

Consultation Report-Submission and engagement summary

Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041

December 2022





Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Introduction

In 2017, the Department of Planning and Environment (the department) finalised the *Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036* (the 2017 Plan), one of 9 regional plans in NSW to establish a vision and planning directions for the strategic use of land for the region. The 2017 Plan addressed the Central West and Orana region's future needs for jobs, housing, infrastructure, a healthy environment and connected communities. Since 2017, the NSW Government has worked closely with councils, government agencies, other stakeholders and communities to deliver on the 2017 Plan's priority actions.

The 2017 Plan has now also undergone its first five yearly review. The review built on the existing regional plan and considered the impacts of change since 2017, current and emerging trends and the expected drivers of change for the region. Since the 2017 Plan's release, the region has experienced change from a range of influences, including:

- major events such as COVID-19 Pandemic, drought, bushfire and floods.
- NSW government commitments to major precincts and capital investment in the region, such as Inland Rail, the Great Western Highway upgrade, establishment of the Parkes Special Activation Precinct (the SAP) and the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (the REZ).
- new policy and legislation such as the State's commitment to Net Zero by 2050, the Biodiversity Conservation Act, the Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy, Local Strategic Planning Statements, water, economic and transport strategies and planning for region-shaping investment in transport, renewable energy and precincts such as the Parkes Special Activation Precinct
- growth in demand for critical minerals and metals, agricultural products and value-add industries, tourism and COVID-19-related demographic changes.

Throughout 2021, the Department consulted widely with councils, government agencies and other stakeholders to update the priorities and vision for the region over the next 20 years, prepare and exhibit the *draft Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041* (the draft Plan) and then prepare the final *Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041* (the Plan). The Plan will:

- replace the 2017 plan and inform ongoing land use and infrastructure planning and investment by State and local governments and private investors
- help to ensure the region is healthy, connected and resilient, with a prosperous economy.

The Plan applies to the 19 local government areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Bogan, Cabonne, Coonamble, Cowra, Dubbo, Forbes, Gilgandra, Lachlan, Lithgow, Mid-Western, Narromine, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Warren, Warrumbungle and Weddin.

This report summarises:

- the engagement, consultation and feedback received prior to, during and following the public exhibition of the draft Plan
- the themes and issues raised in this consultation and how this feedback has informed the Plan.

Review process

The review of the 2017 Plan occurred in stages.



Stage 1 – Research and engagement

The review of the 2017 Plan commenced in 2021 with workshops and meetings with all councils and key government agencies within the region. The initial consultation identified the planning changes and challenges that had occurred across the region since the regional plan was released and the current and potential future trends and opportunities.

To inform and guide the review, the department also conducted:

- analysis of issues and challenges and government policy changes
- an audit and analysis of local strategic planning statements and relevant local strategies
- commissioned research on major infrastructure projects, socio-economic profile, challenges, opportunities and trends affecting economic conditions of the region and potential planning responses to the issues associated with temporary worker accommodation.

Stage 2 – Drafting

Drafting occurred between March 2021– October 2021, in addition to workshops and briefings with:

- The Central West and Orana Regional Plan Review Steering Committee which includes representatives from key State agencies and the Central NSW Joint Organisation of Councils. The Steering Committee provided oversight of key milestones, an escalation-point for any issues and ensured alignment between other plans such as the LSPS, Regional Economic Development Strategies, regional water strategies and transport plans.
- An inter-agency Senior Officers Group which oversaw the broader regional plan review program and included representative from key agencies involved in the delivery of regional plan initiatives, including Transport for NSW, Department of Regional New South Wales and Department of Community and Justice.
- Councils, agencies and other stakeholders, where the proposed responses to regional planning issues were tested and refined.

Stage 3 – Exhibition

The *draft Plan* was publicly exhibited from 22 November 2021 till 18 February 2022. The exhibition was managed through a combination of:

- a central online engagement hub and the NSW Planning Portal,
- the department's Western Region office in Dubbo presenting to councils and stakeholders on the draft Plan, taking feedback in online forums and attending several in-person consultation sessions with local councils.

Submissions could be made via the NSW Planning Portal, email or post to the department's Western Region office or verbally. The engagement section of this report details the schedule and outcome of exhibition activities while Table 1 summarises the format of the engagement sessions and the number of participants.

Stage 4 – Consideration of submissions, consultation, and preparation of final draft plan

Both verbal and written submissions were received during the exhibition period and further consultations held by the department staff. The submissions and results of the exhibition were considered by the department between March 2022 and July 2022, as the final Plan was prepared.

Once the submissions were reviewed and potential responses were drafted, the Department held several feedback sessions and individual meetings with Councils, the Central NSW Joint Organisation to confirm the response to submissions.

Engagement

Overview of engagement program

The draft Plan was exhibited from 22 November 2021 to 18 February 2022. While provisions in the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* require that draft regional plans are exhibited for a minimum of 45 days, the exhibition period was extended to reflect it coinciding with the local government caretaker and election and Christmas and New Year periods.

The online engagement hub allowed people to explore themes from the draft Plan and comment, download both the draft Plan and a set of Frequently Asked Questions about the plan review process and the plan itself, register for an online engagement session and make a submission. Submissions were received through the NSW Planning Portal, which was linked through the online engagement hub, and directly, via post and email to the Department's Western Region office in Dubbo.

Communications to raise awareness about the public exhibition also included:

- Direct emails to interest groups, councils and individuals
- Direct messaging to the Department's registered subscribers
- A paid social media campaign leveraging the Department's social media channels
- Paid advertising on radio stations within the region
- Media outreach targeting local media outlets.

Online engagement hub – ideas wall

The engagement hub included an 'ideas wall' where visitors were able to 'like' or 'dislike' or comment on 17 visual 'tiles' which each represented a specific concept or action in the draft Plan.

The ideas wall was used as a landing page with 2,654 unique users visiting it during the public exhibition period and the draft Plan and FAQs being downloaded a (combined) total of 728 times.



Figure 2: Examples of some of the tiles used in the Engagement Hub

Workshops and meetings

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the department ran an online meeting program which consisted of several interactive online workshops and briefings. These were an important part of the wider engagement activities and were supported by an independent facilitator.

Approximately 100 people participated in the briefings and workshops which were delivered from the start of the exhibition process until 15 February 2022. At all workshops and information sessions, the department's Western Region team presented about the review process, the issues and opportunities affecting the region and how the draft Plan responds to these. The workshops also included a facilitated discussion with participants that sought their views regarding:

- the priorities for the region over the next five to 20 years
- aspects of the draft Plan they liked or did not like
- aspects of the draft Plan that should be updated or removed in the final Plan.

The workshops were designed specifically to allow practical engagement and maximise useful feedback on the draft Plan.

Given that the draft Central West and Orana Regional Transport Plan was exhibited concurrently with the draft Plan, staff from Transport for NSW also attended most of the online consultation sessions and presented a brief overview of their draft Transport Plan.

Table 1: Online engagement sessions and workshops

Type	Details	Participants
Online engagement hub	22 November 2021 – 18 February 2022	2,654 visitors
Council information session	7 December 2021	25 (excluding DPE + TfNSW staff)

Type	Details	Participants
Council workshops x 3	31 January – 1 February 2022	30 (excluding DPE + TfNSW staff)
Community workshops x 3	3 February – 15 February 2022	24 (excluding DPE + TfNSW staff)
Invited Aboriginal Stakeholders	7 February 2022	11 (excluding DPE + TfNSW staff)
CW&O Councillors Session	8 February 2022	10 (excluding DPE + TfNSW staff)

Workshop findings

Attendees at the workshops were generally supportive of the draft Plan with specific feedback given on parts of the plan that could be improved and issues that should be addressed in more detail in the final Plan. The main issues raised at the workshops were:

- Councils and the Central NSW Joint Organisation both raised issues relating to:
 - the population projections and these not reflecting either the aspirations of local councils or their expected growth, particularly LGAs with smaller centres
 - resourcing to implement the draft Plan, noting the significant pressures being placed on councils from ongoing planning reforms, E-planning initiatives and work being required to respond to housing and employment pressures being experienced in their LGAs
 - the need for coordinated planning for the cumulative impacts of proposed major projects within the region
 - the local government priority statements not identifying specific opportunities and priorities for each of the LGAs.
- Aboriginal stakeholders raised issues relating to:
 - the language in the draft Plan being more about acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal history and culture, instead of consulting with Aboriginal stakeholders and supporting economic development opportunities for the Aboriginal community
 - the need for the plan to support economic self-determination of Aboriginal people.
- Community participants raised issues relating to:
 - protection of the region's biodiversity values and the identification of additional public open space and recreation opportunities
 - housing supply and affordability
 - transport-related issues
 - the economic transition of Lithgow and Mudgee and the need to plan as early as possible for the post-mining economy.

Overall, the draft Plan was well received, and there were several suggestions made regarding edits and improvements to the final Plan. The workshops were facilitated by Cred Consulting which provided a summary report which has informed the content of this Consultation Report.

Submissions received

During and after the exhibition period, 59 submissions were received. This included 17 from councils (1 of which is from a Council outside of the region), 10 from NSW government agencies, 12 from peak bodies or industry groups, 7 from community groups and 7 from individuals. A summary of the submissions analysis and response is provided below.

The department granted several councils minor extensions to the submissions period, to ensure all councils had an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Plan. Where councils did not make a formal submission during or immediately after the exhibition period, the department offered to meet with them to take a verbal submission on the draft plan, if required. Comments received from councils in these follow-up meetings and in any subsequent/late council submissions were considered with the submissions and in preparation of the final Plan.

Several submissions included feedback that was out of scope of the review or function of the regional plan or the department's role. The department forwarded relevant comments to other agencies, for their consideration, including the issues relating the regional water strategies, the draft Central West and Orana Regional Transport Plan and the REZ.

Post exhibition amendments

After considering all submissions and comments, the department made amendments to both the structure and content of the exhibited draft Plan.

Amendment to the structure of the plan

The exhibited draft Plan contained an overall vision for the region, a series of supporting objectives that were grouped under 4 themes (Place, People, Prosperity and Location specific responses) and separate Local Government Priorities. The objectives were individually supported by specific actions (initiatives to be completed by the department), strategies (policy guidance for councils and state agencies) and collaboration activities (projects involving multiple organisations).

A common issue raised was the draft Plan did not elevate and respond to the region's economic story and the significance of the once-in-a-generation investment in projects such as the Parkes Special Activation Precinct (SAP), the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), extractive industries and minerals processing and other changes and opportunities.

In response, the final Plan has region-shaping investment opportunities identified up-front leading to a restructure of the final Plan into 5 themes.

Draft Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041

Part 1: A sustainable and resilient place
Part 2: People, housing and communities
Part 3: Prosperity, productivity and innovation
Part 4: Location specific responses
Local Government Priorities



Final Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041

Part 1: Region-shaping investment
Part 2: A sustainable and resilient place
Part 3: People, centres, housing and communities
Part 4: Prosperity, productivity and innovation
Part 5: Local government priorities

KEY

- Existing theme under the draft plan
- New theme following consultation process
- Amended theme following consultation process

Figure 3: Changes to the regional plan structure

Summary of submissions and department responses

Department staff reviewed the 59 submissions in detail and considered each separate point in the submissions when preparing the final Plan. A summary of the issues raised and how the Department responded is provided below:

General

Process, implementation and plan structure

- councils expressed concern regarding the lack of detail regarding the implementation process, priorities, monitoring and highlighted the need for resourcing to support its implementation
- some councils made detailed edits regarding their respective Local Government Priorities
- mapping should be similar to the mapping in the 2017 Plan, i.e. showing the existing pattern of settlement and movement, particularly for the Central West
- there were several suggestions regarding the structure of the draft Plan and the need to articulate the region's economic story or vision more clearly.

Department Response

- an implementation framework has been included in the final Plan, with the first of the proposed Regional Planning Forums proposed to be held before the end of the 2022 calendar year. Additional detail regarding the plan's implementation will be added to the regional plan web site (Implementation Plan)
- the department will continue to engage with Councils, State agencies and the Central NSW Joint Organisation to identify funding opportunities to support implementation of the regional plan, including through the housing-related announcements such as the regional housing strategic planning fund

- the department circulated the final Local Government Priorities to the respective councils to ensure they aligned with the current priorities for each LGA and these have been updated in the Plan
- as outlined in the previous section, the structure of the final Plan was amended in response to submissions regarding about the region's economic story and alignment of the regional cities with the other centres and housing content.

Growth and projections

- there was concern from councils about the population projections not reflecting their LGA's opportunities, and their aspirations for growth. Councils which were predicted to grow by a small amount or decline were particularly concerned about the projections and the potential for these to influence future public and private investment
- smaller councils felt the draft Plan was too focused on the regional cities and should provide greater recognition of strategic and smaller centres to avoid 'regional centralisation' and actively encourage growth e.g. a "move to the bush" campaign
- submissions acknowledged that growth would occur across the region due to major employment investment and that it should be supported with housing and service delivery, to allow communities to attract permanent residents, instead of just temporary workers.

Department Response

- the Plan was aligned with the updated 2022 projections, which included higher growth rates for several strategic centres and the regional cities
- the Plan acknowledges some councils have aspirations and opportunities beyond what are shown in the projections and proposes strengthening an existing collaboration activity to ensure these aspirations are known and considered in future updates to the population projections.

A sustainable and resilient place

Biodiversity Planning

- councils mentioned they need support to:
 - improve the identification and mapping of land with High Environmental Values (HEV)
 - integrate HEV with terrestrial biodiversity mapping in the LEPs
 - interpret and apply the biodiversity legislation, with the offset requirements on land that was zoned for urban development (BCA/BOS complex and impacting development).
- several areas were identified that need greater recognition (e.g. via mapping) and protection (through planning and policy) such as biodiversity around centres, mines and water infrastructure projects, wetlands such as the Macquarie marshes and Lachlan river wetlands, additional wildlife sanctuaries near wetlands, river corridors which can also provide climate change refuge for flora and fauna and Karst areas.

Department Response

- Collaboration Activity 11 was broadened to flag a need to identify potential development and conservation opportunities for zoned development sites, that have known biodiversity values
- several minor improvements were made to the mapping.

Hazards

- the objectives and strategies within the plan should be about avoiding high-risk hazard affected areas instead of managing hazards and addressing future impacts and mitigation options.
- councils need support to prepare flood data/mapping for urban areas and outside urban areas. Further engagement was suggested with RFS to update bushfire hazard mapping
- a new collaboration activity was also suggested about hazards mapping within the region.

Department Response

- strategy 7.1 was updated to address the various hazards-related issues raised, including mapping and avoidance of risk
- the RFS will be consulted as planning occurs in the region
- a new breakout box was also added to Objective 7 to highlight the ongoing work to implement the recommendations of the 2022 NSW Flood Inquiry and the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Climate change, Net Zero and energy transition

- various suggestions for the draft plan to go further by identifying:
 - clear criteria to measure climate change impacts, managing heat impacts, and the need to replace fossil fuels with renewables, and building sustainability with low use of carbon materials
 - further support the energy transition inside and outside the REZ e.g. linking to the green hydrogen strategy and opportunities such as freight and proposed hydrogen facilities in Dubbo
 - potential agriculture opportunities (e.g. farm diversification) and threats (e.g. to high value agricultural land from generation/transmission and Infrastructure)
 - Suggestion for stronger links to/use of CW&O Enabling Regional Adaptation report/NARClIM data & regional snapshots.

Department Response

- the issue of needing to support the energy transition and achieving Net Zero by 2050 has been elevated into Objective 2, through:
 - an updated Strategy 2.1 which identifies a number of areas where strategic and statutory planning should further support the energy transition to Net Zero
 - an additional collaboration activity (Collaboration Activity 4) being added which flags that the Department will work with Energy Corporation of NSW, Department of Regional NSW and councils to identify economic diversification and land use planning issues, opportunities and actions to respond to changes in energy generation, transmission, storage and land use required to meet the NSW target of Net Zero by 2050
- the text in Objectives 1 and 2 have been edited to identify the opportunity relating to the new industries within the Parkes SAP and use of renewable energy for existing and future industry. Network improvements linking the SAP to the Central-West Orana REZ were not mentioned as these would, if appropriate, be more appropriately mentioned in an Energy Corp of NSW network strategy.
- Strategy 7.1 in Objective 7 has been expanded to identify the value of green infrastructure to avoiding new hazards such as the heat island effect.

Open/Public Space

- councils mentioned the need to strengthen guidance regarding the benefits of open space and pedestrian links as buffers between land uses and the importance of pedestrian links to existing open space
- there were several recommendations regarding specific items which should be mentioned throughout the plan, including regional-scale facilities such as the Gardens of Stone and activated river and waterfront land (e.g. Lake Forbes and the sculpture walk).
- one council also requested that the reclassification of open space not be made too onerous to allow the removal of unsuccessful pocket parks, if required.

Department Response

- strategies 6.1-6.3 were revised to address various issue raised regarding the benefits and opportunities relating to public open space
- both the text in Objective 6 and the respective Local Government Priorities for each LGA were updated to ensure that they adequately reflected the open space and recreation opportunities identified by individual councils. Text relating to the Gardens of Stone (i.e. in Objective 3) and riverfront activation (Strategy 6.4 and Action 1) were also strengthened
- the criteria for justifying the reclassification of open space in Strategy 6.3 are appropriate and would generally be required under the existing policy framework anyway.

Circular economy and waste

- several suggestions were made regarding strengthening the circular economy content by including reference to zero waste initiatives, economic development opportunities relating to recycling for the region, needing to strategically plan for waste material from multiple renewable energy developments and *NSW Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan*
- it was suggested that NetWaste does not have the resources to drive a circular economy approach across the region
- opportunities should be identified for the region such as funding landfills to accept asbestos to incentivise its removal and regional economic development opportunity - incentivising waste recovery/recycling businesses (region has abundant land).

Department Response

- the Plan was updated to acknowledge that the *Critical Minerals Strategy and High-tech Metals Strategy* (2021) will support critical minerals and high-tech metals processing and circular economy-related industries, with a specific Collaboration Activity that seeks to identify circular economy opportunities
- the circular economy content in Objective 7 was strengthened, with acknowledgement of the need to plan for renewable energy waste and to acknowledge NetWaste, without suggesting that it will drive circular economy work in the region.

Water and Riverfront Activation

- concerns were raised regarding overallocation of water in the region, need to maintain environmental flows, overreliance on groundwater during drought, separation of water licenses from the land and loss of irrigating potential, water security of small towns and industry (e.g. need pipelines) and town

water connections for rural-residential development. Conversely, concern was also raised regarding the statements in the draft Plan about water being 'fully allocated' with this potentially being seen as a disincentive for investment within the region

- councils mentioned they need guidance (e.g. principles, case studies) regarding the re-use of treated effluent for irrigation on sports fields and stated that currently, it's more cost effective to return treated water to the rivers instead, and to better collaborate on drought management
- Aboriginal stakeholders identified that there are Aboriginal cultural tourism opportunities associated with riverfront activation
- the suggestion was made that foreshore activation shouldn't just be about rivers and could also include creeks and riparian land within centres that were not on rivers (examples of waterways mentioned in this context are Lake Forbes and Blackmans Swamp Creek in Orange)
- there were also suggestions that the environmental values map should show the Sydney/Warragamba water catchments
- submission of support and objection were provided regarding the proposed Wyangla dam wall raising project.

Department Response

- most of the water-related issues are out-of-scope for the regional plan, however the text relating to the allocation of water was amended, without changing its intent and water-related issues were provided to Water NSW, for consideration in the regional water strategy processes
- Strategy 6.4 has been updated to include opportunities for cultural practices, recognition of culture and place and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people, including cultural tourism
- text in Objective 6 was edited to make it clear that it applied to rivers and other water bodies, to cover the issue of water bodies within centres that don't have river frontage. The dams are also specifically mentioned in Collaboration Activity 12
- the Sydney water catchments are shown on the map and mentioned in the Plan
- it would not be appropriate for the Plan to assume an outcome for the Wyangla dam wall raising project, before it undergoes a rigorous environmental assessment process.

People, centres, housing and communities

Settlement and centres

- there was general support for greater recognition of strategic centres and highlighting their:
 - ability to support growth and the smaller centres within their own sub-region
 - strong connections to regional cities
- the importance of retail within main streets and CBD enhancements was also recognised. There was a suggestion that the Settlement Guidelines from the draft New England North West Regional Plan (NENW Plan) should be applied to the CW&O region
- there were general comments about the connectivity of smaller centres to larger centres as being key to their ongoing viability and prosperity

- recommendations regarding pedestrian and bike amenity, networks and safety (e.g. reduce speed limits to 30km/hr in residential streets and town centres)
- suggestions for Narromine to be a strategic centre and there should be strategies to deal with vacant buildings in centres such as Cowra.

Department Response

- the role of the strategic centres has been further highlighted in the Plan
- Narromine was not categorised as a strategic centre in the Plan – this would not preclude the council aspiring to grow and diversify the range of housing and businesses within the centre. Additional work will be done with all councils regarding centres in the region to:
 - identify economic opportunities for all centres, including the smaller centres
 - determine whether it would be appropriate to develop settlement guidelines (e.g. similar to the NENW Plan Settlement Guidelines) that could be applied in the Central West and Orana region.

Housing

- it was suggested that Councils should be made to prepare local housing strategies, do more to support housing supply, growth and revitalisation of centres and respond to the Regional Housing Taskforce recommendations
- councils stated they need support to:
 - plan for and deliver infill housing, especially in the regional cities, greenfield housing and affordable housing
 - monitor, fund and deliver new housing areas e.g. the strategic and smaller centres were not eligible for the Regional Housing Fund which means that regionally important precincts such as Marangaroo in Lithgow LGA are not accelerated
- there were also suggestions for:
 - new actions and collaboration activities to provide greater resilience and sustainability
 - more interagency support the delivery of for Roads to Home project

Department Response

- the Plan has been updated to align with the recommendations of the Regional Housing Taskforce and work being undertaken to implement it, noting recommendations and commitments regarding capacity modelling, strategic planning and an urban development program, were already mentioned in the draft Plan.

Prosperity

General issues

- several councils commented that the region's economic story and opportunities did not come through as clearly as they did in the 2017 Plan and that the Plan needed to be more aspirational, in relation to the region's economy

- Concerns were raised about employment zone reforms e.g. compatibility/amenity issues associated with combining light and general industrial zones
- support for RDA Orana's Business Case for a Zero Emissions innovation zone. JO offer to co-design/invest in studies on job and skills shortages.

Department Response

- The vision and prosperity text was reviewed to ensure there is a clear message regarding the economic strengths and opportunities of the region and investigate the Zero Emissions Zone concept and whether there is a role for DPE/regional plan.
- the plan was re-ordered to strengthen the economic story (i.e. now Part 1 of the Plan) and there were also minor changes made to address LGA and industry-specific edits.

Agriculture

- Councils need more guidance identifying and protecting important agricultural land and guidance on diversification/integrating manufacturing/value-add for agriculture. Importance of forestry particularly in Oberon LGA should be mentioned.
- Need to maintain agricultural production in high-value areas such as around Wellington which may be impacted by the CWO REZ. There was also support for the work being done by the Ag-Commissioner.

Department Response

- Discussed NSW Agricultural Commissioner's work, SSAL and policy approach with DPI and reviewed actions regarding agricultural land and reference forestry as being important industry for the region.

Health and education

- Councils need more guidance on health precinct delivery/next steps e.g. Dubbo (collaboration activity suggestion with university, health etc. to make this a zero emissions precinct) and the role and opportunities for precincts in smaller centres.
- Suggestion for better planning of education facilities when new areas are planned and the suggestion for broader use of education facilities such as; using schools for community and sporting uses outside of school hours and a collaboration activity to maximise the use of buildings and infrastructure in TAFE campuses.

Department Response

- Discussed this potential collaboration activity with council and included new text regarding health and education facilities.
- Strategy 21.1 amended to require mixed use precincts to adopt sustainable land use requirements and net zero principles.

Tourism

- Local tourism opportunities for each LGA should be mentioned e.g. sculpture trails, national parks, Utes in the Paddock etc as well as bike tourism opportunities – in towns, between towns and on and off road (e.g. mountain bikes)
- the Plan should Reference DPE agritourism work
- suggests engaging indigenous community to develop tourism products/experiences and support with infrastructure e.g. buildings, art spaces etc.

Department Response

- Strengthen Objective 2, related strategies and collaboration activity 2 to mention opportunities for regional and local scale facilities and that cycling includes on/off road (including mountain biking).

Mining and critical minerals

- Mention *Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy* and the Parkes Critical Minerals Hub.
- Coal and minerals and critical minerals are significant opportunities for the region, as is minerals processing, research and advanced manufacturing. The region also has a skilled workforce that will support the industry.
- There was support for transition for Lithgow and planning earlier for Mid-Western and should mention of Mount Piper closure in the plan.
- the Plan needs a clear link between mining (a 'key enabler') and the energy transition/renewable energy development.

Department Response

- the Plan is amended to reflect the need to Integrate the *Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy* and engage with MEG, DRNSW and the relevant councils to identify how to improve identification and planning for resources. A new collaboration activity is included around critical minerals. The Plan strengthens the links between mining and the renewable energy transition.

Aboriginal content

- Suggestions to strengthen language around collaboration and partnerships with Aboriginal people regarding waterfront activation and celebrate good work/examples (not just acknowledge culture).
- the social impacts of Roads to Home should be considered and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage should be strengthened.

Department Response

- Improve the content on Native Title, strategic merit for projects and other text within the plan while consulting with stakeholders.

Transport

Freight

- Highlights the need to protect and improve freight corridors (e.g. regional scale to/from the east coast, sub-regional scale through Oberon LGA and large load corridors to the REZ)
- freight interaction with tourism needs to be considered, especially for LGAs within a weekend trip radius around Sydney (e.g. Oberon, Mudgee).
- suggestions for a reference to the hydrogen strategy and freight focus for green hydrogen, including heavy freight vehicles and trains.
- The freight map needs to show access to growth areas, ports and major destinations, it is also recommended the Olympic Highway and regional roads be shown.
- Freight precincts should also be mentioned, such as Narromine.

Department Response

- Discuss with TfNSW to ensure alignment with the draft transport plan (and that relevant content sits in each plan) and review the relevant text and mapping to address the issues raised.

Rail

- There were various suggestions in relation to the fast rail such as mapping improvements, alternative routes, intention of the fast rail and connectivity to sub-regional centres.
- It was recommended that the region provide bike and e-bike space on trains/buses for cycle tour opportunities.

Department Response

- Discuss with TfNSW to ensure alignment with the draft transport plan (and that relevant content sits in each plan) and review the relevant text and mapping to address the issues raised.

Other transport issues

- There was support for electrification of the transport sector and suggestions for improving biking in centres (e.g. networks, tracks, end-of-trip) and mountain biking (e.g. tourism, environmental impacts i.e. Orange)
- it was mentioned that further guidance may be required for mixed-use planning and suggestion regarding elevation of Cowra airport's role
- the significance of the Great Western Highway should be mentioned as well as the importance of bypasses.

Department Response

- Discuss with TfNSW to ensure alignment with the draft transport plan (and that relevant content sits in each plan) and review the relevant text and mapping to address the issues raised.
- The Great Western Highway upgrade project was elevated in the Plan and a central west growth corridor has been included to reflect the economic potential from this road infrastructure among others.

Area specific responses

CWO REZ

- Councils stated they need guidance on how they can benefit from the REZ, specifically development application related advice and assessment
- concern over how the REZ will affect agricultural land around Wellington and a suggestion to expand the REZ to cover the entire region.

Department Response

- Update collaboration activity 15 and relevant text and consult with DPI regarding impact of renewable projects on agricultural land.

Parkes SAP

- Parkes SAP collaboration activity should be more detailed and include a focus on the following; more detail regarding the sub-regional/commuter catchment housing and employment strategies; supporting a trained and skilled workforce including skills in automation, programable logic, self-guidance, robotics, engineers, drone tech etc
- population projections that acknowledge direct and indirect jobs from employment projects, freight connections to connect the SAP to the region and Identifying health and education needs of a growing population
- attract value-add businesses and to support the establishment of a logistics hub. It was also suggested to amend the travel time map to update Condobolin's proximity to Parkes and it was raised that other centres will need good road access to Parkes SAP and safety issues with network (e.g. crossings).

Department Response

- convert Action 8 to a collaboration activity and broaden wording to expand the role of the Parkes sub-working group.