

Draft Far West Regional Plan 2041

This document answers frequently asked questions about the strategic blueprint for the Far West region

What is a regional plan?

Regional plans set a clear vision and direction for how each region can build on future opportunities to ensure their communities become more resilient, dynamic and prosperous. This is balanced with the need for housing, jobs, infrastructure and services, a healthy environment, connected communities and access to green spaces.

Structured around goals, objectives and actions, the regional plans set out the requirements for coordinated planning across all levels of government and within the community.

In 2017, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment finalised regional plans. These guide planning for the existing and future communities across the 9 regions of NSW (not including metropolitan Sydney).

The department reviews and updates the regional plans every 5 years. The current review has allowed the department, local government, and the community to consider the changes in the last 5 years that affect the Far West, the challenges and opportunities ahead, and how to update the plan in response.

What is the draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041*?

The current *Far West Regional Plan 2036* applies to the 8 local government areas of Balranald, Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Central Darling, Cobar, Walgett, Wentworth and the Unincorporated Area. It is a 20-year land-use plan that focuses on and informs all areas of local strategic planning, from the development of local plans to the assessment of planning proposals.

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* builds on the current plan, which was finalised in 2017. Since then, the NSW Government has worked closely with councils and government agencies to deliver on the plan's key priority actions.

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* updates the strategic framework for the region to ensure its ongoing prosperity.

How was the plan reviewed?

In 2021, the Department of Planning and Environment started a review of the current regional plan and how it has been used. We sourced updated data and evidence on drivers of growth and change and consulted with local councils and other stakeholders. This consultation involved:

- **an audit of actions delivered** to determine which elements have been effective and which ones remain relevant for the revised plan
- **a review of the Far West councils' local strategic planning statements** so the revised plan can build on these and give guidance for their future review

- **commissioning research to identify the key drivers of growth and change in the region** and options for responding to the demand for worker accommodation in the region
- **considering key areas of change that will affect the region in the future** such as:
 - the changing regional economy and catalyst projects and key interstate investments that are likely to affect the region
 - climate change evidence and policy, including the NSW Government's commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2050
 - challenges such as the ongoing recovery from drought, bushfire and floods, and the global pandemic
- **a review of other new and proposed policy and legislation** prepared since the existing regional plan was finalised, such as the *20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW* and subsequent Refresh, draft regional water strategies and NSW Housing Strategy 2041
- **consultation with state agencies and councils** on the current regional plan, councils' needs in implementing the planning system and the development of the draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041*.

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* reflects this work. It resets the current plan's priorities to ensure the Far West community benefits from improved land-use planning for the next 20 years.

What are the key themes of the draft plan?

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* aims to protect and enhance the region's assets and plan for a sustainable future.

The draft plan provides an overarching framework to guide subsequent and more detailed land-use plans, development proposals and infrastructure funding decisions at a regional, subregional and local level. It is divided into 3 parts, each with several objectives to be achieved by the strategies, actions and collaboration activities:

- Part 1 – Environment
 - Objective 1: Protect, connect and enhance biodiversity throughout the region
 - Objective 2: Protect and enhance culture and heritage
 - Objective 3: Manage water for people and the environment
 - Objective 4: Increase natural resilience in the region
- Part 2 – People and communities
 - Objective 5: Supporting Aboriginal aspirations through land-use planning
 - Objective 6: Plan for housing supply, diversity, affordability, and resilience
 - Objective 7: Create a network of centres for the dispersed population
 - Objective 8: Enable appropriate rural residential development
 - Objective 9: Facilitate accommodation options for seasonal, temporary and key workers
 - Objective 10: Plan for connected cross-border communities
- Part 3 – Ongoing prosperity
 - Objective 11: Support and diversify visitor economy opportunities
 - Objective 12: Protect rural and mining industries
 - Objective 13: Protect and develop industry and manufacturing

- Objective 14: Protect and leverage existing and future road, rail and air transport routes and infrastructure
- Objective 15: Support the transition to net zero by 2050
- Objective 16: Ensure government and community service provision

How does the draft plan protect the region against natural hazards such as floods and bushfires? How does it respond to climate change?

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* recognises that the climate is changing and that:

- floods, bushfires and droughts are likely to be more intense and happen more often
- large-scale events may build up or happen at the same time
- there may be new hazards such as urban heat islands (highly developed areas that absorb and store heat)
- these changes could affect how we use land, as well as outcomes for future development that is sustainable and can withstand and recover from natural disasters.

To reduce exposure to natural hazards and build resilient communities and places, we encourage planners to consider natural hazards from the start when deciding how to use land. The plan also promotes tree planting and urban greening (creating more space for plants and trees in urban areas), as well as better planning for managing the region's rivers and public spaces.

How does the draft plan respond to housing needs in the Far West?

Projections forecast that the population of the region will continue to decrease and age in the long term. The average household size will decrease and there will be more single and 2-person households.

Housing demand will change in different ways within the region. For example, the population in areas such as Wentworth–Buronga will remain relatively stable, while the population in Broken Hill, Cobar and Ivanhoe is expected to decline and/or vary because of cyclical changes in industries such as agriculture and mining.

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* identifies actions that respond to the challenges the region is expected to face in providing housing for temporary and permanent workforces and managing changing population structures and climate conditions. At the same time, the actions direct how development and investment is coordinated to help create high-quality, resilient and liveable communities.

How does the draft plan support the Aboriginal community's aspirations for their land?

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Barkindji, Barkindji, Baranbinja, Gamilaraay, Karenggapa, Koamu, Kula, Kurnu, Malyangapa, Milpulo, Murrawarri, Muthi Muthi, Naualko, Ngemba, Ngiyampaa, Ngurunta, Parintji, Parundji, Ualarai/Euahlayi, Wadikali, Wilyakali, Wanjwalku, Pantjikali/Wanyiwalku, Paruntji, Weilwan, and Wongaibon Countries that this region sits within.

It also recognises the local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs) that straddle multiple local government areas and regional boundaries. The plan makes a commitment to build on the *Far West Regional Plan 2036*, which included actions to help give LALCs information.

The department has assessed land held by LALCs in NSW since 2019. These assessments bring together information about landholdings (including mapping and aerial photos), planning controls and constraints, and information about the suitability of land for development. The department is speeding up assessments in the Far West to give LALCs essential planning system information about their land.

The draft plan also states that strategic planning must respond to the aspirations of Aboriginal peoples and support LALCs in navigating planning processes such as rezonings and development approvals.

What's in it for my council?

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* encourages infrastructure delivery that targets the needs of the region's communities. It also encourages local government to allocate resources and investment efficiently to improve the liveability and sustainability of the region. The NSW Government will help councils to translate these priorities into local plans.

How does the draft plan fit in with councils' local strategic planning statements?

The local strategic planning statements (LSPSs) that all councils in the region prepared, in consultation with their communities, were a key input into the draft regional plan.

In 2020, all councils in NSW prepared an LSPS setting out:

- the 20-year vision for land use in the local area
- the special character and values that are to be preserved
- how change will be managed into the future.

An LSPS allows a council to ensure that priorities identified in the regional plan are placed within a clear local context and consider an area's unique economic, social and environmental characteristics. LSPSs also allow councils to translate their own strategic planning work into local priorities and actions, which in turn informs the review of the regional plan.

This feedback cycle from local to regional planning ensures that there is a two-way 'line of-sight' between the different levels of spatial planning. The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* objectives, strategies, actions, collaboration activities and council activities reflect the priorities of the Far West LSPSs.

How can I have my say?

The draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041* is on exhibition **from 6 October 2022 to 21 November 2022**.

- [Read the draft *Far West Regional Plan 2041*](#).
- Register for an [online community briefing](#) in which the people who wrote the updated regional plan will present its key components.
- [Make a submission](#).

What are the next steps?

[Register to receive updates](#) on the next steps to finalise the regional plan.