

Draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041

This document answers frequently asked questions about the strategic blueprint for the Riverina Murray region

What is a regional plan?

In 2017, the Department of Planning and Environment finalised regional plans. These guide planning for the existing and future community across the 9 regions of NSW.

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

Structured around objectives, strategies and actions, the regional plans set out land-use responses that will help to meet NSW Government objectives, while also supporting land-use planning undertaken by councils and development proponents in the region.

The existing regional plan includes a commitment for its regular review. The review allows the department, local government and the community to consider the changes in the last 5 years that affect the region, the challenges and opportunities ahead, and how to update the plan in response.

What is the draft *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041*?

The current Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 applies to the 20 local government areas of Albury, Berrigan, Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra–Gundagai, Edward River, Federation, Greater Hume, Griffith, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Snowy Valleys, Temora and Wagga Wagga. It is a 20-year land-use plan that focuses on and informs all areas of local strategic planning, from the development of local plans and strategies to the assessment of planning proposals.

The draft *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041* builds on the previous plan, which was finalised in 2017. Since then, the NSW Government has worked closely with councils and government agencies to deliver on the plan's key priority actions. The draft *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041* updates the strategic land-use framework for the region to ensure its ongoing prosperity.

How has the current *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036* been put into action?

State and local governments have delivered a range of projects connected to regional plan actions including regional urban design guidelines, health precinct planning, regional freight network and work to support local housing strategies and agribusiness.

The department has also worked closely with all 20 councils in the region to ensure their local strategic planning statements carry out the current regional plan in their local government areas.

A Delivery, Monitoring and Coordination Committee was established to oversee the delivery of the plan and the start of the review. The committee included representatives from state government agencies and local governments.

How was the plan reviewed?

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

- **an audit of actions delivered** to determine which elements have been effective and which ones remain relevant for the revised plan
- **a review of the 20 Riverina Murray councils' local strategic planning statements** so the revised plan can build on these and provide guidance for their future review
- **commissioning research to identify the key drivers of growth and change in the region** and options for responding to the demand for worker accommodation in the region
- **considering key areas of change that will affect the region in the future** such as:
 - the changing regional economy and catalyst projects such as the Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct and Inland Rail, as well as key interstate investments which are likely to affect the region
 - climate change evidence and policy, including the NSW Government's commitment to achieve a carbon neutral economy by 2050
 - challenges such as the ongoing recovery from drought, bushfire and floods, and the global pandemic
- **a review of other new and proposed policy and legislation** prepared since the existing regional plan was finalised, such as the *20 Year Economic Vision* and subsequent Refresh, draft regional water strategies and NSW Housing Strategy 2041
- **consultation with state agencies and councils** on the current regional plan and the development of the draft *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041*.

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

What are the key themes of the draft plan?

The draft plan aims to protect and enhance the region's assets and plan for a sustainable future.

It acknowledges the significant changes that have happened over the past 5 years. The draft plan capitalises on several major infrastructure investments that are already underway to help transform and enhance the region's economic and social wellbeing and drive job creation. These include the Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct, Albury Regional Job Precinct, Inland Rail, South-West Renewable Energy Zone and multiple Murray River bridge projects.

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

- Part 1 – Environment
 - Objective 1: Protect, connect and enhance biodiversity throughout the region
 - Objective 2: Manage development impacts within riverine environments

- Objective 3: Increase natural hazard resilience
- Part 2 – Communities and places
 - Objective 4: Supporting Aboriginal aspirations through land-use planning
 - Objective 5: Ensure housing supply, diversity, affordability and resilience
 - Objective 6: Support housing in regional cities and their sub-regions
 - Objective 7: Provide for appropriate rural residential development
 - Objective 8: Provide for short-term accommodation
 - Objective 9: Plan for resilient places that respect local character
 - Objective 10: Improve connections between Murray River communities
 - Objective 11: Plan for integrated and resilient utility infrastructure
- Part 3 – Economy
 - Objective 12: Strategically planning for rural industries
 - Objective 13: Support the transition to net zero by 2050
 - Objective 14: Protecting and promoting industrial and manufacturing land
 - Objective 15: Support the economic vitality of CBDs and main streets
 - Objective 16: Supporting tourism
 - Objective 17: Strategically plan for health and education precincts
 - Objective 18: Value the integration of transport and land-use planning.

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

The plan recognises the changing climate and the likely increase in the frequency, intensity and extent of floods, bushfire and droughts. This in turn could bring about cumulative or concurrent large-scale events or new hazards such as urban heat islands. These changes could affect land use, as well as outcomes for resilient and sustainable future development.

To reduce exposure to natural hazards and build resilient communities and places, the plan encourages people to consider and address the effects of natural hazards early in the land-use planning and decision-making processes. It also promotes urban greening and tree planting, as well as better planning for managing the region's rivers, responding to the changing environment and meeting community expectations.

How does the draft plan respond to housing needs in the Riverina Murray?

The recent NSW population projections estimated that over the next 20 years, the Riverina Murray will need to provide 26,100 dwellings to house a population of 324,400. This represents over 43,300 additional people that are projected to live in the region. The plan recognises this stronger-than-anticipated-growth and changing demographics and plans for greater housing choice for those people in the future.

What communities expected of housing, public areas, urban design and open spaces in Australia 50 years ago is different from their needs, preferences and expectations today. As a result, the current supply and diversity of

dwellings, as well as public spaces, do not necessarily support the community's aspirations and needs. Strategic planning must consider agile workforces, changing population structures and changing climate conditions while directing how development and investment is coordinated to help create high-quality, resilient and liveable communities.

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

The draft plan acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta Countries that make up the Riverina Murray region. It also recognises the 20 local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs) that straddle multiple local government areas and regional boundaries. The plan makes a commitment to build on the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036*, which included actions to help give LALCs and Native Title holders information.

The department has assessed land held by LALCs in NSW since 2019. These assessments bring together information about landholdings (including mapping and aerial photos), planning controls and constraints, and information about the suitability of land for development. The department must accelerate assessments in the Riverina Murray to give LALCs base-level planning system information about their land.

Further, strategic planning must reflect the aspirations of Aboriginal peoples for Aboriginal land and support LALCs in navigating legal planning processes such as rezonings and development approvals.

What's in it for my council?

Regional planning encourages infrastructure delivery that targets the needs of its communities. It also encourages local government to allocate resources and investment efficiently to improve the liveability and sustainability of the region. The NSW Government will help councils to translate these priorities into local plans.

Priorities for each council are based on the Riverina Murray councils' local strategic planning statements. These are set out in the council activities throughout the plan, which relate to how the regional plan will be put into action at a local level.

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

In 2020, all councils in NSW prepared a local strategic planning statement (LSPS) setting out:

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

An LSPS allows a council to ensure that priorities identified in the regional plan are placed within a clear local context and consider an area's unique economic, social and environmental characteristics.

Importantly, the LSPS also allows councils to translate their own strategic planning work into local priorities and actions, which in turn informs the review of the regional plan. This feedback cycle from local to regional planning ensures that there is a two-way 'line of-sight' between the different levels of spatial planning.

The LSPSs prepared by all councils in the region, in consultation with their communities, were a key input into the draft plan.

The plan's objectives, strategies, actions, collaboration activities and council activities reflect the priorities of the 20 LSPSs.

How can I have my say?

The draft plan was on exhibition from 28 July 2022 to 12 September 2022 and is now closed for submissions.

The Department will now closely consider how the submissions and feedback will be incorporated into the final plan.

Visit the Planning Portal (planning.nsw.gov.au/riverinamurray2041) to:

- download the draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041
- make a submission
- register for an online community information session facilitated by the people who wrote the draft plan.

What are the next steps?

Register to receive updates on the next steps to finalise the regional plan.