### Temora and Bland Shire Councils

## Temora and Bland Shires Drought Resilience Plan

Summary Booklet

Canola Fields (supplied by WSF





### Acknowledgement of Country

We pay respect to the Wiradjuri people as the Traditional Custodians and First Peoples of the Bland and Temora Shire lands, and we acknowledge their continued connection to their country and culture.



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# 01 **Our Region**



#### **Bland Shire**

**Traditional Owners:** 

Wiradjuri

#### **Townships:**

Barmedman, Mirrool, Naradhan, Tallimba, Ungarie, Weethalle, West Wyalong, Wyalong

Area:

8,560 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 

5,547 people (2,790 male, 2,758 female)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2021. 2021 Census All persons QuickStats – Bland. Accessed 5 Sept 2023. <a href="https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA10800">https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA10800</a> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2021. 2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Temora. Accessed 5 Sept 2023. <a href="https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL13799">https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL13799</a>

### **Temora Shire**

#### **Traditional Owners:**

Wiradjuri

**Townships:** Temora, Ariah Park, Springdale



# 02 **The Impacts of Drought**

An understanding of the challenges faced by future drought is key to developing a coordinated strategy for drought resilience. To understand what may happen in the future, a drought resilience diagnostic assessment was undertaken to understand how our region has been impacted by drought and the potential impacts going forward.

To understand these impacts, we must first recognise the great resilience our region has shown in responding and recovering to droughts in the past. We must use these learnings to navigate the challenges we face today and in the future, and move to a more prevention and preparedness approach to droughts To do this, our Regional Drought Resilience (RDR) Plan has been developed in consultation with local leaders, businesses, and community members. This document aims to provide a high-level summary of our RDR Plan's context, how drought can systemically impact our region's society, economy, and environment, an overview of our drought resilience journey, which leads to the priority actions identified to help our region achieve strategic resilience outcomes.



Our Society

The makeup of our region's people is a critical factor in how we respond to climatic hazards such as drought. Temora LGA and Bland LGA both sit on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people. The proportion of people that reside in Temora and Bland over the age of 65 years old is substantially higher than the NSW State average, a defining factor in our community's physical and mental resilience. Temora, in particular, has a relatively low number of residents currently active in the workforce, and a high number of people holding pension concession cards. This correlates with a median household income of only \$1,203, which is 30% lower than the NSW State average. Population growth projections indicate that the population of Temora is likely to increase slightly by 2041 (0.46% each year) and the population of Bland will decrease (5,050 people by 2031).

Attracting a diversity of people to our region in the face of population fluctuations including age, family make-up, household income, culture, and language will ultimately encourage a diversity in the systems and services available to our mostly aging population, strengthening our social resilience in the face of drought.

#### **Our Economy**

Water is the foundation of our region's economy. Thus, when water is scarce, our local community becomes vulnerable to financial decline. Our region is strongly reliant on agriculture and related manufacturing for economic development. Sheep, beef cattle, grain farming, meat and meat manufacturing, metal ore mining, and tourism are key industries in the region. Health care and social assistance are the second largest employing sector, largely due to the ageing population of both LGAs. Although we have lower than average unemployment rates (~2.9% compared to the NSW average, 4.9%), ageing populations will likely contribute to employment and skills shortages in the future.

These sectors are both an asset and a vulnerability during periods of drought. Diversity in income and employment opportunities will offer some buffer for our region against industry and economic fluctuations associated with water shortages.

Image: Ariah Park silos, Temora Shire

#### **Our Environment**

The state of our environment is inextricably linked to our regions resilience and ability to bounce back from climate hazards like drought. Although there are no major rivers or tributaries running through Temora and Bland, our region is home to nationally significant wetlands like Lake Coal/Wilbertroy and Yarran Swamp. These wetlands offer important homes to many fish communities and recreational benefits such as bird watching and fishing. Our region is also home to several threatened ecological communities including Grey Box Grassy Woodlands, Derived Native Grasslands of South-eastern Australia, the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Growling Grass Frog, and Malleefowl.

We understand that retaining biodiversity within our landscapes is critical to ensuring their long-term heath, and subsequently, the health and wellbeing of our community. Our landscapes offer important places for our community to relax and recharge.

#### **Our Governance**

National, State, Regional, and Local institutional and regulatory frameworks governing our region have an important role in addressing drought resilience. Whilst a vast number of responses exist at each level of government, existing legislative or policy documents largely focus on economic support for primary producers and farming businesses. Although economic prosperity is tied to our community's perceived value, our true identity runs much deeper.

Governance and legislative frameworks have typically lacked a community driven approach to drought management and resilience, overlooking the unique drought related challenges we face and the unique opportunities available to make us stronger in the face of drought. This is particularly true where drought impacts span across different industries, systems, and services. A key aspect of this Regional Drought Resilience Plan is that it is community lead and driven, meaning that it will cater to our unique drought resilience needs across aspects of society, economy, and environment.

### The Process

Figure 1: Temora and Bland Shires RDR Plan Process in detail



6



Action rationale.

Implementation steps.

High-level cost estimates.

Action lead and stakeholders.

Action KPIs and evaluation.

Supporting actions and next steps.

Synthesis

Vision, Goals, and Outcomes.

Actions under Economic. Social and Environmental Pillars.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

## 03 **Our Drought Resilience** Journey

The Program Logic in Figure 3.1 describes our drought resilience journey. This starts from a shared vision and strategic objectives and goals to arriving at specific actions and the desired short-term and long-term outcomes.

#### Figure 3.1: RDR Plan Program Logic



In Temora and Bland, we envision a vibrant community, fortified by resilience, compassion, and unity. Our journey towards drought resilience is a product of our strong community spirit. By embodying our unwavering investment and commitment to each other, we will leverage existing social connections and strengths to adapt to future changes. We will be a region that fosters data -driven economic diversity, becoming a thriving destination of choice for new skilled res.idents. By embedding physical and mental resi lience across generations now and in the future, we will cultivate a sense of comradery to sustain us through each new challenge we face. By planning for the dry times ahead, we will remain a viable local economy. By embrilding these values, we strive to economically, socially and environmentally prosper amidst adversity and droughts. Together, we will forge a more resilient future.

To bridge our vision with actionable steps, three strategic areas across the **economic**, **environmental**, and **social spheres of influence** were prioritised:

	Economic	Environmental	Social
Gtrategic Priorities	Generating economic diversification and strengthening existing businesses andindustry to bolster economic stability in times of drought.	Improving awareness of the processes that underpin our unique landscapes and implementing initiatives to ensure they remain healthy and resilient.	Create equitable and accessible re sources that leverage our strong community spirit, so we are mentally and socially resil ient through times of hardship.

In order to achieve strategic priorities, specific goals were co-identified with regional community:



#### Priority actions were co-designed with key stakeholder and co



Short

Term

Outcomes

(≤ 4 years)

- Enable economic growth and diversification by br vacant houses onto the rental market.
- Enable the provision of targeted drought relief thr • spend data analysis and associated communication
- Strengthen the capacity of community groups to c social connection activities.

progress towards our vision, strategic priorities, and goals. It is economic, environmental, and social res

Economic Resilience

- Increased money flowing through the local economy from the rental income and from new residents who live local and buy local.
- Increased capacity for existing and new businesses & major infrastructure projects to attract skilled workers, strengthening and diversifying the economy.
- Thriving businesses who are well supported will have improved capacity to adapt to economic changes brought about by drought cond itions, floods, or other events. This paves the way for diversification of the economy through the attraction of nonagriculture-based businesses.
- Business owners actively pursue opponunities to increase financial security of their business pre-, during, and post-drought.

Attaining our **long-term outcomes** hinges on the successful execution of each action, accumulating our short-term outcome success, and thereby achieving our strategic priorities and goals:

- Main perf publi reside whic physi • Impro
- redu potal supp stora
- Maint of towns and villages, particularly during drought, Is a key element in sustaining tourism spend within the region.

mmunity to ensure the re	gion achieve above identified goals:		
events of the province of the	<ul> <li>Improve community-wide well-being through the resilience project.</li> <li>Enabling economic growth and diversification through scoping the provision of human resource management support to local bus inesses.</li> <li>Maintaining open green space amenity through improved water efficiency.</li> </ul>		
	ort-term outcomes that demonstrate actions will produce the following ur community:		
Environmental Resilience	တို့ကို Social Resilience		
taining the amenity and prmance of recreational and ic open space will enable ents to undertake activities h are beneficial for their ical and mental wellbeing. oving water efficiency will ce the reliance on non- ble and potable water lies from the regions' water ge dams and aquifers. taining the visual appearance	<ul> <li>More people and families living in the area add ing numbers to local schools, sporting teams and clubs.</li> <li>Greater capacity to attract staff for community support roles such as aged care, healthcare, and childcare.</li> <li>Maximal use of current housing stock and improved visual amenity with once vacant homes now being actively cared for.</li> <li>Building individual resilience has</li> </ul>		

- improved the resilience of families, school communities and the wider community.
- Community groups have achieved their potential to support and deliver social connection activities:, thus reducing social isolation and opportunities for people to improve their physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

- Measures are implemented to limit impacts of drought and better respond to drought.
- Stakeho lders and communities actively share knowledge
- and take actions contributing towards drought resilience. Diversify our local economy.

To ensure our journey towards long-term outcomes remains on track, adaptable, and achievable, we will employ robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning mechanisms. This will provide valuable insights

## 04 **Our Actions**



Economic

#### Enable Economic Growth and Diversification by Bringing Vacant Houses onto the Rental Market



To mitigate the economic impact of drought and foster a diverse local economy, this action focuses on addressing housing shortages to attract and retain skilled staff. Greater housing availability would reduce upward pressures on housing costs and associated cost-of-living pressures felt by existing residents, improving overall economic resilience.

#### **Enable the Provision of Targeted Drought Relief Through Spend** Data Analysis and Associated Communications

To enhance drought resilience and economic planning across the region, this action proposes acquiring a spend-data subscription service with associated analysis providing real-time aggregated data at several levels. This aims to answer crucial questions about our local economic health during times of drought, facilitating support efforts and investment advocacy.

#### Enabling Economic Growth and Diversification Through Scoping the Provision of Human Resource Management Support to Local Businesses

To address ill drought preparedness, particularly among small retailers, this action proposes a scoping analysis to explore models for securing human resource support. Assessing various options (such as establishing a cooperative) will build workforce attraction, retention, and overall business resilience in the face of drought conditions.



Image: Long road, Bland Shire



#### **Strengthen the Capacity of Community Groups to Deliver Social Connection Activities**

To strengthen social connections and community resilience during drought, this action proposes the introduction of a volunteer coordinator position. This position addresses challenges faced by community groups (such as limited promotion), creates a database of community groups, activities, relevant contacts, and streamlines resource sharing, enhancing volunteer skillsets across councils.

### Improve Community-Wide Well-Being Through the 'Resilience Project'

To address mental health challenges exacerbated by drought, this action advocates for the expansion of 'the Resilience Project'. This evidence-based program fosters emotional and social wellbeing among school-aged children – the future generations, creating a shared language of gratitude and mindfulness, better equipping community to face adversity such as drought challenges.



### Maintaining Open Green Space Amenity Through Improved Water Efficiency

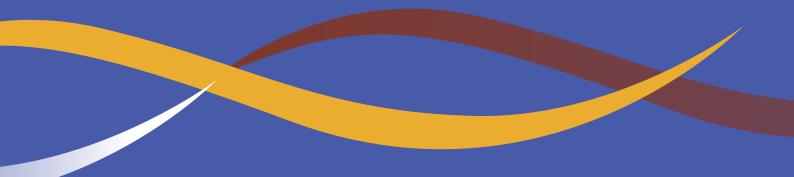
This action emphasises the importance of optimising water efficiency strategies, particularly during droughts, to maintain quality public open space amenity in our region. By upgrading irrigation equipment and watering regimes, the project aims to enhance overall efficiency, preserve aesthetic value, and set a sustainable example for neighbouring communities.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal framework and blueprint to achieve a resilient and sustainability future for all, have been widely adopted within the global community to guide the sustainable development process across all pillars environment, social, and economic. SDGs have been utilised throughout this RDR Plan to demonstrate the linkages between the region challenges, opportunities, actions, and the resilience and sustainable future pathways. Read more: https://sdgs.un.org/goals"











Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



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