to see in the future.



6.1 Consultation outcomes

Throughout the consultation process, there were some consistent themes and trends that arose, around why people chose Balranald Shire and what they felt needed to be addressed through the Strategy.



Sense of community



Natural environment
and open space



Family connections



Employment opportunities
and security





Clear housing gaps identified:

- A lack of smaller dwellings for long persons, older people and downsizers. 42% of respondents said they would like to live in a small low maintenance dwelling close to a town.
- Difficulty in procuring housing for families, and disproportionately high rents for the available stock.
- Balancing permanent residents and seasonal workers: residents understand the importance of the seasonal workers to the local economy but struggled with the competition for housing and accommodation it created.
- A lack of diversity – 68% of respondents there were limited housing choices overall.



Housing affordability and availability.

- 40% of respondents said they experienced difficulty finding suitable housing in the past 12 months.
- Affordability and availability affects local business' ability to attract and retain staff.
- This includes key workers in health, amenity and local government, many of whom cannot find housing in the area and commute long distances, or



Retaining younger people and families

Explicit links were drawn between accessible and affordable housing, and the need to retain younger people in the area. The relationship between employment opportunities and housing was also noted.

Many respondents lamented the lack of "lifestyle" lots for families, such as those afforded in large lot residential zones.



Buildings fit for purpose

- Many respondents noted a disproportionately high number of houses had been abandoned and left derelict in Balranald.
- There were some tensions with the use of commercial buildings. Some respondents felt there were unused commercial buildings that could be utilised through adaptive reuse.
- Others that noted commercial buildings were being used for housing or accommodation, potentially inhibiting business and retail growth.



Infrastructure

A lack of serviced land and/or infrastructural capacity was noted by some as an impediment to development.



Preservation vs Growth

Many respondents said they valued "the friendly community", "safe place for kids", and "slow-paced living".

While this reflects a positive sentiment, it contrasts with significant frustration around lack of housing choice and affordability, requiring the growth and construction. This tension suggests a desire to preserve local character while enabling growth—a key challenge for the Strategy

90% of respondents said there should be more land zoned for accommodation and housing.

7

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The development of this strategy has primarily been about defining the issues the community are dealing with, when it comes to the provision of housing and accommodation.

Importantly, as a Planning document focused on housing, the recommendations are focused on the legislative and community structures that define and enable how housing is delivered and serviced throughout Balranald LGA.

Housing influences and is influenced by employment, demographic trends, mobility patterns, service delivery models, community cohesion, infrastructure investment priorities, and the interplay between residential development and commercial activity that sustain local communities.

The major issues identified for housing throughout Balranald LGA have been documented through the development of the background and research report, stakeholder and community engagement through a variety of techniques (in person and online).

These have informed the themes, strategies and actions that seek to apply planning (legislation and policy levers) and non-planning (community based programs, advocacy and ideas) recommendations that are pragmatic and outcome focused.

Much of the development of this Strategy has been devoted to 'defining the problem'; that is figuring out what can be addressed through the framework of a local housing strategy.

As a local housing strategy, there are of course limits to what it can achieve, especially where larger economic forces, state and federal policy frameworks quite directly control potential land use outcomes, built form and service delivery.

Regardless, the documentation of the issues throughout seek to add to a growing body of local and specific work that effectively "define the problem" and support future funding and advocacy.

The recommendation framework is supported by the body of research, and logically structured into the exploration of Planning and non-planning ideas to address the issues raised during the Strategy's development.



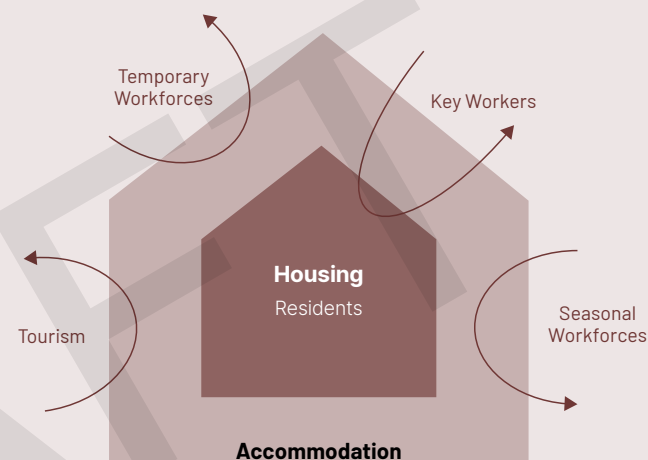
For the purposes of this Strategy, it is important to make a distinction between Accommodation and Housing, both of which are important to land-use planning throughout Balranald LGA.

Housing refers to the permanent or long-term dwellings that make up the LGA's residential stock. It is typically fixed to a location, designed for ongoing occupation, and counted within the Estimated Resident Population (the "official" count). Housing is part of the land use planning framework; zoned areas, infrastructure connections, and built form, which evolves slowly over time. It influences long-term settlement patterns, community stability, and the availability of services.

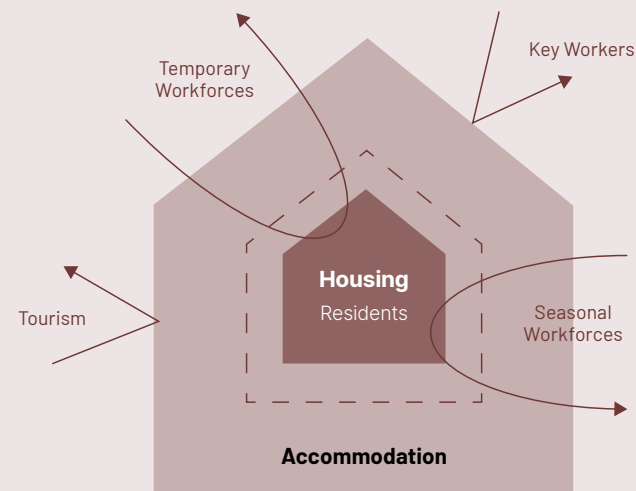
Housing in Balranald and Euston is primarily geared to residents who live there year-round, even as the demographic profile evolves.

Accommodation, by contrast, is generally temporary, transient, or seasonal. It serves people whose connection to place is short-term such as itinerant agricultural workers, renewable energy construction staff, tourists, or cross-border seasonal labour. Accommodation can take many forms (caravan parks, motels, workers' camps, rented rooms) and often sits outside the formal housing market. Its spatial footprint may be flexible, sometimes located in or near service centres, or on sites related to workplaces. Temporally, accommodation demand is highly variable; peaking with harvests or project timelines, then contracting.

Ideally, housing stock can provide for permanent, long term residents. Accommodation can adapt to surges in seasonal and temporary workforces, tourists and key workers.



Balranald LGA's housing stock is being eroded by temporary and seasonal workforces, disadvantaging key workers and tourists, locking out long term residents and preventing community growth or even stabilisation.



In planning terms, housing supports the **permanent population base**, while accommodation must flexibly respond to **short-term population surges** without distorting the long-term housing market.

At the heart of matter, Balranald and Euston's housing environment is under pressure from short-term accommodation surges, which have occurred over long periods and are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The inability to both house and accommodate people is negatively affecting the towns' ability to host workers that contribute to service and amenity including important roles in healthcare, local government, community, retail and tourism.

Initially, this section identifies some types of housing, accommodation and construction methods, according to use, that Council can explore and encourage. Each will look at its applicability to Balranald LGA and any Planning or non-Planning recommendations that might help to enable it.

Housing and Accommodation Matrix

	Population	Accommodation /Housing Type
Temporary	<p>Short stay in temporary dwellings Fluctuating Population inc. Seasonal Workers, Rural Workers, Construction Workers, Tourists</p>	<p>Temporary Workers' Dwellings Construction Workers' Accommodation Relocatable and Flat Pack Homes Motels</p>
	<p>Short stay in permanent dwellings Year round population inc. Key Workers, Seasonal Workers, Rural Workers, Construction Workers, Tourists</p>	<p>Short Stay Accommodation Rural Workers' Dwellings Boarding Houses Co-Living Houses</p>
Permanent	<p>Permanent residents in permanent dwellings Permanent, steady population inc. Key Workers, Residents</p>	<p>Townhouses Apartments Single Dwellings</p>

7.1.1. Temporary and Seasonal Workers

This Strategy acknowledges the pressure seasonal and temporary workers are exerting on the housing stock throughout Balranald LGA.

Seasonal migration is central to agriculture and horticulture in regional Australia. Workers move along “harvest trails” to meet labour demand in fruit, vegetable, and nut production. Balranald’s economy is strongly tied to irrigated agriculture and large projects in renewable energy and mining. These industries depend on seasonal, itinerant, and project-based workforces.

The Planning System, when it comes to dealing with temporary and seasonal workers and land use is legislatively complex and difficult to navigate, which can lead to unsuitable and ad-hoc outcomes with outcomes already evidenced, including informal boarding houses, overcrowding, a lack of services, living standards and worker exploitation.

The unintended outcome is people circumventing the planning system. Risks to doing this include the provision of unsafe and inadequate living conditions, a strain on local housing and services, loss of planning control and importantly, of community trust. There is a need to accommodate people affordably and with dignity.

The Temporary Workers’ and Seasonal Workers’ Accommodation Toolkit has been produced by the Department of Planning and Environment (now DPHI), intending to assist this process.

Adding Temporary Workers’ Dwellings to the Land Use Table ensures a statutory planning mechanism that directly responds to the housing and workforce realities. It assists Council to legally and strategically manage the influx of seasonal and itinerant workers, align with regional and state planning directions, protect existing housing stock, and provide certainty for industry investment. It is the critical link between strategic policy (regional and local) and statutory development control.

Without this explicit recognition, Council cannot easily approve appropriate forms of accommodation.

Recommendation

Consider adding Temporary Workers’ Accommodation to the land use table with the RU5 Village Zone, RU4 Primary Production Small Lot Zone and RU1 Primary Production Zone.

Add a locally relevant definition and conditions of Temporary Workers’ Accommodation to the LEP

7.1.2. Rural Worker’s Dwellings

Rural Workers’ Dwellings (RWDs) are a specific form of accommodation recognised within the NSW planning system. They are defined as a dwelling on rural land that is ancillary to the primary use of the land and occupied by a person employed in, or engaged in, the management of that use. The key feature is that they must directly support agricultural, horticultural, forestry or resource operations rather than being a stand-alone residential use.

Under the Standard Instrument Local Environmental Plan (LEP) framework, RWDs are permissible with consent in rural zones such as RU1 Primary Production Zone, RU4 Primary Production Small Lots Zone as well as the RU5 Village Zone (though not entirely applicable or explicitly listed). Within the RU5 Zone, Co-living and Boarding are more appropriate.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) provides councils with discretion to impose conditions to ensure that the dwelling remains tied to the rural enterprise. Importantly, unlike subdivision that fragments agricultural land, RWDs allow essential staff to live on site without undermining land use integrity.

The NSW Housing SEPP does not directly deal with RWDs but provides a complementary framework for other forms of worker and temporary housing. Development consent for RWDs usually requires evidence of genuine need, such as workforce numbers, land use intensity and operational management requirements. Councils often require legal agreements or conditions tying occupancy to employment on the land.

For Balranald LGA, RWDs are particularly relevant. The Shire’s expanding irrigated horticulture (almonds, pistachios, viticulture) and large pastoral enterprises rely on seasonal and permanent workers. Providing on-farm accommodation can reduce pressure on Balranald and Euston’s limited housing stock, support worker retention, and minimise commuting issues across vast distances. However, controls are needed to ensure RWDs are not misused as lifestyle housing or speculative development. In practice, well-regulated RWDs offer Balranald a planning tool to balance its agricultural expansion with community housing needs.

Applicability to Balranald LGA and Recommendations

The Balranald LEP allows Rural Worker’s Dwellings in the RU1 and RU4 Zones and from a Planning perspective, should provide an adequate legislative structure for RWDs to be constructed. Overflow of workers may be accommodated in Temporary Worker’s Accommodation.

7.1.3. Short Stay Tourist Accommodation

While this category sits at the periphery of the Strategy's scope, it is nonetheless important to recognise its role in the provision of short stay accommodation and the relationship with housing stock.

Cultural and environmental based tourism plays a big part Balranald's economy and contributing to its diversity and strength. Balranald LGA's tourism drawcards include the World Heritage-listed Mungo National Park and Willandra Lakes, the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers and Yanga National Park. Euston has been identified as a popular stop for caravanners on the Murray River.

Feedback provided during consultation has indicated motels are being taken up to a large extent by temporary workers who might otherwise be better accommodated in Construction Workers' Dwellings and/or Temporary Workers Dwellings.

The result of motels being used for these workers is tourists are being squeezed out and often can't find accommodation.

The economic implications include a lessening of demand for services and amenity (retail, food services) that tourists might otherwise engage with and spend money in.

Applicability to Balranald LGA and Recommendations

While there are no direct changes to recommend from a Planning perspective, it is intended that the provision of suitable accommodation for workers should ease the reported pressure on tourist accommodation.

7.1.4. Construction Workers' Accommodation

Construction Workers' Accommodation is highly relevant to supporting mining and large scale infrastructure projects in Balranald, but its applicability comes with both opportunities and constraints.

The NSW Housing SEPP provides a clear pathway for Construction Workers' Accommodation in Renewable Energy Zones, which include Balranald. It applies to temporary housing made up of movable dwellings (minimum of 5), for workers employed on state-significant development (SSD) or infrastructure (SSI) projects.

While the guidelines were written primarily for renewable energy, the same issues of temporary workforce influx apply to mining projects, which are also often classed as SSD/SSI under the EP&A Act. This means the accommodation model can be extended to mining-related projects.

Councils can impose conditions: limiting the duration of approval, requiring decommissioning, bushfire/evacuation planning, and preventing subdivision of the land.

Balranald is host to major mineral sands mining, which is expected to expand as an industry. These bring test and full extraction phases which can require hundreds of workers over the lifespan of a mine. Accommodation villages are already a practical and necessary part of mining workforce planning in Balranald.

The Far West Regional Plan 2041 notes that mining and large-scale construction projects attract temporary workers, increasing pressure on small housing markets, such as Balranald and Euston. Without dedicated camps, this has caused overcrowding, poor living conditions, higher rents, and squeeze

out housing for locals and essential workers.

Construction Workers' Accommodation is directly applicable to mining projects in Balranald as a way to absorb temporary population spikes without destabilising the local housing market and provide scalable, relocatable accommodation that can serve multiple projects over time.

Importantly, the guidelines encourage camps to be sited close to or within towns where possible, so that workers contribute economically and socially to the local community.

It provides a regulated framework to manage temporary mining populations, protect local housing affordability, and seeks to avoid the risks of informal or unsafe accommodation that have been reported in informal accommodation markets.

Applicability to Balranald LGA and Recommendations

Balranald is host to a Construction Workers' Village in RU5 Village Zone, which accommodates workers for a Mineral Sands Mine.

Iluka's on-site camp, north of the Balranald township, will accommodate 300 workers during construction and 120 during the operational phase, expected to last for 12 years.

7.1.5. Relocatable, Modular and Flat Pack Homes

Relocatable, modular and flat pack homes are increasingly important in regional housing markets due to their affordability, speed of delivery and adaptability. The opportunity to construct and assemble these types of housing has broadened recently and well beyond the ability of the planning system to quickly adapt.

While similar in intent, each has distinct features:

- Relocatable homes are movable dwellings designed to be transported and re-sited multiple times. They often resemble manufactured or transportable homes and are covered by NSW planning definitions where “moveable dwellings” include caravans, cabins and manufactured homes. They can be located in caravan parks, manufactured home estates, or in temporary workers’ villages under the NSW Housing SEPP.
- Relocatable homes require a DA and a Section 68 Approval (instead of a construction certificate)
- Modular homes are prefabricated dwellings constructed off-site in modules, then transported and assembled on land. Once installed on footings, they are typically regarded as permanent dwellings. They must comply with the Building Code of Australia, and in most zones where “dwelling houses” are permitted, modular housing can be approved via standard development application pathways.
- Flat pack homes are kit-based systems that allow walls, floors and roof panels to be transported in compact form and assembled on-site. They sit between modular and conventional dwellings. Their compliance

Applicability to Balranald LGA and Recommendations

The affordability and flexibility of these housing and accommodation types may provide options for housing providers throughout Balranald and Euston, especially where traditional construction methods and professionals are difficult to secure.

Council may also benefit from outlining these types of constructions in the DCP.



There are additional types of housing for Balranald and Euston to consider where the building is permanent, though the residents may be temporary.

Boarding Houses and Co-Living Housing have similarities in the way the dwellings are organised and provisioned for residents though there are some key differences to consider.



7.1.6. Co-Living Housing

The Housing SEPP provides direction for the minimum standards required with regards to the size and ratio of communal open spaces, private spaces, parking and accessibility.

Co-living housing refers to a type of residential accommodation that provides tenants with a private room and living facilities, while also sharing communal spaces such as kitchens, laundries, and common living areas. Co-living housing is designed to suit a broad market including professionals and key workers by offering flexible tenure and higher-quality shared amenities.

Co-living arrangements have been embraced by ageing communities and retirees, particularly those who have downsized or who might otherwise live alone. It may also represent an attractive type of accommodation for longer term seasonal workers who wish to live in urban areas and the amenity it can provide.

The legislation sets development standards that typically include:

- A minimum number of private rooms.
- Requirements for shared spaces (kitchen, lounge, bathrooms, laundry).
- Provisions for management and tenancy (often operated under a single ownership or management structure).
- Exclusion from classification as “seniors housing” or “boarding houses,” to make clear it is a distinct model.
- Co-living is not mandated as affordable, for which, boarding houses may be better suited.

Applicability to Balranald LGA and Recommendations

Co-Living is defined as a type of residential accommodation, and is permitted by the LEP to be constructed. The RU5 Village Zone is considered in “open zone”, though Co-Living is not explicitly permitted with consent. There may be benefit to amending the LEP to signal Council’s intent for this type of housing.

The exploration of Co-Living arrangements is something the community can undertake with a housing and accommodation audit.

Co-Living models may be attractive to a wide range of cohorts, including seniors, lone persons and key workers.

7.1.7. Boarding Houses

Under NSW planning legislation, boarding houses are defined in the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021* as a form of residential accommodation that provides lodgers with a principal place of residence for three months or more.

A boarding house contains rooms that may be let individually, often with limited private facilities, while common areas such as bathrooms, kitchens and laundries are shared. Boarding houses must include a resident manager or caretaker in larger developments and are subject to occupancy agreements under the Boarding Houses Act 2012, which regulates rights and responsibilities of both proprietors and lodgers.

Unlike co-living housing, the boarding house model is closely tied to affordable rental housing policy. It is intended to provide low- to moderate-income households, students, or vulnerable groups with secure and lower-cost accommodation. Planning provisions often allow development bonuses or relaxed standards to encourage delivery, while ensuring safety, amenity, and long-term residential use.

- A minimum room size is required (12 m² for single lodgers, 16-25 m² for doubles), ensuring adequate amenity.
- Shared facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms, living rooms, and laundries must be provided, with at least one common room per development.
- A resident manager or on-site caretaker is required when the boarding house contains more than 20 lodgers.

- Reduced car parking rates apply, particularly for sites near public transport, with requirements often focused on bicycle and motorbike parking.
- Rooms must be offered for lodgers' principal place of residence for stays of three months or more, distinguishing them from short-term accommodation.

Applicability to Balranald LGA and Recommendations

Given Boarding Houses' connection to affordable housing, Council may be able to advocate for, and partner with a housing provider for vulnerable cohorts throughout the community.

7.1.8. Medium Density Housing

Medium density housing is an important component of the NSW planning system's aim to provide diverse, affordable and sustainable housing choices.

Medium density housing generally refers to dwelling types such as dual occupancies, townhouses, villas and small apartment buildings (typically up to three storeys).

The NSW Housing SEPP (2021) establishes development standards and pathways for medium density housing, including provisions for complying development of dual occupancies and manor houses, subject to local LEP permissibility. Medium density is designed to deliver "gentle density" that balances neighbourhood character with growing housing needs.

Applicability to Balranald LGA and Recommendations

Balranald and Euston are small towns with relatively low population density and limited multi-unit housing. The existing housing stock is dominated by detached dwellings, with only a small proportion of attached or apartment-style dwellings. In this context, high-density housing is unlikely to be appropriate or viable in the short to medium term. However, medium density housing offers a pragmatic response to demographic change and workforce needs. Townhouses, dual occupancies and small clusters of units could provide suitable options for older residents seeking to downsize, single-person households, and key workers employed in community, government, health, agriculture, mining and renewable energy projects.

For Balranald, integrating medium density provisions into the LEP and DCP would help diversify housing stock without compromising town character, while avoiding the risks of over-zoning for higher densities that the market cannot support.

This may be addressed through considerations to infill strategies, and minimum lot sizes.

7.1.9. Secondary Dwellings

Secondary dwellings, often known as Granny Flats, present an opportunity to provide extra accommodation throughout Balranald and Euston.

As a default they're allowed within the RU5 Village Zone and from a planning perspective, are enabled by the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021 (Housing SEPP).

Clause 5.4(9) of the LEP allows secondary dwellings up to 60m² or to 100% of the total floor area of the principal dwelling.

Privately constructed secondary dwellings within the RU1 Primary Production Zone and RU4 Primary Production Small Lot Zone may offer alternatives to addressing some accommodation shortages, especially where they are within close proximity to a township.

- Key worker housing
- Migrant working housing
- Tourist accommodation
- Ageing in place

Some advantages of secondary dwellings are that extra carparking provisions are not mandatory.

Clause 5.5 of LEP (an opt-in clause), can be adopted by Council to allow them within a certain distance of primary dwellings and limited to a certain floor area, whether that is a square metreage or a percentage of the primary dwelling.

Exceptions to Clause 5.5 are not allowed under via clause 4.6 (Exceptions to development standards), which can help to ensure consistent application and delivery of secondary dwellings.

Recommendation

Introduce Clause 5.5 to the Balranald LEP to allow secondary dwellings in the RU4 Primary Production Zone and RU1 Primary Production Zone.

Recommendation

Include guidelines for Secondary Dwellings in the Development Control Plan

7.1.10. Master Planning and Contributions for Key Investigation Sites

Balranald and Euston already has a supply of zoned urban land for both primary urban land within the RU5 Village Zone. It is largely recommended that these existing urban areas be prioritised for future housing outcomes to accommodate growth.

Throughout the consultation, some businesses indicated interest in developing housing that specifically benefited its employees and the community.

The Settlement Strategy (2022) identified a large number of infill sites within Balranald and Euston, which this Strategy aligns with.

The Strategy recommends that future master planning and supporting infrastructure planning be undertaken for the investigation sites to appropriately plan for their release.

Master planning and consideration of the key investigation sites areas should consider:

- Understanding site context and existing uses
- Developing key planning goals for the area
- Land Use Mix
- Sequencing
- Infrastructure and contributions
- Open space and urban design
- Specific plans for lot layout, densities
- Sustainability initiatives

A fundamental component of future master planning work would be a contribution plan that enables equitable delivery of infrastructure and services for the new urban areas. This ensures that key infrastructure to service growth areas can be made available at the right time and in the right sequence.

7.1.11. Key Investigation Sites

Identifying land use opportunities for diverse community aspirations – Key Housing and Employment Investigation Sites

Key investigation sites have been nominated in this Strategy which can provide further land for brownfield and greenfield development opportunities within the already residentially zoned areas of Euston and Balranald. Rezoning more land at the periphery or “spreading out” is not an efficient use of land nor is it cost effective for the community, despite its perceived expedience.

There are a number of factors to consider when determining the most appropriate land for future development.

There is a plentiful supply of land within the key investigation sites, and a relatively slow rate of development, which will allow the time for Council to consider a well-designed outcome.

A common growth scenario and a high growth scenario have been calculated for future lot consumption and land requirements. Given the population issues and the chronic under-reporting of residents, the assumptions may have to be revisited in the near future.

Balranald and Euston’s environmental constraints and geography are key considerations:

- Flood risk – can come from different sources and intensify depending on the extend of development in an area. Impermeable surfaces (roads, infrastructure, dwellings) can alter flood behaviour and decrease the capacity for land to adequately drain during a flood event. A flood study is underway for the two towns and will better inform site selection.
- Environmental Significance – land that may be host to ecologically important species or habitats to flora and fauna should also be avoided.
- Bushfire risk – Council’s bushfire risk mapping has been recently updated and reflects
- Crown Land – Both Balranald and Euston contain significant crown land reserves which, due to time and bureaucratic barriers to use are being avoided in the short term.
- Infrastructure – considerations include proximity to existing services and transport networks, the cost to augment reticulated systems and to collect adequate contributions.



7.1.12. Balranald Key Residential Investigation Sites

While many of the opportunity sites in Balranald are smaller scale and infill sites, the Key Residential Investigation Sites represent a larger scale opportunity that may be developed in a more formal manner, rather than opportunistic or ad hoc.

Growth scenarios are built on general assumptions including a 600m² lot size, and 30% allocation of area for infrastructure.

These represents a medium to long term opportunity. While the potential lot yield is around 31 and 20 lots respectively, the need to provide smaller and more specific housing types such as medium density outcomes is something that should be explored, which would encourage a more efficient land use outcome

Opportunities such as these may benefit from consolidated and planned developments, designed for a specific outcomes, including Co-Living and Boarding House arrangements.

To calculate yield, common growth assumptions of two dwellings per year and four dwellings per year for high growth scenario are used.

Action

Develop master plans for key investigation sites, update Development Control Plan

Site	Site 1	Site 2
Site Area	26,717m ²	11,893m ²
Developable area	18,701m ²	11,893m ²
Preferred Land Use Zone	RU5 Village Zone	RU5 Village Zone
Lot Size m ²	600m ²	600m ²
Potential Lot Yield	31 lots	
Years' Supply (Common Growth Scenario)	TBC	TBC
Years' Supply (High Growth Scenario)	TBC	TBC
Timeframe	Medium	Medium



Residential Investigation Sites – Balranald

7.1.13. Euston Key Residential Investigation Sites

Like Balranald, Euston has many opportunities for infill and small scale developments. The most recent and largest suburban development at the north-east corner of the town is slowly.

Since the completion of the Settlement Strategy in 2022, which identified a number of infill opportunities throughout Euston, many of the same sites remain undeveloped.

To calculate yield, common growth assumptions of three dwellings per year and five dwellings per year for high growth scenario are used.

Site	Site 1	Site 2
Site Area	23,020m ²	101,267m ²
Developable area	16,114m ²	70,886m ²
Preferred Land Use Zone	RU5 Village Zone	RU5 Village Zone
Lot Size m ²	600m ²	600m ²
Potential Lot Yield	27 lots	118 lots
Years' Supply (Common Growth Scenario)	TBC	TBC
Years' Supply (High Growth Scenario)	TBC	TBC
Timeframe	Medium	Long



Residential Investigation Sites – Euston

7.2. ACTION BEFORE ADVOCACY

Many regional shires, including Balranald LGA, have small rate bases that can limit funding to community and infrastructural investment. An outcome of this is a reliance on stage and federal government grants to supplement this income, which can be unreliable.

The principle of “Action before advocacy” in local government prioritises demonstrating solutions before pushing for external support. This approach aims to bolster local credibility and effectiveness when advocating for changes or resources, seeking grant or funding from State and Federal Government.

It is important to acknowledge the position that Local Government holds in the land use planning environment and while advocacy is a vital part of Local Government’s role, this Strategy encourages Council to build the capacity to better advocate and present “shovel ready” projects for funding consideration.

Building Internal Strength:

Instead of immediately seeking change from higher levels, local governments first focus on internal capacity, building expertise and managing resources efficiently. This responsible approach strengthens their future funding cases.

Demonstrating Effectiveness:

By successfully tackling local issues with existing resources, local governments showcase their capabilities. This track record serves as powerful evidence when advocating for additional support.

Empowering Local Solutions:

This approach prioritises local initiative and innovation. By tackling challenges head-on, local communities build self-reliance while highlighting the need for potential external support when necessary.

Encouraging active community input in each step, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring development aligns with actual community preferences.

Fostering Collaboration:

Taking action first allows local governments to collaborate effectively with other stakeholders. This builds stronger partnerships, creating a more receptive environment for future advocacy efforts.

Avoiding Premature Demands:

By demonstrating proactive problem-solving and ownership of local challenges, local governments build credibility and trust, strengthening their future advocacy efforts

Recommendation

Create a Balranald LGA Housing and Accommodation Working Group



7.2.1. Building community capacity – readiness for future opportunities

The Strategy has identified a variety of housing and accommodation types, potential sites and some land use planning recommendations.

This section looks at some practical opportunities for the Council and the community to engage in.

Population Count

The Robinvale Case study (see section 4.1.2) examined and showed the reported population verse the service population was astoundingly different, with huge effects on the town. Similar circumstances and effects are undoubtedly happening throughout the Balranald LGA.

By understanding the true population of Balranald and Euston can the community can effectively legitimise the issues that are being anecdotally reported and set a baseline goal for accommodation and housing.

Recommendation

Commission a study to understand Balranald and Euston's "true year round" population.

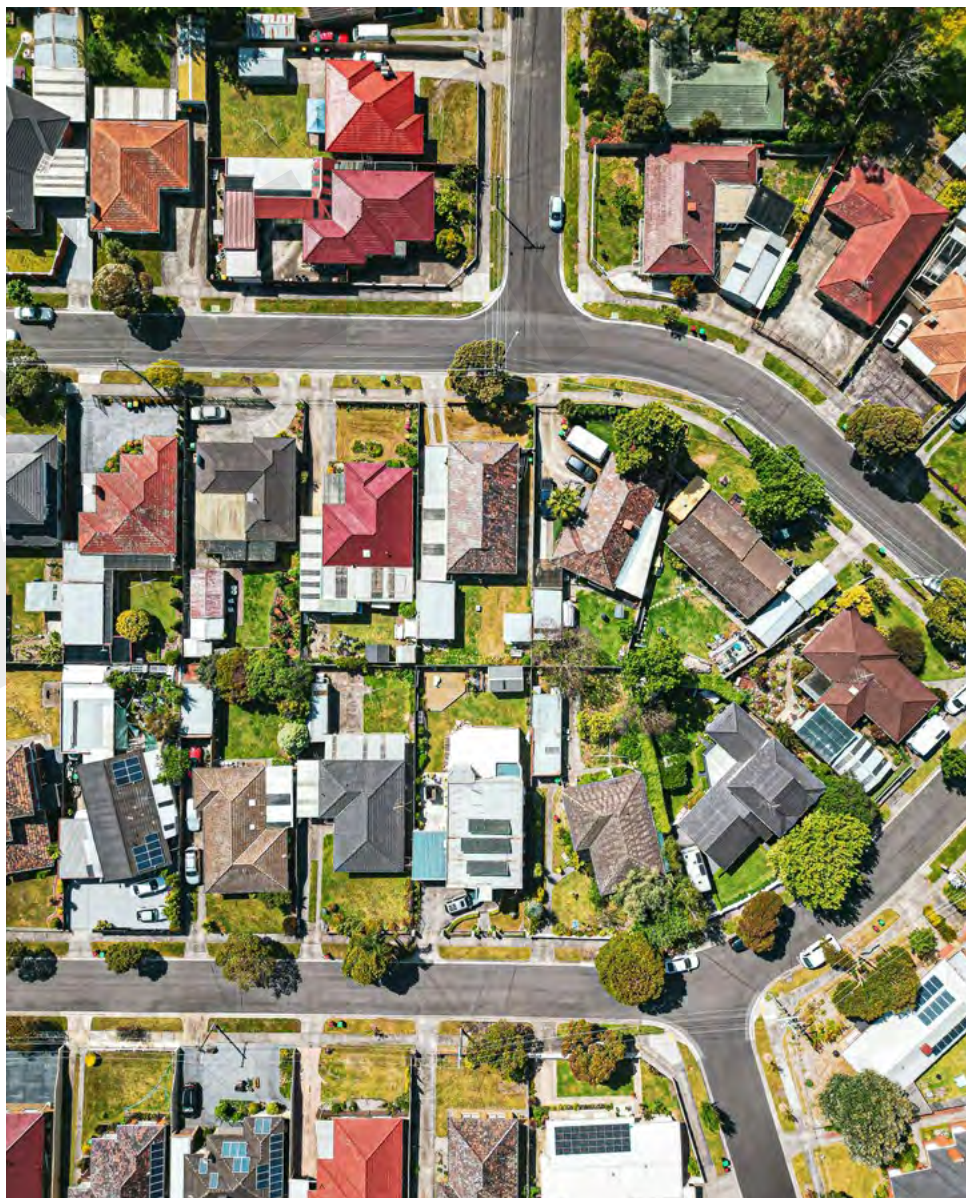
Community Led Audit

A comprehensive, community led housing and building audit can act as a catalyst for action. By plotting a community led path forward for housing and accommodation, Council, residents and business can align with a shared vision and goals.

The audit is not just a count, it's a catalyst for action. Each datapoint can be leveraged into funding, community projects, and partnerships, especially if framed around Balranald's challenges (ageing, cross-border pressures, seasonal spikes, and derelict stock).

Recommendation

Undertake a comprehensive land and building audit (suggested process in the following pages)



In considering Community readiness, it's important that what's being measured is tied to outcomes the community need. An audit can be updated periodically, aligned with housing strategy review.

Recommendations can feed directly into Council policy updates and grant funding bids.



Special Needs & Vulnerability

Data source: Local service providers (health, aged care, Aboriginal housing orgs).

Measures:

- Housing suitability for ageing population (accessible design, proximity to services).
- Youth and migrant worker housing access.
- Emergency accommodation
- Aboriginal housing adequacy and overcrowding.



Dwelling Stock & Condition

Data source: Rates database, aerial photography, ABS dwelling counts, property inspection samples, Community Survey

Measures:

- Total dwellings, type (separate house, unit, caravan/manufactured home, temporary workers' accommodation).
- Age and building condition (via inspection sampling or self-assessment survey).
- Vacant/derelict dwellings – ground-truthing against reported unoccupied dwelling figures.
- Identify suitable vacant land for different types of housing and accommodation types.



Occupancy & Use

Data source: ABS, water/power usage (low-usage flags), local observation.

Measures:

- Permanent resident households vs. part-time/absentee.
- Seasonal worker accommodation (farm-provided, informal, caravan parks).
- Under-utilised dwellings (e.g. 3+ bedrooms but lone person residing).
- Overcrowding indicators (number of people per bedroom).



Affordability & Tenure

Data source: ABS, Cotality, local agents, NSW Dept of Communities & Justice.

Measures:

- Rental availability, median rents, rent stress (>30% income on rent).
- Home purchase affordability and mortgage stress.
- Tenure mix (owner, private rental, social housing, community housing).



Future Demand & Pressure Points

Cross-reference housing supply with:

- Workforce demand (renewable energy, agriculture, mining).
- Seasonal fluctuations (Robinvale-style service population approach).
- Climate change risks (heat, flood, bushfire).

Once Council has a baseline of the issues, some Community led approaches might include:



Farmers' housing co-op to manage worker rentals collectively



Homeshare: rent spare rooms to seasonal workers/teachers



Managed worker villages on vacant throughout Balranald and Euston



Work with Aboriginal housing organisations for culturally appropriate builds



Community housing register — transparent list of rentals and vacancies.



Use migrant workers' stories to advocate for fair housing access.



Downsize matchmaking program — link seniors to smaller units.



Co-living developments with mixed tenants and tenure (key workers, retirees, lone persons, short term workers)



Retrofit program for ageing-in-place (ramps, low-maintenance yards)



Incentivise dual occupancy and secondary dwellings

7.2.2. Council as developer – an affordable housing portfolio and industry support.

The appetite for risk amongst developers within the region is understandably low, especially where it involves exploring new housing types. It is difficult for the private market to deliver the types of housing required as they can diverge from a known delivery model. Where Council acts as the developer, success can be measured in ways other than financial gain and the outcomes can be designed to be both flexible and specific e.g. medium density developments designed and constructed with universal design principles. Developments could be managed by community housing providers and made to approved residents or key workers.

It may benefit the community for Council to act as a developer for pilot projects, to explore, educate and promote new types of development for underserved members of the community.

Similarly, Council may wish to investigate the development of small infill sites within the select areas to build a portfolio of turnkey business properties and serviced lots.

The factors that define a community driven project, rather than a developer led project are vastly different.

- Increased control over development: Local governments can directly shape housing within their area, ensuring it aligns with community needs and planning objectives. This could include factors like housing type, affordability, and sustainability.
- Addressing specific housing needs: Local governments have a deep understanding of their community's housing needs, allowing them to tailor development projects to address specific gaps, like affordable housing for key workers or seniors.

- Potential for cost savings: By eliminating the profit margin of private developers, local governments could offer more affordable housing and industry options.
- Community engagement and ownership: Local government involvement can foster a sense of community ownership and participation in the development process, potentially leading to better outcomes.
- Innovation and experimentation: Local governments could experiment with innovative models and construction methods, potentially leading to better and more sustainable housing solutions.
- The specific risks and benefits would likely vary depending on the scale and scope of the local government's involvement, from smaller projects to large-scale developments. Council will need to consider potential for financial risk, conflict of interest and ensure strong public support and community engagement.

Actions

Explore options for modest pilot projects to demonstrate alternative housing models required by the community, including smaller family groups, lone persons, seasonal and key workers.

7.2.3. Incentivising Infill Housing

With traditionally larger lots and a relatively large lot size minimum, Balranald and Euston have significant potential for infill development of existing urban land.

Infill development refers to the process of developing vacant or underutilised land within existing urban areas, as opposed to expanding outward into undeveloped or greenfield areas, which historically has been the accepted and preferred way to create housing opportunities throughout Balranald and Euston.

Infill development maximises the use of existing urban infrastructure, services, and amenities. It allows for more efficient use of land within established communities, and leverages existing infrastructure, reducing the need for additional expansion and maintenance. It can also be used to enable growth in the township while infrastructure to develop greenfield areas are further planned, funded and developed.

Infill development is often located near existing transportation and road networks, reducing barriers to varied and more sustainable transport modes, such as public transport, cycling and walking.

It can contribute to the revitalisation of existing areas by bringing new life, attracting new residents, businesses, and investments. It also increases the catchment for businesses seeking to attract investment and a stable employment base.

Infill development helps to slow the spread of inefficient land use by utilising available space within existing residential zones. It can help to avoid the fragmentation and erosion of prime agricultural land, and environmentally significant spaces in the surrounding areas.

Infill development allows for the creation of a variety of housing options, including multi-family dwellings, townhouses, and mixed-use developments. This diversity contributes to a more inclusive and resilient housing market that can meet the needs of different demographic groups, one of the changes occurring within the Balranald community.

Actions

- Consider reducing the minimum lot size across the RU5 Village zoned land of 450m²
- Implement an 'Exceptions to minimum lot sizes for certain residential development' clause in the Balranald LEP as per the Standard Instrument, which would enable concurrent subdivision and construction of 1 or 2 dwellings on lot sizes of 300m²

7.2.4. Development Control Plan

As outlined earlier in the Strategy, Balranald shire does not currently have a development control plan (DCP).

While towns of Balranald and Euston's size don't always benefit from overly prescriptive controls, some further direction, including building on recently completed Settlement Strategies will assist to provide an overarching approach to the urban areas of the towns.

Formalising this work into a DCP will help to provide direction for the types of development and its location within the general RU5 Village Zone.

The DCP is a key planning tool, providing detailed design and planning guidelines to support the broader controls of the LEP, particularly

- Built form and urban design
- Environmental Sustainability
- Heritage and Local Character
- Access, Parking and Transport
- Subdivision and Lot Design
- Infrastructure provision
- Signage and Advertising

In the context of this Strategy, the DCP is also recommended to include master plans with controls outlining the above themes for key investigation sites. This provides certainty for landowners and developers as well as Council and the community when considering future development in preferred locations.

Actions

- Council to prepare a Development Control Plan for Balranald LGA, incorporating the previously prepared Settlement Strategies, Preferred Housing Types and Design Guidelines.

7.2.5. Contributions and Benefit Sharing

Council commenced its Section 7.12 Contributions Plan in 2022, the first time it had levied development. The historical lack of development levy has resulted in a deficit of community facilities that would otherwise be funded by an appropriate levy.

In relation to the recommendations made in this strategy, it may be worthwhile Council reviewing the plan to ensure the right types of development are being incentivised.

For instance, Council may seek to reduce the levy for types of housing it is seeking to deliver such as key worker accommodation.

NSW Benefit Sharing Guideline

DPHI published the Benefit Sharing Guideline in 2024, which provides a framework for ensuring communities hosting large-scale renewable energy projects such as solar, wind, and battery storage receive direct and tangible benefits. This is particularly relevant for Balranald Shire, which sits within the South-West Renewable Energy Zone and is already seeing significant solar, wind and critical mineral projects come forward.

The scale of benefits that can be negotiated by a Council can be at different scale from a neighbour, to a local community or be managed by Council for larger projects.

Funds levied might then help to invest in community facilities, housing trusts, community scholarships and training that directly benefit the towns and strategically align with housing and accommodation goals.

Benefit Sharing Agreements can be useful where Section 7.11 and 7.12 contributions plans are unsuitable to address the sometimes unwanted effects of large scale renewable projects, which are largely borne by local communities, including Balranald and Euston. Benefit sharing does not replace local contributions.

The guideline provides a number of pathways for negotiating through Voluntary Planning Agreements and the financial management and distribution of benefits to the community through community reference groups or Council.

It is important for the process to be:

- Collaborative;
- Transparent;
- Community Focused;
- Proportionate; and
- Deliver a positive outcome.

Actions

Council to investigate Benefit Sharing Agreements and their application throughout the Shire.

Recommendation: Council to review contributions plan to investigate the incentivisation of required housing and accommodation types.

8

CONCLUSION

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Recommendation	Responsibility	Timeframe
Commission a population study to understand true 'year round' population and pressures for housing and accommodation on Balranald and Euston.		
Consider adding Temporary Workers' Accommodation to the land use table with the RU5 Village Zone, RU4 Primary Production Small Lot Zone and RU1 Primary Production Zone.		
Add a locally relevant definition and conditions of Temporary Workers' Accommodation to the LEP		
Council to prepare a Development Control Plan for Balranald LGA, incorporating the previously prepared Settlement Strategies, Preferred Housing Types and Design Guidelines.		
Include guidelines for Secondary Dwellings in the Development Control Plan		
Develop guidelines and master plans for key development sites		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce Clause 5.5 to the Balranald LEP to allow secondary dwellings in the RU4 Primary Production Zone and RU1 Primary Production Zone. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Balranald LGA Housing and Accommodation Working Group 		
Undertake a comprehensive, community led land and building audit. Use audit as a 'catalyst for action'		
Explore options for modest pilot projects to demonstrate alternative housing models required by the community, including smaller family groups, lone persons, seasonal and key workers.		
Consider reducing the minimum lot size across the RU5 Village zoned land of 450m ²		
Implement an 'Exceptions to minimum lot sizes for certain residential development' clause in the Balranald LEP as per the Standard Instrument, which would enable concurrent subdivision and construction of 1 or 2 dwellings on lot sizes of 300m ²		
Investigate Benefit Sharing Agreements and their application throughout the Shire.		

8.2. Monitoring and evaluation

Council will undertake regular monitoring and reporting of this Strategy as follows:

Annual reviews of housing delivery and supply against the implementation and delivery plan to ensure that the Strategy and the LEP are delivering the Strategy's objectives

Five-yearly reviews of the evidence base and housing stock against the broader aims of the policy environment to ensure that the Strategy is aligned with the housing needs; and

Ten-year review of the Strategy to ensure the, the evidence base and the strategic and planning contexts are aligned with the goals of the community, the broader aims of the policy environment, Strategy implementation and delivery plan.



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