

# Draft Rural Lands Strategy

2019



**Rural Lands Strategy**

Drafted 2019

Adopted 20##

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Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council acknowledges the significant input given to this project by the Australian Rail and Track Corporation, Department of Primary Industries, Goldenfields Water, Roads and Maritime Services and the keen members of the community.

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Fishing in Morley's Creek.

# Introduction



# Introduction

## Message from the Mayor & General Manager

We are pleased to announce the release of the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Rural Lands Strategy 2019.

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council area is a diverse and varied landscape which provides a range of opportunities for agricultural land uses and other broad acre industries. From the wheat fields of Wallendbeen, to the grassy slopes of Adjungbilly to the Lucene flats of Nangus, there is almost nothing which cannot be grown in our Local Government Area.

The changing requirements of consumers and development opportunities from tree changers, waste recycling and energy producers means that there is significant land use conflicts occurring on rural lands. This strategy creates a framework for Council's new Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan to dictate what development is permissible and under what circumstances. The current absence of strong documents like these, leaves our Council open to undesirable development outcomes which compromise the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of future generations.

This strategy has been the result of robust community consultation and background research and creates an agricultural vision for our community connecting the development and use of rural lands to the prosperity of our towns and villages.



Abb McAlister  
Mayor



Phil McMurray  
Acting General Manager



Mayor Abb McAlister & Acting General Manager Phil McMurray



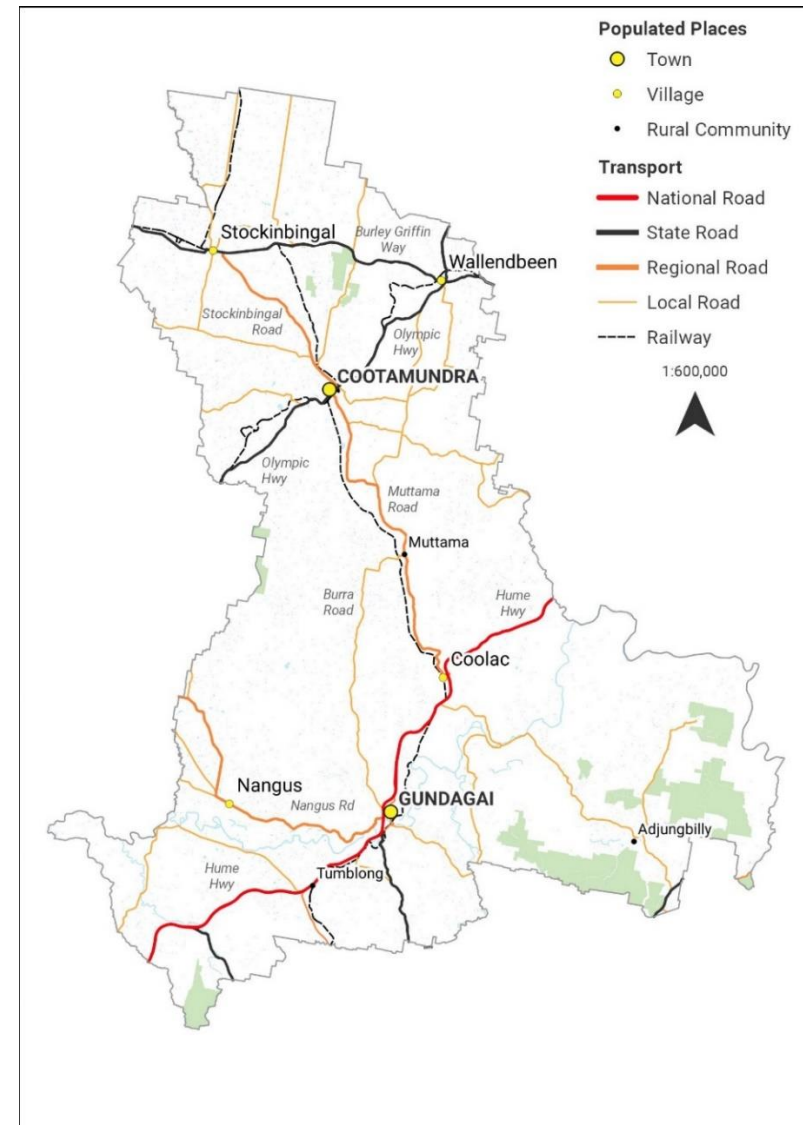
## Purpose of the Rural Lands Strategy

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 Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) which cover the entire regional council area. A strategy to deal specifically with the rural lands of CGRC was proposed, aiming to analyse agricultural trends and opportunities for the area. The Rural Lands Strategy will help to update mapping for the new LEP while also providing rationale and reasoning for zoning 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 on agricultural land often has a disproportionate impact on residential and economic activity of towns when compared to urban development, with intensive feedlots, quarries and landfills facilitated mostly located on rural land. Furthermore, agricultural uses themselves such as piggeries, vineyards, feedlots and so on have a long term impact on the use and viability of a site and surrounding lands. Through the strategic planning process, controls and principles of development can be implemented for 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 in a manner which is fair and equitable.

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 investors as a wide variation of agricultural pursuits can be explored in this single local government area.

It is Council's intention that the Rural Lands Strategy serve 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.



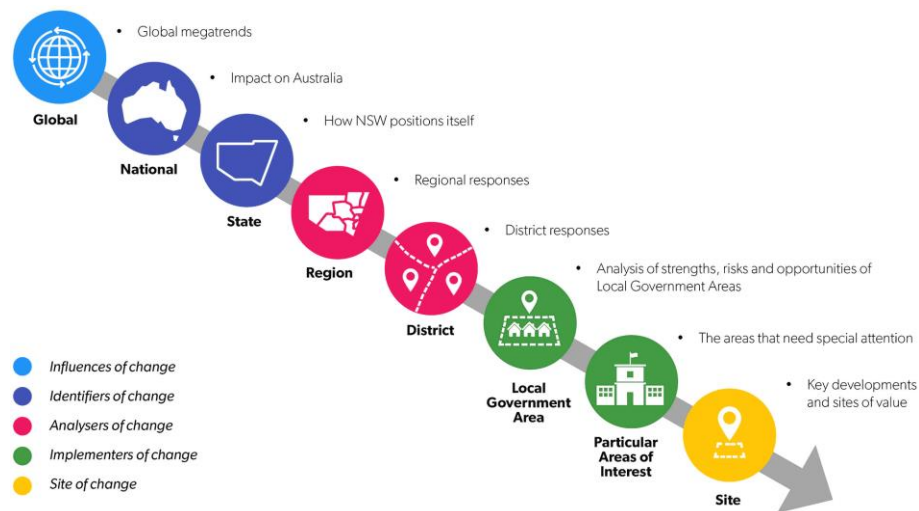
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council

# Strategic Context

The Rural Lands Strategy was developed over an 18 month period of research, consultation and review. This section outlines the context within which this strategy was developed.

Importantly, the Rural Lands Strategy will inform a key component of the Local Strategic Planning Statement's rural lands component and serve as the background document to the LEP and DCP.

Good strategic planning is not done in isolation, and in order to ensure the success of this strategy, it has been formulated in line with other strategic plans and considerations.



From the NSW Department of Planning's website

## Community Strategic Plan: Our Place, Our Future 2018-28



The Integrated Planning and Reporting framework for local councils was developed to help Councils strengthen community participation in decision making, provide corporate strategic emphasis and reduce duplication of work. As a part of this Integrated Planning and Reporting framework, Council is required to prepare a community strategic plan.

The community strategic plan is a ten year document with high level objectives, developed by the community articulating the vision of “A vibrant region attracting people, investment and business through innovation, diversity and community spirit.”

The formulation of the community strategic plan is based on the principles of equity, access, participation and rights. The plan takes a holistic view of our community by addressing social, economic, environment and civic leadership issues.

The key direction of “Sustainable natural and built environments: we connect with the places and spaces around us” speaks directly to the role and purpose of the Rural Lands Strategy and demonstrates the connection between the community strategic plan and this strategy.

## Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979

The Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 and associated regulation legislate how local environmental plans and other planning controls are to be created. A chapter on rural development and subdivision in the DCP will be informed by this Strategy. The Rural

Lands Strategy aims to inform changes to the existing Local Environmental Plans (Cootamundra and Gundagai) and inform the forthcoming Cootamundra-Gundagai Local Environmental Plan.

Objectives from the Act to encourage the proper management of land have influenced and shaped a number of the actions and recommendations of the Rural Lands Strategy.

## NSW 2021



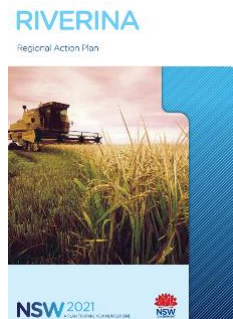
The NSW State Plan is a 10 year plan to guide policy and budget decision making. NSW 2021 works in conjunction with the NSW Budget to deliver identified community priorities. It sets goals and measurable targets outlining immediate

actions that will help achieve these goals. These goals reflect the Government's commitment to whole of State growth and delivery of projects, to improve opportunities and quality of life for people in regional and metropolitan NSW.

The Plan indirectly guides residential development through infrastructure planning. Major infrastructure plans have been used to inform, justify and support recommendations of the Rural Lands Strategy in particular utilisation of existing and proposed freight and transport links.

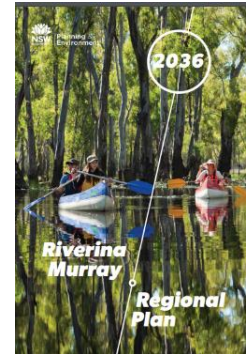
## Riverina Regional Action Plan 2021

The Riverina Regional Action Plan identifies the immediate actions the NSW Government will prioritise in the Riverina. These actions aim to compliment both long term strategies developed for NSW and existing regional strategies.



These priorities inform a number of directions and recommendations of the Rural Lands Strategy and serve as a basis for recommending the investment and expansion of a value add agricultural industry in our towns and villages.

## Riverina-Murray Regional Plan

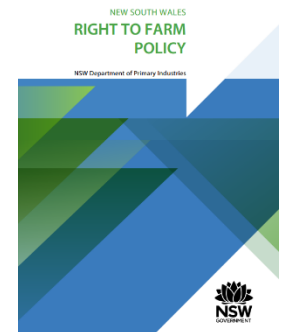


The Riverina-Murray Regional Plan looks broadly at the Riverina Region, with specific emphasis on the cities and towns of the region as key to the future 27% increase in population by 2036.

In terms of development, the Regional Plan provides good planning outcomes which influence recommendations for local environmental plan changes in particular.

## NSW DPI Right to Farm Policy

Released in 2015, this policy establishes the baseline of agricultural land use rights and responsibilities for NSW. It emphasises the primary purpose of designated rural land as being first and foremost for the purpose of agriculture. A number of the actions from this policy have helped to shape the actions of this strategy.



## **Considerations of Directions Issued by the Minister (Section 9.1 Directions)**

### **Employment & Resources**

#### **Business & Industrial Zones**

The Strategy is consistent with this direction and proposes to increase usage of industrial land across the local government area, taking advantage of existing infrastructure.

#### **Rural Zones**

This strategy does not seek to rezone any rural zones to residential, business, industrial, village or tourist zone at this stage. It is acknowledged that rezonings may be required or justified by recommendations of this strategy, accordingly this document provides the strategic context for such changes and it is believed that such rezonings would be of minor significant and therefore comply with this direction.

#### **Rural Lands**

The Strategy is consistent with the purpose and intent of this direction and any resulting planning proposal from any recommendations of this strategy would be supportive of the direction.

### **Environment & Heritage**

#### **Environmental Protection Zones**

The Strategy is consistent with this direction as it does not recommend diminishing any environmental protection zones nor impact the function of such areas.

#### **Heritage Conservation**

The Strategy is consistent with this direction as it seeks further recognition of heritage, particularly aboriginal and other cultural heritage.

### **Housing, Infrastructure & Urban Development**

#### **Integrated Land Use & Transport**

The Strategy is consistent with this direction as it promotes greater employment opportunities and increases in services in industrial areas and identified tourism “hotspots”.

### **Hazard & Risk**

#### **Acid Sulfate Soils**

The Strategy is consistent with this direction as it does not propose development on land identified as containing acid sulfate soils.

#### **Mine Subsidence and Unstable Land**

The Strategy is consistent with this direction as it does not propose development on land identified as unstable or in a mine subsidence area.

#### **Flood Prone Land**

The Strategy is largely consistent with this direction as it does not seek to rezone or repurpose land which is mapped as being flood prone. Noting that any development proposed in a flood prone area would

need to comply with the controls of the relevant LEP and DCP, any inconsistency with this direction would be negligible.

### Planning for Bushfire Protection

Noting that review of the bushfire mapping for the local government area will be undertaken in the near future, the Strategy does propose land uses and potential rezoning of sites which are mapped as being bushfire prone, however any planning proposal around these sites would need to adequately address this direction.

### Regional Planning

#### Implementation of Regional Plans

The Strategy has been formulated and influenced by the Riverina-Murray Regional Plan and a number of actions and work items are directly supported by the regional plan.

### Local Plan Making

#### Approval & Referral Requirements

The Strategy is consistent with this direction as it does not include recommendations of provisions which would require the concurrence, consultation or referral of development applications to a Minister or public authority.

#### Reserving Land for Public Purposes

The Strategy does not seek to create, alter or reduce existing zones or reservations of land for public purposes and is consistent with this direction.

### Site Specific Provisions

The Strategy does not propose any site specific works or projects on land which would require spot rezoning and thus be subject to a planning proposal. The Strategy is consistent with this direction.



## Preparation of the Strategy

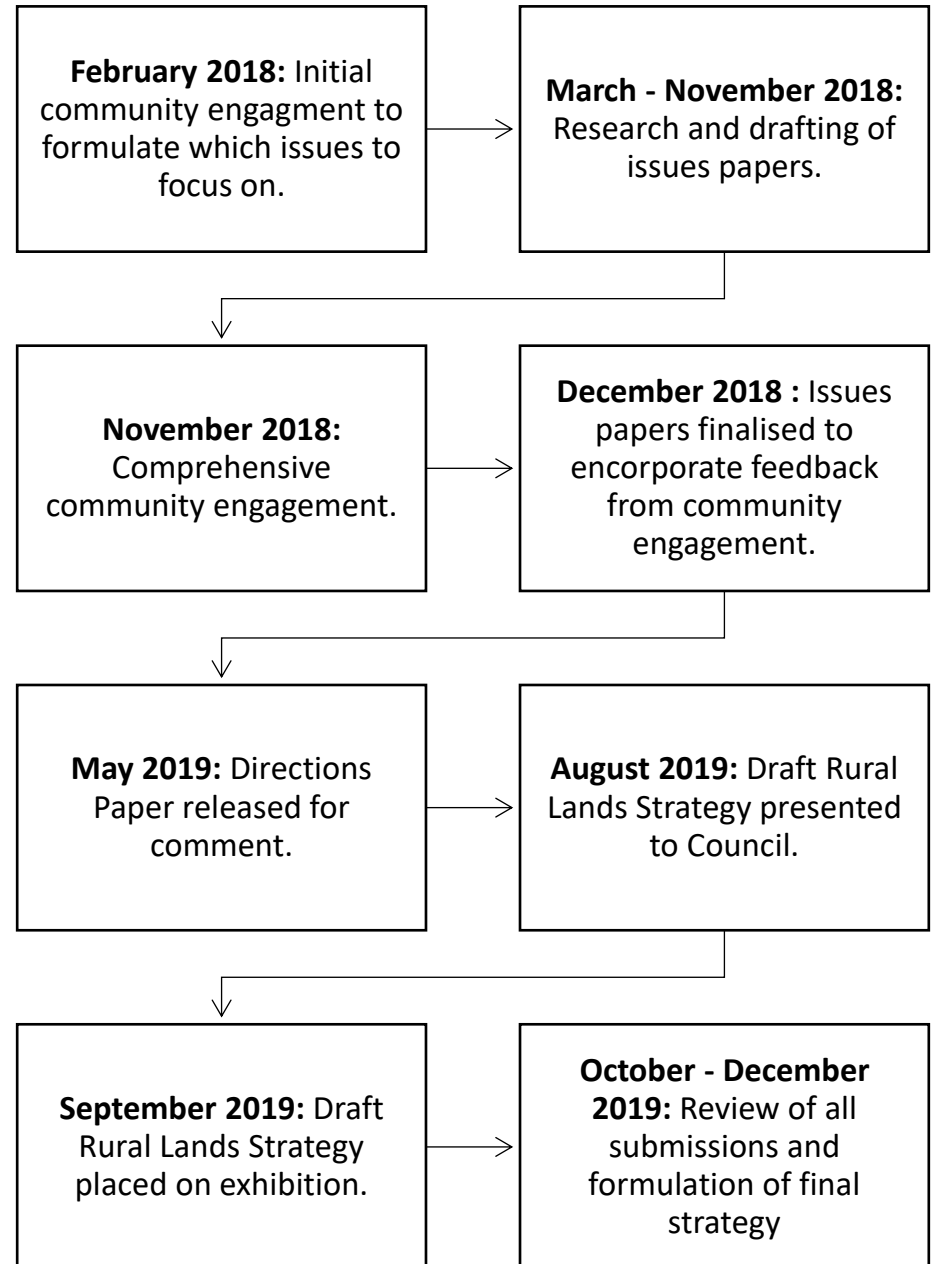
The CGRC Rural Lands Strategy is a strategic document which aims to create a vision for the villages and rural communities of Cootamundra-Gundagai Local Government Area. The strategy is the culmination of research, consultation and future planning.

Council began the process of creating a Rural Lands Strategy in February 2018 with the entire process showed in the flowchart to the right.

The amount of background research collated through the issues papers and community engagement meant that delays to the project timeline have pushed delivery of the final strategy back six months. While delays are never the preferred outcome, the extra time has allowed for greater consultation and reflection of the directions which shape and headline this strategy.



Community consultation for the Strategy February 2018





# Direction One: Protect and Enhance Agricultural Land



## Overview

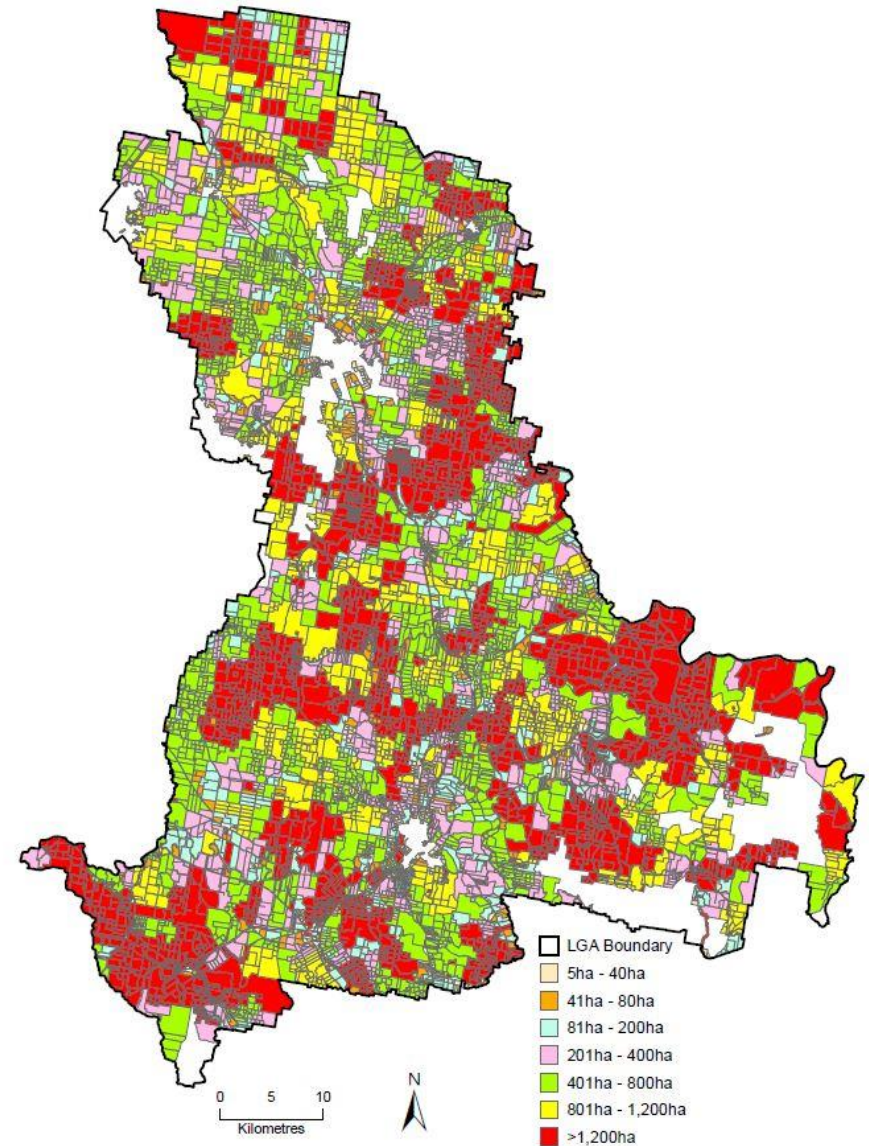
This direction focuses on protecting and enhancing the productive value of agricultural land. With such a diverse Council area, there are a range of agricultural land uses which can be undertaken in CGRC, however the increasing value of agricultural land and fragmentation of high value areas mean that the long term prosperity of broad acre industries and large framing enterprises are threatened.

Broad acre areas are not a limitless resource and while it may be desirable to split the family farm for succession purposes, this erodes the long term use of the area and encourages underutilisation of the area as well as driving up land values in the long term.

## Considerations

### Currently Zoned

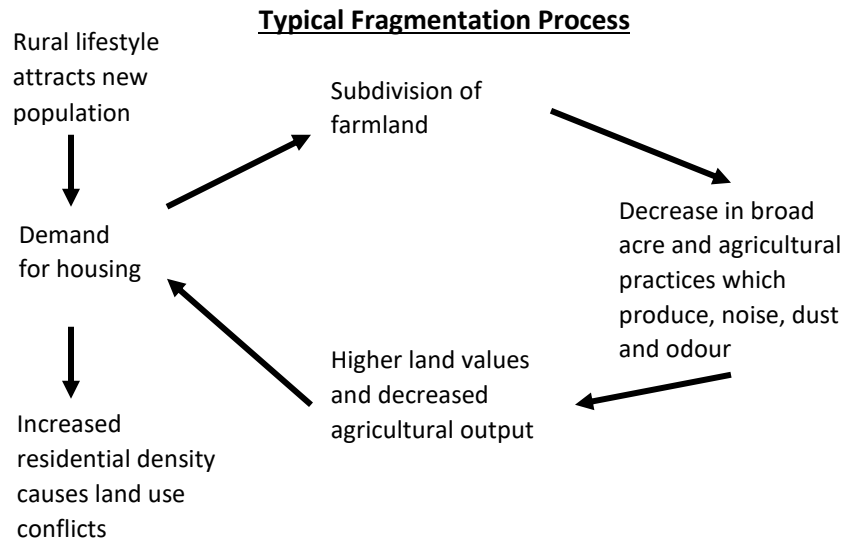
CGRC currently has an oversupply in zoned land catering to the small acreage market. Analysis of the undeveloped RU4 – Primary Production Small Lots across the LGA reveals that there is approximately 385.7 hectares which could be subdivided to yield 123 lots and associated dwellings. On average 2.5 dwellings are approved per year on these types of lots meaning that the LGA has almost 49 years supply of acreages and other small lots. Even if an average was taken from dwelling approvals on larger rural lots (considering the ability for lots regardless of size in former Gundagai Shire to apply for a dwelling) that is 9.3 dwellings approved per year, meaning that there is a 13.2 year supply of lots.



*Current, rurally zoned holding sizes*

## Fragmented rural land and the “Tree Changer” effect

Decreasing affordability of our cities and interest in rural areas has seen a marked increase in city dwellers moving to regional areas. More often than not these people are either close to or near retirement and lack knowledge and practical skills to truly manage land and/or they are professionals seeking space. This has led to a rise in demand for smaller lots with no quantifiable agricultural output.



## Succession planning

Succession planning is a complex issue. Family farms make up 60% of all farm businesses across Australia and there is an accumulative failure of rate of transition from the first generation onwards (see Farm Diversification and Succession Planning Issues Paper). Land owners typically hold onto numerous titles believing that each title adds incremental value or offers greater entitlement for dwellings and thus

ensures an informal succession plan. This is not the case, with the use of the land tied directly to the zoning and the land size, meaning that the number of titles can be often irrelevant. However, many families only become aware of this after an event such as a death has occurred which triggers a rapid transfer of assets. To clarify this and provide certainty it is essential that Part 4 of the LEP address subdivision and dwellings on rural land.

## Diversification

Evidence suggests that larger farms have greater opportunities to diversify (see Farm Diversification and Succession Planning Issues Paper) with better incentives to invest in technology and more space to include opportunities through other industries such as tourism.

An individual's education has also been proven to influence the diversification rate of a farm from a monocrop enterprise to a multi-faceted one. With changing social, economic and climatic conditions it is essential that farmers have better access to education and the internet.



# Actions

## Action 1.1. Minimum lot sizes

Minimum lot sizes, zoning and associated land uses be implemented in accordance with mapped agricultural land value (from either Council or Department of Primary Industries). This includes the introduction of other Rural and Environmental Zones aside from Primary Production to cater for lands with scenic and environmental values. Measures to provide consistent minimum lot sizes across the LGA are to be supported.

## Action 1.2. “Dwelling entitlements”

Part 4 of the proposed CGRC LEP clearly articulate permissibility and circumstances for dwelling approvals on rural land.

## Action 1.3. Dual occupancies

Dual occupancies (detached) be permissible as an alternate solution for succession planning and family farm enterprises.

## Action 1.4. Agricultural subdivision

Subdivision and boundary realignments below the minimum lot size for agricultural purposes continue.

## Action 1.5. Land use conflict and biosecurity

Setbacks for built structures and intensive agriculture development must achieve a minimum setback of 100m from a boundary under different ownership or provide mitigating solutions to reduce the impact on neighbours.

Land adjoining rural zones have setback requirements for buildings and strict controls requiring clearance areas for weeds and other pests.

## Action 1.6. Innovation and enterprise support

Encouragement of holdings to diversify income streams to better cope with changing social, economic and climatic conditions. An ability to undertake multiple land uses on the same holding be supported in the DCP and through Council Policy.



## Direction Two: Grow Agritourism



# Overview

This direction focuses on supporting and allowing flexibility for tourism and regional food experiences to be developed on rural land. Impacts of standalone enterprises and the ability for holdings to be diversified to cater to the growing agritourism market need to be supported in a manner which promotes innovation but safeguards the primacy of agricultural production in rural areas.

Agritourism is an industry Council seeks to encourage not just because of the positive economic impacts of such development, but also because it provides an alternate source of income which improves the financial resilience of holdings and the community in challenging conditions.

Agritourism is a growing industry in Australia with visitor numbers to rural areas increasing by roughly 9% per annum and generating \$9.4 billion a year (see Agricultural Tourism Issues Paper).

## Considerations

### Land uses

Defining “agritourism” is problematic for development assessment staff as it is such a broad category with various standalone land uses interpreted differently in a mixed use environment. For ease of understanding, it is clear that there are certain uses which alone constitute an “agritourism” activity, with a further subset group which, when operating in conjunction with another land use, could be considered “agritourism”.

### Agritourism

- Artisan food and drink industry
- Cellar door premises
- Farm stay accommodation
- Roadside stall

### Subset of agritourism operating in a mixed use environment

- Agriculture
- Agricultural produce industry
- Bed and breakfast
- Caravan park
- Camping ground
- Restaurant or café
- Information and education facility
- Specialised retail premises

### Ecotourism – as another visitor generating, rural land use

- Ecotourist facility
- Environment facility

### Clause 5.4 Miscellaneous permissible uses

Particularly on smaller sites within proximity of urban areas, there can be a tendency for agritourism to encompass the entire site and create land use conflict. Accordingly, it is imperative that Clause 5.4 of the LEP be current and reflective of flexibility of agritourism whilst balancing potential land use conflicts. In particular, attention and limitation on the number of bedrooms for visitor accommodation and floor space limitation for retail areas need to be created and enforced. Current controls under 5.4 differ between the Cootamundra LEP 2013 and the Gundagai LEP 2011. A midground between the two should be implemented and then reviewed in five years.

### Transport linkages

Emphasis on the vehicle accessibility of agritourist facilities needs to be considered in the assessment of any new development. In particular, assessment of roads and their ability to handle additional light traffic. Options for Council include the ability to develop a comprehensive road standard which all agritourist facilities must be accessed by.

Opportunities to develop regional tourist routes for self-travel or by coach further create a need to assess and provide adequate onsite car and coach parking. Potential cycling routes would further create a need to consider bike lockers and shower facilities. Connection to horse trails also create a need to have stabling and other grooming facilities onsite. These standards would be detailed in the DCP.

### Water, sewer and electricity

Connection to services are essential for any enterprise, however with changing technology it is possible for a building to be “off grid” and still

achieve a high level of functionality. Council can be supportive of these undertakings provided that all development standards, building code requirements and requirements of other agencies are met. Additionally, a resilience plan for water during drought events would need to be prepared as a part of any application.

### Regional food

Changing consumer demands for ethical and sustainable food as well as the rise of the global middle class is fuelling demand for premium agricultural products. Coupled with the reach of the internet, this market provides an opportunity for our LGA to utilise smaller holdings for the production of niche commodities as well as presenting value add opportunities either on farm or in town.

Farms wishing to diversify through regional or niche food cultivation and production should be encouraged in line with *Action 1.6 Innovation and enterprise support* of this strategy.



*TASTE Riverina Food Festival showcases culinary produce of the region*

# Actions

## Action 2.1. “Open” zones

Allow for all rural zones to be “open” meaning that “any development not specified in item 2 or 4” be listed under item 3 “permissible with consent” to allow for innovation and flexible land use.

## Action 2.2. Miscellaneous permissible uses

Ensure that controls under Clause 5.4 of the LEP be realistic and unencumbering on development and use of site.

## Action 2.3. Development control plan (DCP)

Create a specific subsection of the DCP under business and industrial development which deals with agritourism and artisan food businesses.

## Action 2.4. Fact sheets and start up packs

Create a series of fact sheets on agritourism and regional food development. Couple this with development packs which contain all council forms and other agency contacts for a business to get started.

## Action 2.5. Aboriginal heritage and culture

Undertake an Aboriginal heritage and cultural study to better understand the needs and opportunities of indigenous people and place as well as identifying opportunities for education and tourism.

## Action 2.6. Active transport strategy

Undertake an active transport strategy that addresses rural links, particularly for cycling and horse riding using paper road reserves and former railway corridors.

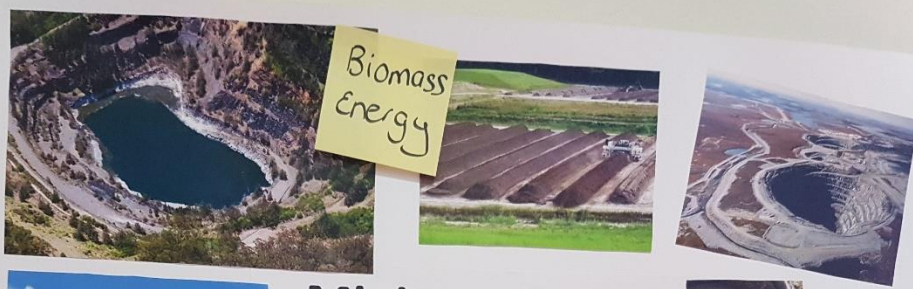
## Action 2.7. Coolac

Agritourism hotspot “Coolac” be master planned and serviced with water to allow for development and growth focused on providing produce direct to consumers and suppliers along the Hume Highway. Coolac can also be a staging point for recreational trails utilising former railway corridors.

## Action 2.8. Employment and training

Support the implementation of the South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022. Council to sponsor and partner with education providers to run short courses in agriculture and permaculture to capitalise on the “experience economy”.





Biomass  
Energy



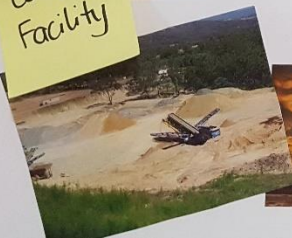
Mining, Disused  
Mines & Landfill



Sum local  
Straw + Import  
Rubbish to make  
electricity



Compost  
Facility



## Direction Three: Encourage Diversity of Rural Industries



Farm  
Diversification

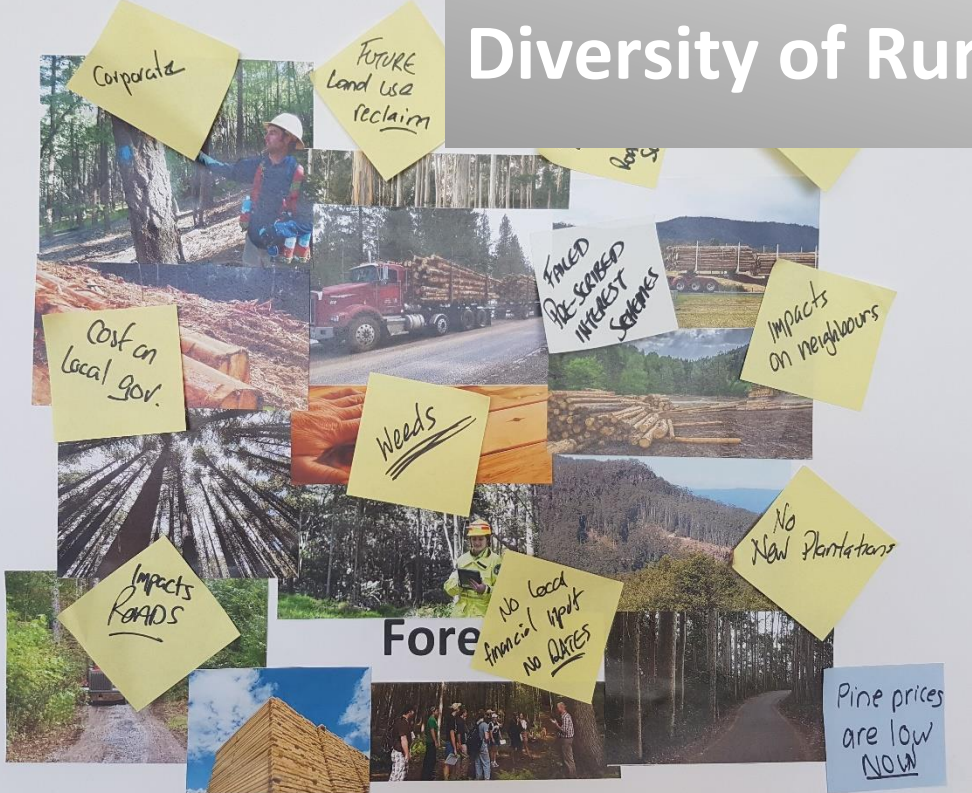
act  
n  
ads

Weeds +  
Pests

Erosion

Road  
User Pay

Heavy  
Vehicle  
S94A



Fore

Forestry

Community engagement

## Overview

A key theme of this strategy is to advertise that CGRC is the area where you can find a place to grow and raise anything – this direction speaks directly to this. This direction seeks to encourage innovation and allow choice for farmers and other land holders of rural land.

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

Consider the increased demand for native edibles and you start to view virulent pest flora like acacia baileyana a little differently. An increasingly aged population and growing middle class mean that there is increased demand for traditional and non-traditional medicines.

## Considerations

### Land uses

Building on the need to have “open” rural zones is the need to be specific when listing prohibited land uses. Although slightly unwieldy, to ensure clarity and confidence, land uses under item 4 need to be specific and not group terms i.e. “hardware and building supplies” rather than the group term of “retail premises”.

### Mixed use enterprises

Often biosecurity and farming conventions isolates produce cultivation and processing. Where it is safe and complies with state and federal guidelines, mixed use enterprises can offer security of income and

ensure that unexpected climatic conditions, economic or personal issues can be better mitigated and continuity of the stewardship of the land is maintained.

To better capture the impact of each use on another and neighbours, it is imperative that land holders obtain development consent for any applicable activity and when appropriate do a whole of farm approval to better manage impacts.

### Trial opportunities

Farmers and other businesses are sometimes afforded opportunities to undertake development of new and emerging industries due to commercial opportunities or grants. Naturally, these opportunities compress the timeframe available for project planning – which often includes the approval process. Should this situation occur, Council can facilitate a working agreement with the business operator and other agencies to undertake the approval process while the trial is being conducted. The trial would have to be agreed to by all parties and for an agreed timeframe.

Particularly for new and emerging industries, data collected during the trial would directly inform any consents or licences required, should the activity be developed beyond a trial.

### Internet

Research, reach and reporting are essential. Internet access is crucial for business owners to undertake a range of administrative and development tasks. Improving the coverage of telecommunications is a key priority for the development of rural industries. Council should

be advocating for continued improvement in internet coverage and access to high speed NBN with relevant State and Federal ministers.

## **Forestry**

Forestry as an industry is a large employer and generates revenue for the eastern areas of the LGA. However, it is a contentious issue for many neighbours of plantations. The cyclic nature of a plantation means that it is a relatively “hands off” operation when compared to other agriculture such as animal grazing.

Australia has a problem with pest flora and fauna which requires constant vigilance from land owners and users. Forestry, has at times, not been as vigilant in eradicating and managing pests and it directly impacts neighbours who either suffer a profit loss and/or are required to put in greater effort in eradicating pests on property boundaries.

Strict requirements for dog proof fencing and clearances on the forestry side of a property boundary would go some way in mitigating conflicts between land holders and minimise the spread of pest flora and fauna. Education and opportunities for landholders to invest in drones and other surveillance equipment would also mitigate the physical work required to monitor boundaries.

## **Mining**

Arguably, mining has had an extraordinary impact on the development of this LGA, in particular the gold field at Muttama which directly contributed to the founding of Cootamundra and asbestos mining around Gundagai and Coolac being a lucrative local industry for many years.

Despite this history, mining is generally restricted to quarries for gravel or sand these days. A local boom in quarrying for road base occurred with the duplication of the Hume Highway, and the ongoing demand for local road projects has continued to sustain a number of quarries.

It is likely that mining will be limited to quarries in the future with only six exploration licences for minerals active in the LGA, which are unlikely to result in large scale mining activities.

## **Landfill**

The increasing sophistication of technology and resource recovery means that the likelihood of new landfill sites are limited. Despite this, the impact of such sites due to contamination and traffic generation bear discussion in relation to this LGA being a possible site for any new facilities.

Extensive consultation and evaluation via the Mining, Disused Mines and Landfill Issues Paper has resulted in a proposed stance for CGRC being that there is general support for the improvement of existing facilities to intensify operations provided the physical footprint is not expanded and impacts such as odour, noise and traffic are not increased or are generally acceptable. No new sites or facilities are supported outside of existing general and heavy industrial areas or within a 2km radius of a residential zone or receptor.

## **Electricity generating works**

Electricity generating works, in particular solar and wind has become an emerging land use in rural Australia. Solar farms are preferably located on flat areas which are open and sunny – incidentally these are often areas of high agricultural value for cropping or grazing. Wind

farms are located on ridge lines which are typically cleared of vegetation and highly visible from great distances.

Evidence from large solar developments in surrounding areas indicate poor management of weeds which agitates neighbourhood conflicts. While some electricity generating farms would be approved as State Significant Development, those that would be approved by Councils are done so under the provisions of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007. This leaves no ability for Council to prohibit such development on rurally zoned land.

Due to the low level of supervision usually required for such facilities, pest management and impacts can be problematic. Having said this, specific controls under the Business and Industrial section of the DCP relating to solar energy systems such as grazing of the site, appropriate fencing and measures to minimise the spread of weeds and other pests will help to mitigate the impacts of such development.

## Actions

### **Action 3.1. Specific land uses prohibited**

To ensure clarity and confidence land uses under item 4 need to be specific and not group terms i.e. “hardware and building supplies” rather than the group term of “retail premises”.

### **Action 3.2. Development control plan (DCP)**

Create a specific subsection of the DCP under business and industrial development which deals with intensive agriculture and forestry to better manage land use conflicts.

### **Action 3.3. On farm trials**

Allow for trials of small scale agriculture without development consent provided environmental and amenity impacts do not give rise for

concern for Council and other agencies. The scale and timeframe must also be agreed to in writing. These uses and circumstances would need to be listed in Schedule 2 of the LEP.

### **Action 3.4. Medical crop cultivation and processing industry**

Encourage the development, where appropriate, of medical crop cultivation and allow for flexibility in land use to process on farm as an ancillary activity or as a standalone industrial facility in town.

### **Action 3.5. Native plants**

Encourage exploration of endemic flora and fauna as a source of native food, wood and fibre. Look at opportunities for native plants to serve as drought fodder and wind brakes to increase the tree canopy of the LGA, improve water retention and resilience to drought.

### **Action 3.6. Forestry**

Develop the RU3 – Forestry zone to include more objectives and detailed land uses to allow for reuse of disposed sites and to ensure that development consent is sought when required.

### **Action 3.7. Landfill**

“Waste or resource management facility” including:

- (a) a resource recovery facility,
- (b) a waste disposal facility,
- (c) a waste or resource transfer station,
- (d) a building or place that is a combination of any of the things referred to in paragraphs (a)–(c).

Be restricted to general and heavy industrial sites and rural zones with appropriate buffer distances and controls.

### **Action 3.8. Electricity generating works**

Controls specific to electricity generating works (100kW or greater) be included in the DCP including site maintenance through grazing (this includes providing infrastructure for the sustainment of onsite grazing), fencing and clearance areas along boundaries.



Direction Four: Promote and encourage value add industries to take advantage of transport links and local resources

# Overview

This direction focuses on leveraging off of existing transport infrastructure as an impetus for developing a value add industry for agriculture in our towns and villages as well as enhancing opportunities for existing value add industries.

By minimising the length of time and distance between primary producer, manufacturer and market there is the added benefit of decreasing the carbon footprint of the agricultural process and retaining as many flow on benefits to the local area as possible.

## Considerations

### Brand “Riverina”

The intrinsic value of brand “Riverina” as an existing brand of agricultural reputation to encourage value add industry and primary production in our LGA. In the same way that “Margaret River” or “Sunraysia” evokes a certain image of region and quality, so too does “Riverina”. Being the northern gateway to the Riverina, this LGA has an ability to specialise in produce which is not grown elsewhere in the region and/or simply act as a staging point for Riverina products to reach market.



### Riverina-Murray Region

A key focus of the Regional Plan is the importance of infrastructure, in particular freight and logistics infrastructure to get produce to markets.

This LGA is afforded many touch points into the freight network in four key areas:

#### Coolac

Coolac is a relatively flat village area which fronts the Hume Highway. Coolac Road (former Hume Highway) and the Muttama Road overpass are strategic assets which would be desirable to developers for industrial land use should connection to potable water be secured.

#### Cootamundra

Cootamundra’s main link into the freight network is via road which services local value add industries and provides connections to intermodal terminals such as Bomen or Harefield.

There is a unique opportunity for Cootamundra to develop as a hump rail yard or freight rail yard due to its proximity to the Inland Rail and position on the Sydney-Melbourne line. This proposal has limited impact on the agricultural production of the LGA, however it does mean that Cootamundra is limited to freight movement via road in the absence of a rail intermodal facility or the airport being developed as a small scale freight facility.

## **Gundagai**

Gundagai links into the road freight network via the Hume Highway with several main regional and state roads which connect onto the highway including Gocup Road and Nangus Road. These roads connect other major regional towns such as Junee and Tumut to the Hume Highway but also service a number of agricultural enterprises between these. As such, Gundagai is a key touch point for agricultural freight. Development within Gundagai needs to be conducted in such a manner so as to not interfere with the purpose and use of freight network, meaning that the road hierarchy for Gundagai Town needs to afford these roads right of way.

With limited flat land appropriate for industrial development, it is assumed that Gundagai is limited to the Gundagai Meat Works as a bulk agriculture value add industry. Having said this, there is significant potential for Gundagai to develop as a touch point for local produce through the visitor information centre and retail along Sheridan Street. Establishment of a road hierarchy in town is essential to allow for the separation between freight heavy vehicles and commuter light vehicles. It is suggested that freight movements be concentrated in South Gundagai, with light vehicle ingress and movement around Gundagai Town focused through the northern and middle highway entry points.

## **Stockinbingal**

Stockinbingal is in the fortunate position of being the cross section of the Inland Rail, Lake Cargelligo railway line, Burley Griffin Way and Stockinbingal Road. The development of the Inland Rail has the potential to enhance the grain receivable depots at Stockinbingal – one of the few guaranteed to operate year on year as well as develop

as a siding for produce from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, in particular Griffith through the Burley Griffin Way connection.

## **Actions**

### **Action 4.1. Establish urban containment lines for towns**

As a part of the CGRC LEP drafting process, Council is to establish and adopt urban containment lines for Cootamundra and Gundagai. This is to include an articulation area of large residential lots as well as acreages. As part of this measure Council will investigate a value capture policy.

### **Action 4.2. Intermodal/siding at Stockinbingal**

Work with ARTC and other relevant authorities to service a potential industrial site at Stockinbingal which is to be zoned as general industrial in the CGRC LEP.

### **Action 4.3. Improve signage off main roads and rural addressing**

Improve the signage for local roads and encourage renewal of property addressing where it is unclear. Allocate all rural holdings a physical address based on entry point.

### **Action 4.4. Direct access to regional roads be limited**

Where access can be achieved via a local road, consent for a new or additional entry onto to a regional, state or federal road is not to be granted.

### **Action 3.5. Agribusiness opportunities in industrial areas**

Ensure that all industrial zones are open and allow for agribusiness to develop.



# Direction Five: Increase Resource Efficiency



## Overview

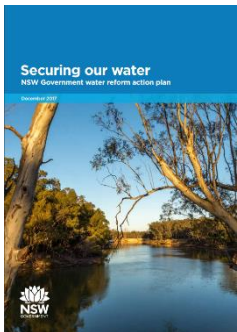
Environmental pressures of a changing climate and the spread of pest flora and fauna present a number of challenges for land owners with increased and prolonged drought. Despite the challenges, adversity can present opportunities for new business and innovation for existing business to solve problems or cater to a new market.

Council seeks to implement a regulatory framework which complies with State and other agency requirements but still allows for flexibility to trial and implement new business methods and opportunities.

## Considerations

### Water

Access to water is essential for agricultural production, however with less frequent rainfalls and decreasing reach of waterways, traditional farming and crops may no longer be viable. Earthworks such as terraforming and increased tree plantings can help retain water on farm, however this may decrease seepage and recharge of aquifers and creeks which in turn will lead to a net loss of water in our waterways. Conversely flood events, including inundation events are increasing in frequency and can quickly wipe out stock and crops.



Water management is a complex issue which is impacted by a number of internal and external factors. Council can assist the management of

water by practicing good water management and adhering to the NSW Government's Water Reform Action Plan.

### Riparian corridors

Riparian areas are land corridors alongside creeks, streams, gullies, rivers and wetlands. Revegetation along riparian corridors helps to improve water quality, reduce evaporation and mitigate erosion.

Riparian corridors are particularly vulnerable on cleared, grazed land with degradation from uncontrolled stock access and loss of bank stability. Fencing and vegetating riparian corridors improves the water quality and biodiversity of catchments, but also provides a number of on-farm benefits such as improving water supply, shading and wind breaks.

### Weeds

Often a by-product of neglect, weeds are becoming an ever increasing problem with changing climate facilitating an environment for new, invasive weeds and out of season weed growth. While land owners have obligations under the Biosecurity Act 2015, there are also obligations relating to the impact of weeds on conservation areas and other native pastures under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

Small acreages and hobby farms pose a particular threat in this area (although forestry and other industries often harbour weeds and pests). These smaller properties are sometimes poorly managed and weeds can quickly spread onto neighbouring productive farms.

Council has a Bio Security Officer who looks at weed and pest control by enforcing State and Local legislation. Through the DCP and other

policy documents, Council could mitigate the spread of weeds by mandating better fencing and clearance areas during the development stage, and producing fact sheets and other guidance material on who and when to clear weeds and options such as using certain animals to target problem areas.



*Field invaded by blackberry and rubus leucostachys*

### **Feral animals**

Feral animals cause millions of dollars' worth of damage to the agricultural economy through lost stock and productivity. While many primary producers see the value in better fencing to deter foxes, dogs, cats and so on, the cost of materials and labour can make this a cost prohibitive exercise, especially when other animals such as llamas, donkeys, maremma dogs and so on can cost less than fencing and deter some feral animals.

Land owners have responsibilities to not only maintain their site so as to not provide a harbour for feral animals but to also minimise the spread of feral animals where possible.

### **Regenerative farming**

Regenerative farming uses practices and methods to increase biodiversity, improve soil and nurture endemic ecosystems. The most common management system is “no till” or “reduced till” pastures.

The primary objective of regenerative farming is to increase the top soil to such an extent that less external compost is required, the nutrient value of the soil is improved and the property is generally more resistant to extreme weather events. The economic benefit being reduced labour and fertiliser input overtime with greater yields.

There are a number of different methods and practices which follow the principles of regenerative farming, however the method chosen depends on the needs of the land owner, requirements of the land, land capability and finances. The rise in popularity for regenerative farming has grown in line with other whole of system thinking such as permaculture and rewilding through education as well as consideration of climatic and population concerns.

### **Trees**

Trees serve not only to carbon capture as an above ground biomass, but can provide shelter for animals, habitat for birds, spiders and insects which eat crop pests, slow hot winds, decrease soil loss as a wind break and provide fodder during drought. Flowering trees also help support bee communities, which in turn improves crop yields.

Council is committed to increasing the tree canopy across the LGA and will set a tree canopy target through a tree canopy plan. Rural subdivision could contribute by conditioning tree plantings along new property boundaries.

## **Council process**

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 council, 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.

## **Actions**

### **Action 5.1. Transparent decision making**

Information on legislation and legislative process is readily and easily available to the general public. Plain English fact sheets and opportunities to meet with Council staff are available.

### **Action 5.2. Regularly reviewed legislation and policy**

The LEP and DCP is reviewed every five years as a minimum. Policies and fact sheets are reviewed every two years as a minimum.

### **Action 5.3. Education and compliance**

Education of the community regarding Council's responsibilities and the responsibilities of land owners is targeted through social media, print, radio and Council's website.

### **Action 5.4. Unified approach**

Council, Department of Primary Industries, Office of Environment and Heritage (Environment) and Local Land Services create a working group which discusses matters relevant to the rural environment of CGRC and proposes actions for each organisation to implement or investigate.

### **Action 5.5. Regenerative farming encouraged**

Regenerative farming encouraged through community education online and in newsletters as well as minimisation of red tape for major regeneration works with delays to integrated development along waterways minimised via representation through the working group proposed in Action 5.4.

### **Action 5.6. Improve water quality**

Improve the quality of stormwater by reducing reliance on chemicals, reduce nutrient run off, erosion and loss of top soil through increased tree canopy across the LGA through a tree canopy plan.

### **Action 5.7. Tree canopy**

Set a realistic target for total tree canopy for the LGA and set about implementing this in the next 30 years with an adopted tree canopy plan.

# Implementation



Implementation of the Rural Lands Strategy is organised in accordance with the identified actions of the Strategy.

<b>Protect and Enhance Agricultural Land</b>				
	<i>Action</i>	<i>Need</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
1.1.	Minimum lot sizes	Achieve consistency between the LEPs of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires as well as allowing for development to occur on land which is already fragmented and in individual ownership.	Short term	Minimum lot sizes, zoning and associated land uses be implemented in accordance with mapped agricultural land value (from either Council or Department of Primary Industries). This includes the introduction of other Rural and Environmental Zones aside from Primary Production to cater for lands with scenic and environmental values.
1.2.	“Dwelling entitlements”	Clarification for land holders and consistency between the LEPs of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires.	Short term	Part 4 of the proposed CGRC LEP clearly articulate permissibility and circumstances for dwelling approvals on rural land.
1.3.	Dual occupancies	Alternate solution for farm succession planning rather than fragmenting existing holdings.	Ongoing	Dual occupancies (detached) be permissible as an alternate solution for succession planning and family farm enterprises.
1.4.	Agricultural subdivision	To allow for flexibility for land owners to expand and contract holdings when required.	Ongoing	Subdivision and boundary realignments below the minimum lot sizes for agricultural purposes continue.
1.5.	Land use conflict and biosecurity	Reduce land use conflict and promote rural amenity.	Ongoing	<p>Setbacks for built structures and intensive agriculture development must achieve a minimum setback of 100m from a boundary under different ownership or provide mitigating solutions to reduce the impact on neighbours.</p> <p>Land adjoining rural zones have setback requirements for buildings and strict controls</p>

				requiring clearance areas for weeds and other pests.
1.6.	Innovation and enterprise support	Ensure that our agricultural holdings and enterprises are as resilient as possible.	Ongoing	Encouragement of holdings to diversify income streams to better cope with changing social, economic and climatic conditions including an ability to undertake multiple land uses on the same holding be supported in the DCP and through Council policy.

<b>Grow Agritourism</b>				
	<i>Action</i>	<i>Need</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
2.1.	“Open” zones	Achieve consistency between the LEPs of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires as well as allowing for development to occur on land as appropriate.	Short term	Allow for all rural zones to be “open” meaning that “any development not specified in item 2 or 4” be listed under item 3 “permissible with consent” to allow for innovation and flexible land use.
2.2.	Miscellaneous permissible uses	Achieve consistency between the LEPs of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires as well as allowing for development to occur on land as appropriate.	Short term	Ensure that controls under Clause 5.4 of the LEP be realistic and unencumbering on development and use of site.
2.3.	Development control plan (DCP)	Ensure that development assessment standards are consistent across the LGA.	Short term	Create a specific subsection of the DCP under business and industrial development which deals with agritourism and artisan food businesses.
2.4.	Fact sheets and start up packs	Clarify the development process and provide guidance.	Ongoing	Create a series of fact sheets on agritourism and regional food development. Couple this with development packs which contain all council

				forms and other agency contacts for a business to get started.
2.5.	Aboriginal heritage and culture	Better understanding of the first people and how they interacted with the land as well as preserving artefacts and storylines through education and information.	Medium term	Undertake an Aboriginal heritage and cultural study to better understand the needs and opportunities of indigenous people and place as well as identifying opportunities for education and tourism.
2.6.	Active transport strategy	Achieve better connections with towns and villages as well as fostering a recreational tourism industry.	Medium term	Undertake an active transport strategy that addresses rural links, particularly for cycling and horse riding using paper road reserves and former railway corridors.
2.7.	Coolac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow and promote Coolac as a major highway service hub.</li> <li>• Ensure that Council and developers are investing in the most cost efficient and value for money way.</li> </ul>	Medium – long term	Agritourism hotspot “Coolac” be master planned and serviced with water to allow for development and growth focused on providing produce direct to consumers and suppliers along the Hume Highway. Coolac can also be a staging point for recreational trails utilising former railway corridors.
2.8.	Employment and training	Consistency between Council and State plans.	Ongoing	Support the implementation of the South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022. Council to sponsor and partner with education providers to run short courses in agriculture and permaculture to capitalise on the “experience economy”.

Encourage Diversity of Rural Industries				
	Action	Need	Timeframe	Outcome
3.1.	Specific land uses prohibited	Achieve consistency between the LEPs of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires as well as allowing for development to occur on land as appropriate.	Short term	To ensure clarity and confidence land uses under item 4 need to be specific and not group terms i.e. “hardware and building supplies” rather than the group term of “retail premises”.
3.2.	Development control plan (DCP)	Ensure that development assessment standards are consistent across the LGA.	Short term	Create a specific subsection of the DCP under business and industrial development which deals with intensive agriculture and forestry to better manage land use conflicts.
3.3.	On farm trials	To allow for innovation and change.	Short term	Allow for trials of small scale agriculture without development consent provided it is not of concern to Council and other agencies. The scale and timeframe must also be agreed to in writing. Some uses and circumstance should be listed in Schedule 2 of the LEP.
3.4.	Medical crop cultivation and processing industry	To allow for flexibility for land owners to innovate when presented with opportunities.	Ongoing	Encourage the development, where appropriate, of medical crop cultivation and allow for flexibility in land use to process on farm as an ancillary activity or as a standalone industrial facility in town.
3.5.	Native plants	To allow for flexibility for land owners to innovate when presented with opportunities.	Ongoing	Encourage exploration of endemic flora and fauna as a source of native food, wood and fibre. Look at opportunities for native plants to serve as drought fodder and wind brakes to increase the tree canopy of the LGA, improve water retention and resilience to drought.
3.6.	Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce land use conflict.</li> <li>• Provide option for the disposal of forestry land.</li> </ul>	Short term	Develop the RU3 – Forestry zone to include more objectives and detailed land uses to allow for reuse of disposed sites and to ensure that development consent is sought when required.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow flexibility and use for current land holders.</li> </ul>		
3.7.	Landfill	Achieve consistency between the LEPs of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires as well as allowing for development to occur on land as appropriate.	Short term	<p>“Waste or resource management facility” including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) a resource recovery facility,</li> <li>(b) a waste disposal facility,</li> <li>(c) a waste or resource transfer station,</li> <li>(d) a building or place that is a combination of any of the things referred to in paragraphs (a)–(c).</li> </ul> <p>Be prohibited in all rural zones and restricted to general and heavy industrial sites.</p>
3.8.	Solar farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce land use conflicts.</li> <li>• Ensure that development assessment standards are consistent across the LGA.</li> </ul>	Short term	Controls specific to energy generating works (10kW or greater) be included in the DCP including site maintenance through grazing (this includes providing infrastructure for the sustainment of onsite grazing), dog proof fencing and clearance areas along boundaries.

<b>Promote and Encourage Value Add Industries to Take Advantage of Transport Links and Local Resources</b>				
	<i>Action</i>	<i>Need</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
4.1.	Establish urban containment lines for towns	Reduce urban sprawl and protect the primacy of agricultural land.	Short term	As a part of the CGRC LEP drafting process, Council is to establish and adopt urban containment lines for Cootamundra and Gundagai. This is to include an articulation area of large residential lots as well as acreages.
4.2.	Intermodal/siding at Stockinbingal	Take advantage of major infrastructure spending and implementation.	Short term	Work with ARTC and other relevant authorities to service a potential industrial site at Stockinbingal which is to be zoned as general industrial in the CGRC LEP.

4.3.	Improve signage off main roads and rural addressing	Improve accessibility.	Ongoing	Improve the signage for local roads and encourage renewal of property addressing where it is unclear. Allocate all rural holdings a physical street address based on main entry point.
4.4.	Direct access to regional roads be limited	Limit conflicts along major corridors and ensure that maximum speeds are achieved.	Ongoing	Where access can be achieved via a local road, consent for a new or additional entry onto to a regional, state or federal road is not to be granted.
4.5.	Agribusiness opportunities in industrial areas	Achieve consistency between the LEPs of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires as well as allowing for development to occur on land as appropriate.	Short term	Ensure that all industrial zones are open and allow for agribusiness to develop.

Increase Resource Efficiency				
	Action	Need	Timeframe	Outcome
5.1.	Transparent decision making	Re-establish community trust in government organisations.	Ongoing	Information on legislation and legislative process is readily and easily available to the general public. Plain English fact sheets and opportunities to meet with Council staff are available.
5.2.	Regularly review legislation and policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that there is consistency between Council and State plans and policies.</li> <li>• Allow for innovation and emerging trends to develop in the area.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	The LEP and DCP is reviewed every five years as a minimum. Policies and fact sheets are reviewed every two years as a minimum.

5.3.	Education and compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve education of the community as to Council's role.</li> <li>• Establish the benchmark for Council compliance.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Education of the community regarding Council's responsibilities and the responsibilities of land owners is targeted through social media, print, radio and Council's website.
5.4.	Unified approach	Ensure that all government agencies are being consistent when dealing with rural issues.	Ongoing	Council, Department of Primary Industries, Office of Environment and Heritage (Environment) and Local Land Services create a working group which discusses matters relevant to the rural environment of CGRC and proposes actions for each organisation to implement or investigate.
5.5.	Regenerative farming encouraged	Improve resilience and yield of agricultural land.	Ongoing	Regenerative farming encouraged through community education online and in newsletters as well as minimisation of red tape for major regeneration works with delays to integrated development along waterways minimised via representation through the working group proposed in Action 5.4.
5.6.	Improve water quality	Ensure that water is managed appropriately.	Ongoing	Improve the quality of stormwater by reducing reliance on chemicals, reduce nutrient run off, erosion and loss of top soil through increased tree canopy across the LGA through a tree canopy plan.
5.7.	Tree canopy	To address climate risk and improve resilience of agricultural land.	Long term	Set a realistic target for total tree canopy for the LGA and set about implementing this in the next 30 years with a tree canopy plan.

