



COOTAMUNDRA-  
GUNDAGAI REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

# Rural Lands Directions Paper



COOTAMUNDRA-  
GUNDAGAI REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

## Rural Lands Directions Paper

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND .....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	8
<b>Direction One:</b> Protect and enhance agricultural land.....	10
<b>Direction Two:</b> Grow agritourism.....	12
<b>Direction Three:</b> Encourage diversity of rural industries .....	14
<b>Direction Four:</b> Promote and encourage value add industries to take advantage of transport links and local resources .....	16
<b>Direction Five:</b> Support the growth of rural industries in addition to agriculture where appropriate .....	18
<b>Direction Six:</b> Increase resource efficiency.....	20
<b>Direction Seven:</b> Streamline approval processes and encourage community participation in decision making .....	22

## Draft Directions Paper?

The idea of the Draft Directions Paper is to provide the community with an opportunity to comment and guide the final Rural Lands Strategy. The Draft Directions Paper proposes the vision and framework to guide the Final Rural Lands Strategy forward by drawing on the ten issues papers which were produced as a part of the initial phase of this strategic process as well as the feedback from the community during consultation in 2018.

Following the exhibition of this Directions Paper, Council will consider all submissions, finalise the directions and commence work on the final Rural Lands Strategy.





# Background

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council  
Rural Lands Directions Paper



# Rural Lands Strategy Background

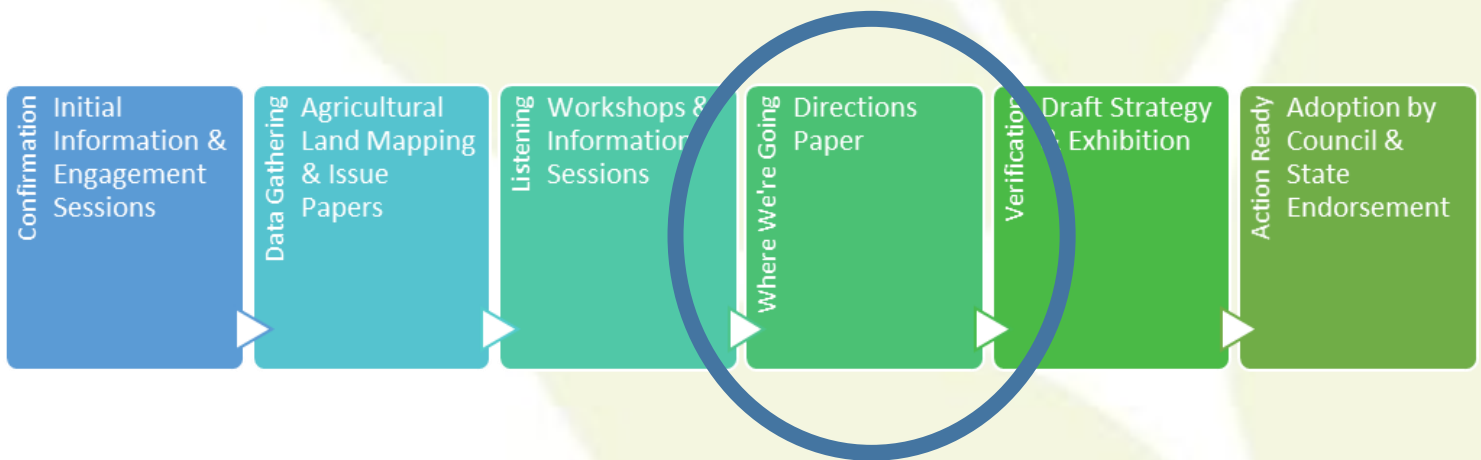
The merger of Gundagai Shire Council and Cootamundra Shire Council as Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC) has necessitated the need for new planning instruments and policies; in particular a Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan which cover the regional council area. A strategy to deal specifically with the rural lands of CGRC is proposed which aims to analyse agricultural trends and opportunities for the area. This strategy will help to update mapping for the new Local Environmental Plan while also providing rational and reasoning for zoning, land use and minimum lot sizes in rural areas.

Rural land is often neglected from a planning perspective due to more pressing planning needs in larger centres, however development of agricultural land often has a disproportionate impact on residential and economic activity when compared to development in a town, with intensive feedlots, quarries, landfills, etc. Furthermore, agricultural uses themselves such as piggeries, vineyards, feedlots and so on have a long term impact on the use and viability of the site and surrounding lands. Through

the planning process, controls and principles of development can be placed on agricultural land to ensure the viability of the land into perpetuity as well as providing opportunities for emerging and new agricultural enterprises to establish in the area.

The two former shires have varied terrain and soil quality which makes formulating one course of action or plan for rural land difficult. However this should be viewed as an opportunity which makes CGRC more attractive and marketable to residents, visitors and prospective residents as a wide variety of agricultural pursuits can be explored in this single local government area.

It is Council's intention that the Rural Lands Strategy serves not only as a land use planning document, but as a plan for economic success and growth through the shared identity of agriculture. This leverages off what CGRC does best (agriculture), connections to logistic hubs and routes as well as capitalising on changing recreation and tourism trends.





# Current Demographic Data Snapshot for CGRC

**876**

**homes/businesses have  
solar panels**



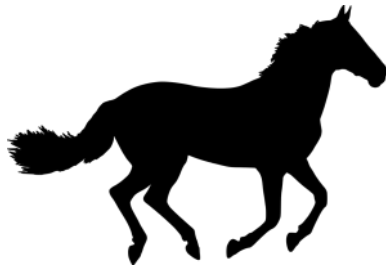
**398,141.7  
hectares**

**Farmland rated properties**

**406** 

**15.2% of population  
is employed in  
Agriculture,  
Forestry and Fishing**

**34% of Develop-  
ment Applications  
received in 2018  
were in rural  
zones**

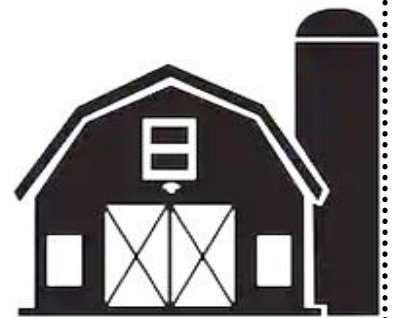


**Businesses in LGA**

**1,156**



**Population of  
11,244**



**Contributed**

**\$468 million  
to the Riverina  
Murray Region's  
gross regional  
product in 2013**



**Median Age 46.4**





# Introduction

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council  
Rural Lands Directions Paper





The Rural Lands Strategy is just one of many strategic documents which will provide land use guidance for the creation of a new local environmental plan, however the benefit of this strategy is further reaching than this as it creates a vision for CGRC area as to how rural land can be developed and what opportunities this affords our towns and villages.

## Directions

The seven directions proposed by this paper are intended to guide not only the formation of the final Rural Lands Strategy but also provide aspiration and vision for our rural lands into the future.

The seven directions touch on all facets of rural land including:

1. Freight and transport
2. Agricultural tourism
3. Farm diversification and succession planning
4. Farm holdings and land use
5. Regional food
6. Environmental pressures
7. Rural living
8. Connections to villages and towns
9. Forestry
10. Mining, disused mines and landfill

Seven directions have been identified which summarises the intent of the direction as a clear statement. This paper provides clear detail as to the intent of each direction, the background of that direction as well as the outcomes it will facilitate and/or achieve.

The seven directions proposed are:

1. Protect and enhance agricultural land
2. Grow agritourism
3. Encourage diversity of rural industries
4. Promote and encourage value add industries
5. Support the growth of rural industries in addition to agriculture where appropriate
6. Increase resource efficiency
7. Streamline council processes and encourage community participation





Direction One

# Protect and enhance agricultural land

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council

Rural Lands Directions Paper





This direction is formulated to ensure that future agricultural productivity of the land is not jeopardised by short term gain and decision making. With a well rounded planning framework that allows for opportunity as well as protection, the CGRC area can continue to yield high agricultural output now and into the future.

## Background:

Agricultural land mapping was undertaken as a part of the initial examination of rural land. This mapping revealed that certain areas of CGRC are more productive or could be more productive than others due to soil quality, access, terrain and on.

CGRC is fortunate that the large council area offers a variety of sites for a variety of land uses, with an ability to grow and raise almost anything.

Proximity to larger urban centres such as Canberra and the rise in popularity of “hobby farms” has lead to land use conflict between large farming enterprises and these smaller land holders. In order to maintain the primacy of the agricultural industry, it is imperative that land zoning and land use reflect the



overall picture and vision for not only the local area but the region.

## Aims:

1. Land that is mapped as being of a productive agricultural value is zoned appropriately to minimise future fragmentation.
2. “Dwelling entitlements” are considered against the productivity of the land.
3. Dual occupancies be considered.
4. Subdivision for agricultural purposes is encouraged.
5. Existing and future land use conflicts are managed so as to minimise impacts.
6. Land owners abutting agricultural land understand their responsibilities to enhance the biosecurity requirements of agriculture.
7. Innovation in water use and farm security is encouraged and supported at all opportunities.

### What’s happening now?

Rural holdings across former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires vary greatly, with the larger cropping holdings more often found in the former Cootamundra Shire and smaller market garden and grazing lots along the Hume Highway in former Gundagai Shire. Land is tightly held in our local government area, with reliable rainfall and good soil making this a desirable place to start an agricultural enterprise or to relocate.

There has been a definite increase in larger holdings being targeted by corporations when they come onto the market, however a lot of land transactions occur between neighbours and so there is a clear trend of contraction and expansion of holdings over the years.

Anecdotally, trends in tree changers have seen a greater demand for 5 to 50 acre lots on the outskirts of the towns. From a planning perspective, this needs to be carefully managed – too small and services such as water and sealed roads are required and too large for services, but smaller than what is required to derive an income and you often find weeds become an issue. Analysis of whether residential lots are the best use of the land is also a consideration, with quality farm land becoming scarcer.

Direction Two

# Grow Agritourism



This direction is formulated to ensure that land owners have flexibility and support to undertake experience generated activity on their property to capture the growing agricultural tourism industry.

## Background:

The increase in Australians seeking unique experiences in their own backyard and the growing agricultural tourism drive from Asia means that farm stays and agricultural tourism is a growing industry.

Some Agritourism activities are already taking place around the CGRC area and the promotion of uniquely agricultural experiences are being heavily promoted by Riverina Tourism.

CGRC is uniquely placed on the major transport routes of the Hume Highway and the Sydney-Melbourne main railway line, meaning that numerous commuters are passing through the area daily. The proximity of major urban centres such as Canberra and Albury-Wodonga means that CGRC can easily become a quick stop or a weekend of experiences.



“Glamping” isn’t all tents at Hillview.

## Aims:

1. Create appropriate land use controls that support tourism and agribusiness.
2. Educate the community about agritourism opportunities.
3. Aboriginal heritage and culture is identified and supported.
4. Invest in infrastructure and transport, particularly in identified agritourism hotspots.
5. Support and encourage employment of youth and seniors.

### What’s happening now?

**Case Study #1:** Hillview, south of Gundagai along the Hume Highway, has been operating as a farmstay since 2006. When new owners Ruth and Pierre took over at the end of 2017, they decided to expand upon the success of the Hillview Farmstay by creating a glamping experience. Glamping and primitive campgrounds have become increasingly popular as an alternate tourism and accommodation experience, particularly by families with children and pets.

Ruth and Pierre have big plans for Hillview and believe that their property and the links to the region through food, wine and other site seeing opportunities will see an increase in travellers seeking an experience rather than a stopover. They have leveraged off changing market demands by providing a Tesla recharge point for electric cars and by offering a number of recreational opportunities for guests from tennis and swimming to feeding animals and general nature watching.

**Case Study #2:** Historic, 7,000 acre Kimo Estate is located between Gundagai and Nangus on the picturesque banks of the Murrumbidgee River. The Ferguson family have diversified the farm through events and agritourism. This provides another source of income when weather and market conditions put pressure on their traditional farm enterprise.

Currently, Kimo Estate hosts wedding ceremonies in the historic gardens and utilises a repurposed grain shed as a reception venue. Accommodation is offered with a purpose built ecohut and two repurposed cottages. Since inception, their wedding business has gone from strength to strength and their accommodation offerings have capacity to grow further with future plans for more ecohuts to take in the Murrumbidgee River and surrounding hill scape.



Direction Three

# Encourage diversity of rural industries



This direction is formulated to promote innovation and choice for farmers and other land holders of rural land.

## Background:

Traditional cropping and grazing contributes the bulk of Australia's agriculture production however industry opportunities such as pharmaceuticals, timber and so on mean that a farm can be more than just grains and meat.

Consider the increased demand for native edibles and you'll start to view some of our most virulent pest flora like acacia baileyana a little differently.

The increasing popularity of farmers markets and online food markets mean that there are even more ways for producers to interact directly with their customers and cater to a scale which suits their business model.

### Consider this.

A growing worldwide population grappling with increasing proportion of aged people and rises in chronic lifestyle diseases is big business for the pharmaceutical industry.

With the increasing demand for pain relief and alternative remedies, opportunities are increasing for farm diversification through poppies for opiates and various herbal crops.

## Aims:

1. Land use definitions are flexible enough to allow for innovation and value add industries as they evolve.
2. Consider performance based clauses for intensive plant agriculture.
3. Support identified regional food opportunities.
4. Focus on sustainability and resilience land uses.
5. Local produce is supported through the "Riverina" brand.



Wattle seeds are increasingly being used in cooking © SBS



Direction Four

# Promote and encourage value add industries



Wallendbeen is synonymous with dryland wheat, just as Nangus is known for some of the best lamb in the country, but rather than just putting the raw commodity on a truck or a train, does CGRC have the capacity to value capture the next link in the economic chain?

## Background:

Agricultural land in CGRC is diverse and unique with great plains suitable for cropping, grassy hillsides for grazing and Lucene river flats for reliable, quality feed.

Around sale days or harvest time, populations in our towns and villages can swell with the hive of activity that takes place whether it is the grain yards of Stockinbingal or sale yard in Gundagai.



These are periodic events, but there are opportunities available with industrial land capacity and transport links in our towns and villages to value add in CGRC or even receive produce from other areas and value add here.

By minimising the length of time and distance between primary producer, manufacturer and then market, there is the added benefit of decreasing the carbon footprint of the agricultural process.

## Aims:

1. Strong land use controls to protect the primacy of industrial land on the urban periphery.
2. Education around possible value add opportunities for the towns and villages.
3. Creation of a local information sharing hub to support and foster innovation and new enterprises.
4. Investment and provision of services in industrial areas.

### Value adding for new and emerging markets.

It's all very well to put in a crop or graze livestock if the conditions are right, but aside from the logistical matter of getting your product to market there's the ultimate viability test of "is there actually a customer base for what I'm selling?"

Particularly when dealing with food products labelling is something which is unavoidable, however labelling can also be a method of selling your product to a wider audience. Cootamundra Oil Seeds is a local business which is capitalising on a growing domestic and international market by certifying their products as Kosher, Halal and Organic. Certifying does often involve fees and could mean that certain preparation methods may need to be modified, so the cost of implementation versus the increased customer base is something which needs to be considered on an individual business basis. Certification labels allow consumers to quickly assess whether a particular product is acceptable for consumption in accordance with their ethical, religious or dietary standards. For Cootamundra Oil Seeds, certification has ensured them a wider customer base which in turn has helped to mitigate market turbulence.





Direction Five

**Support the growth  
of rural industries in  
addition to agriculture  
where appropriate**



Rural land is often used for much more than just agriculture, with energy generating facilities, land fills, quarries and forestry not uncommon. The nature of some of these land uses mean that there is often conflict between land users.

## Background:

Just as the agricultural land in CGRC is diverse enough to sustain various agricultural activities, it is diverse enough to be appropriate for forestry, land fill, mining activities and even some light industrial activity such as energy generating facilities like solar farms.

The overwhelming concern about land uses aside from agriculture in rural zones is that the maintenance of the site or activity on the site causes biosecurity or environmental pressures on the adjoining land holders.

These are legitimate concerns, however through careful and considered planning there is an ability to allow for these alternate land uses to thrive alongside our agricultural land whilst minimizing the impact on neighbours.

## Aims:

1. Strong land use controls to protect the primacy of agricultural land.
2. Stipulate site standards for mining, forestry, landfills and light industry in the development control plan.
3. Flexibility to allow complimentary land uses to occur such as grazing and solar farms through zoning and controls.
4. Enforceable requirements for landowners of land used for mining and forestry to better mitigate the spread of weeds and feral animals.
5. Controls requiring access to mining, forestry and industrial sites be via a public road.

### What a waste.

In 2010/11 Australians generated roughly 2.8 tonnes of waste each. 1.32 tonnes was recovered or recycled, 0.6 tonnes was fly ash from coal fired power stations and the remaining 0.88 went to land fill.

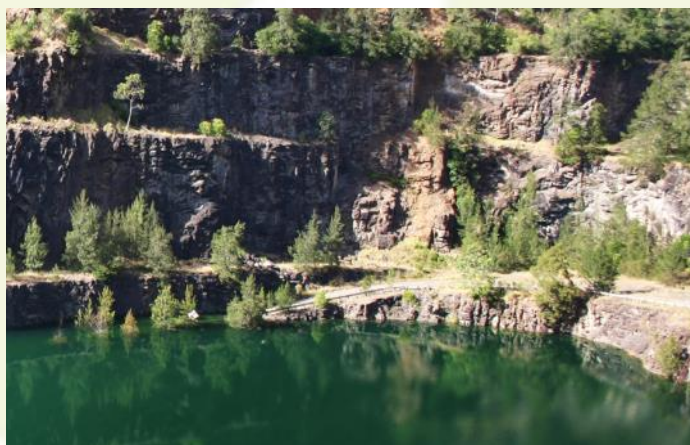
While technically Australians generated more waste than the United State of America, Canada and New Zealand; we generate less per capita than the United Kingdom or Germany.

Rural land bears both the burden of waste and the solution for reducing it. Rural land can be used for land fill and composting facilities, as well as being used for alternate power sources such as solar, wind and thermal energy.

Neither are popular land uses, but they have to go somewhere.



Composted waste can be used in rehabilitating sites such as former quarries.



Direction Six

# Increase resource efficiency



Environmental pressures of a changing climate and the spread of pest flora and fauna, present ever increasing obstacles to agricultural enterprise.

## Background:

Agricultural land in CGRC is diverse and unique with great plains suitable for cropping, grassy hillsides for grazing and lucerne river flats for reliable, quality feed.

Around sale days or harvest time, populations in our towns and villages can swell with the hive of activity that takes place whether it is the grain yards of Stockinbingal or sale yards in Gundagai.

These are periodic events, but there are opportunities available with industrial land capacity and transport links in our towns and villages to value add in CGRC or even receive produce from other areas and value add here.

By minimising the length of time and distance between primary producer, manufacturer and then market, there is the added benefit of decreasing the carbon footprint of the agricultural process.



## Aims:

1. Regenerative farming is encouraged.
2. Collaboration with Landcare, Local Lands Services and Department of Primary Industries to provide education and grant for landowners.
3. Create a rural community that is prepared and resilient to climate change.
4. Education around possible value add opportunities for the towns and villages.
5. Creation of a local information sharing hub to support and foster innovation and new enterprises.
6. Investment and provision of services in industrial areas .
7. Farm gate and small producer markets encouraged through flexible miscellaneous use provisions.

### Regenerative Farming

Hardly a new concept in the farming community, but one that is garnering a lot of attention due to the drought is regenerative farming.

Regenerative farming is about partnering your farm activity with what the land can reasonably provide. Increasing tree coverage and allowing regeneration time between grazing for grasses (especially native grasses) to rejuvenate means that more water and carbon is captured in the soil.

The start up costs of regenerative farming are a barrier with increased fencing and establishment of trees, but the benefits are undeniable in extreme conditions. The picture to the left is the example of a farm using regenerative practices compared to a farm running stock as usual in Boorowa.

The benefits are not only financial, with recent ABC reports suggesting that regenerative farming contribute to an increase in the mental wellbeing of farmers and land users.

Support to undertake regenerative farming can be found through the NSW Farm Innovation Fund.



Direction Seven

**Streamline council  
processes and  
encourage community  
participation**



Dealing with Council can be stressful, however with greater transparency and communication between staff and the community the experience of the development application process can be more pleasant.

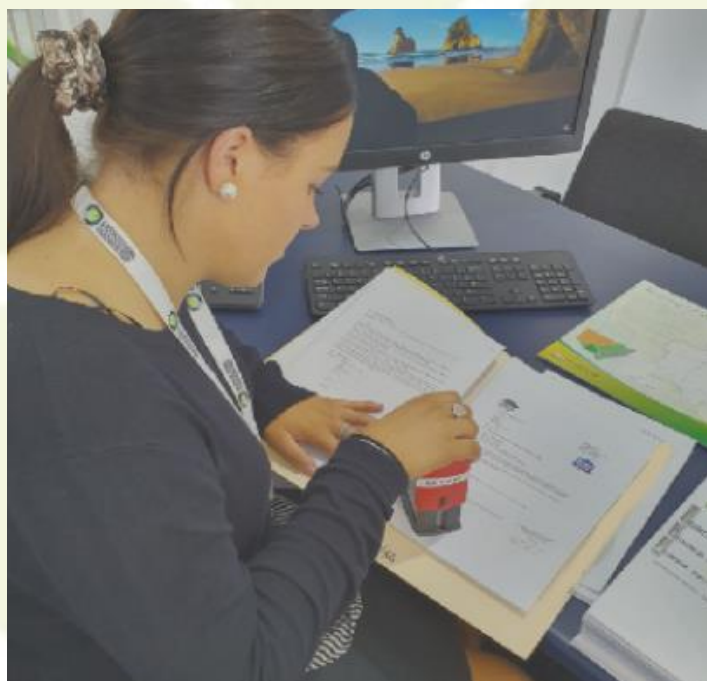
## Background:

Council regulates land uses and building work through State legislation and Local planning frameworks. Necessarily legalistic to allow for enforcement and reduce ambiguity, these documents can be jargonistic and difficult to understand.

As a merged local government, CGRC's local planning instruments are more complex than necessary. Working towards a new Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan for the whole council area will assist in reducing confusion. The development of plain English fact sheets for various types of development will assist in the community's understanding of the development process. It is not unusual for Council to be the last to be consulted, with applicants spending large amounts of money on plans and designs only to either have to redo them and/or discover that what they want to do is not permissible. Encouraging Council to be one of the first ports of call is essential for creating a positive development experience.

## Aims:

1. Council is supportive and open to innovative approaches to rural land use.
2. Decision making is transparent.
3. Local environmental plans and development control plans are regularly reviewed.
4. Education of landowners to responsibly manage their property including the spread of weeds.
5. Keep the community well informed through social media and the Council newsletter.



mail@cgrc.nsw.gov.au  
www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au

1300 459 689  
Fax (02) 6940 2127  
PO Box 420  
COOTAMUNDRA NSW 2590



**COOTAMUNDRA-  
GUNDAGAI** REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

