

# Hay and Carrathool Regional Drought Resilience Plan



Summary Paper

October 2024



## Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Hay and Carrathool Shire Councils acknowledge the Wiradjuri, Nari Nari, Yitha Yitha and Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people, Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, meet and work. We recognise our communities are made up of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples descended from additional mobs and clans who call the Hay Plains and Riverina region their home. We wish to pay our respects to Elders past and present, and recognise the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our region and across Australia.



## Disclaimer

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# Introduction

**Communities across the Hay and Carrathool region have a long, proud history in agriculture - and the opportunities our industries and natural environment affords us.**

Home to more than 5,700 people, the communities are situated in the Riverina region, NSW's agriculture and primary production heartland generating \$1.12 billion annually and employing over 1000 people. The area's unique biodiversity and landscapes, from the Hay Plains to the Conapaira Ranges, further enhance its liveability and tourism appeal.

**From rising living costs to a changing climate to the decarbonisation of global supply chains, our region is navigating growing challenges and disruptions.** Many of these will have long-term impacts on our region, including the compounding impacts of worsening extreme weather events like floods and prolonged droughts we are already facing. Additionally, new policies and industries such as Australia's Agriculture and Land Sector Plan and the South-West Renewable Energy Zone, will play a role in shaping the future of our region. Strategic planning and coordination is essential to navigate these challenges, identify opportunities, build resilience, and take effective, sustained action.

**We have a significant opportunity to keep our communities and economies strong, now and into the future.** With key stakeholders, councils in Hay and Carrathool have been exploring how to diversify our region's economies, regenerate local ecosystems and strengthen our capacity to adapt to change. For example, with fertile soils, diverse ecosystems and a prime location, our region is well-positioned to explore existing and emerging opportunities in agriculture, energy, sustainable industries and decarbonisation. Meanwhile, diversifying our economies will ensure our communities become more adaptable, withstanding industry shocks and attracting investment.

**The Hay and Carrathool Regional Drought Resilience Plan ('The Plan') is our region's collective vision for the future with a strategic framework to guide efforts over the next decade.**

Every day, our councils, industries, businesses, and communities work on initiatives shaping our region's future and creating a positive legacy. The Plan, developed with more than 300 stakeholders throughout 2024, reflects the lived experiences and wisdom of those who live and work in our region. The Plan is, and will remain, adaptive and community driven.

**This summary paper outlines The Plan's 26 Priority Actions for change to support climate adaptation and regional resilience for our complex regional system.** The actions sit under five key regional resilience strategies - including Inclusive and Empowered Communities and Future Ready Businesses – identified as priority impact areas over the next decade. Designed for implementation from local village to regional scales, the actions were developed with potential stakeholder leads in mind.

**The Plan and Priority Actions require collective effort and collaboration across local, regional, state, and national levels.** We thank the NSW and Federal governments, regional partners, and communities for their support and leadership to date. Moving forward, this paper is designed to communicate effectively with stakeholders by summarising the key elements of the Hay and Carrathool Regional Drought Resilience Plan. The commitment of Hay and Carrathool residents has been, and remains key in advancing this work, helping us build more resilient, diverse, and vibrant communities and ecosystems for future generations.

# Behind the Plan

The Hay and Carrathool Regional Drought Resilience Plan (The Plan) is a high-level strategic framework to guide our efforts over the next decade towards the future we want for our region.

The Plan outlines our region's 2035 vision alongside our Key Aspirations, Goals, Strategies, and Priority Actions for councils, businesses, industries, and communities to build economic, social, cultural, and environmental resilience at regional and local levels. The Plan's Priority Actions create space for different people to take different approaches towards this collective vision, strengthening the region's social, environmental, and economic systems as we go. Operational documents and implementation plans will come out of the Plan as it is activated by our community and the appropriate partners.

## Who developed the Plan?

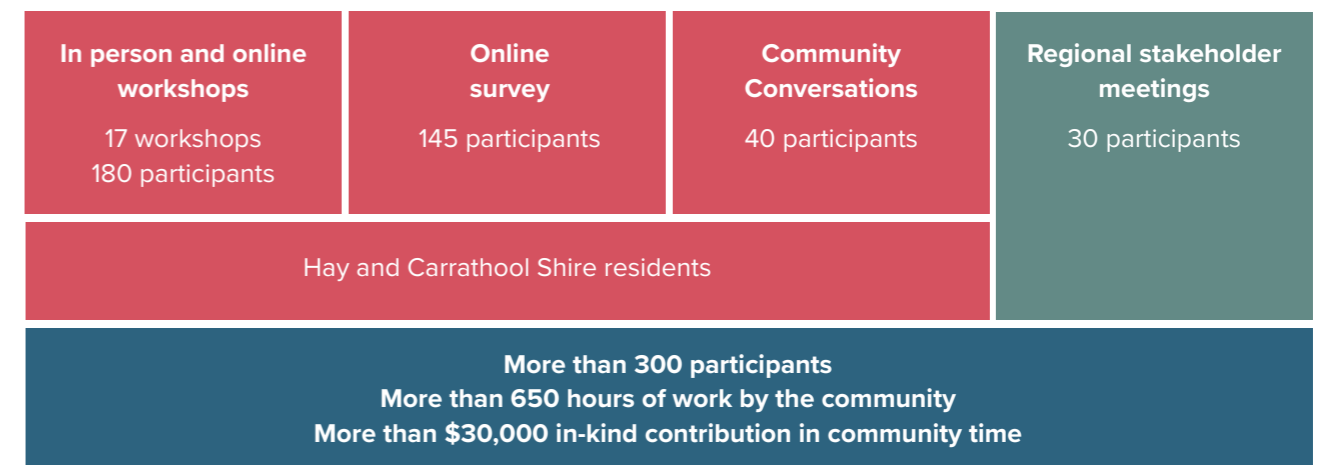
The Plan was developed as part of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program. It is a collaboration between Hay and Carrathool Shire Councils, The Next Economy, The Australian Resilience Centre, regional stakeholders and communities across the region. The Regional Drought Resilience Planning program is jointly funded by the Australian Government and NSW Government under the Future Drought Fund.

## How was the Plan developed?

While development was convened by Councils, the Plan is and will continue to be an adaptive and community-driven plan implemented and stewarded through partnerships between councils, communities, industry and other relevant stakeholders over the next decade.

The Plan was developed in collaboration with more than 300 community, industry and government members through an iterative and participatory place-based process centred on the lived experience and wisdom of people who live and work here. The development process had three distinct phases:

- 1. Resilience of what, to what?** Shining a light on our people and place, March to June 2024
- 2. So what? Exploring ideas, opportunities and pathways,** June to September 2024
- 3. Now what? Orientating the region towards action,** September 2024 onwards



## The approach sitting behind the Plan

### 1. Made by everyone, for everyone

Governments, businesses, communities, and individuals all play key roles in identifying needs and supporting solutions.

### 2. Locally led, regionally focused

The best ideas and actions come from within. The Plan gives our communities a voice to highlight what matters, what's working, and what opportunities we can build on.

### 3. Diverse solutions for diverse contexts

Priority actions range from regional to hyperlocal, reflecting the unique circumstances of each village and township while considering larger-scale needs.

### 4. Individual actions, shared future

The Plan not only honours each community's uniqueness, it allows everyone to contribute according to their own values and capacities, while working towards a shared future

### 5. Collaboration and learning for adaptation

The Plan marks the start of ongoing collaboration between all stakeholders to enhance the region's resilience and improve quality of life. As such, the Plan is a living document that will evolve over time as we learn our way forward.



## The Plan

### Our 2035 vision

In 2035, our communities, including our local governments, institutions, businesses, industries and households, will have greater capacity to adapt to climate, environmental, social, and economic challenges and opportunities while remaining healthy and vibrant, with safe places to live, work, and raise future generations.

### Our shared aspirations

We will be a climate-resilient region that supports:

#### Healthy and connected communities:

From the health and wellbeing of our people, to well-functioning and collaborative groups, to more free time for people to do what they love, we will foster community spirit and strengthen family and community connections that bind people and place.

#### Prosperous regional economy:

From a robust, adaptive and future ready workforce, to on farm technology utilised to support more sustainable farming practices and more free time for farmers, to thriving local businesses, we will drive a diverse and circular regional economy that is in service to our local communities and environment.

#### Sustainable development:

From our communities being aware and prepared for disruptions, to young people wanting to stay in the region, to affordable and secure places to live for everyone, we will plan and provide reliable 'lifelines' that support our community to live sustainably and with dignity.

#### Thriving ecosystems:

From landholders and managers working in strong collaboration and partnership with First Nations groups to communities celebrating and leveraging our abundance of sunshine, clean air, biodiversity and open space, we will conserve, regenerate and revitalise our natural ecosystems and landscapes.

## Our Priority Actions and Regional Resilience Strategies

Our system is driven by interrelated components—agency, relationships, structures, power, and processes—that need to work together for positive change. Systemic change happens when actions align, synergies connect and efforts are sequenced, coordinated, and mutually reinforcing.

The Plan identifies 26 Priority Actions for change to support climate adaptation and regional resilience for our complex regional system. The Actions, sit under five Regional Resilience Strategies and are designed for implementation at one or more of the following levels; local village/township/bio-region (Places), Local Government Area (LGA), and across both Hay and Carrathool Shire Council (Region).

Each Resilience Strategy targets an impact area that requires effort over the next 10 years for our region to reach its full potential and to meet our collective vision for 2035.

The Resilience Strategies, Goals and Priority Actions are summarised on the following pages.



## Strategy 1: Inclusive and Empowered Communities

Our region is fairly isolated from major cities and vulnerable to further isolation when major roads and telecommunications are impacted by natural hazards or climatic events. Connectedness, inclusion, and agency were identified as important and valued in our community conversations. Here, family and community ties help during hard times, with local networks stepping up during disasters.

Safeguarding and strengthening such connections were identified as a priority in our workshops. Already, connections are recognised and celebrated - like the cultural diversity in Hillston and Hay attracting new people to town and enriching local events and celebrations. First Nations custodians across our region offer valuable knowledge for strengthening communities, ecosystems, and economies.

**Our Goal: Our communities look out for each other. We celebrate our unique strengths and contributions, support each other through hard times, and welcome diverse perspectives and experiences.**

**Strategy Facilitator:** Local Government with State Government support



“ It isn’t an organised or coordinated response, but I know I can reach out for emotional or financial support (e.g. time to pay invoices) when it is needed. That doesn’t happen everywhere. We have a history of helping each other. ”

Participant in a meeting with local Agronomists

## Strategy 2: Future Ready Businesses

Our local businesses and workers are an important part of our economy. From large agricultural enterprises to small and medium local businesses, all provide essential services, contribute to our identity and underpin our regions resilience capacity. They need coordinated and long-term support to be better prepared for change, make the most of new opportunities and drive a resilient and thriving region. Drought, floods, a changing climate, technology development and other socio-economic factors such as cost of living and housing shortages already affect how we do business. Increasingly our businesses will need to manage other risks, from market and supply chain disruptions to higher insurance and maintenance costs.

**Our Goal: Our region's workforce development ecosystem, local businesses and workers are thriving before, during and after drought and other disruptions.**

**Strategy Facilitator:** Local employers and the business community

Action	Details	Scale	Potential Action Leads
Community Impact Fund	Community giving and finance model to directly resource and fund strategic initiatives and activities to address regional needs and priorities; and, support the capacity of communities to govern, lead and manage place-based change aligned with their aspirations.	LGA	Local government, local community groups
The Community Taskforce	A strategic working group of a diverse range of experienced local community representatives that are working with community organisations, local councils and other agencies to steward and support activation and implementation of the Plan.	LGA/ Place	A coalition of community groups and businesses, local government
Community Hubs	A neighbourhood / community centre offering affordable and accessible programs to reduce loneliness, increase social connection and improve health and wellbeing in communities. This includes supporting networking between community organisations to strengthen communication and information sharing about community events, processes, services and activities	Place	Local government and/or community organisation or co-op
Community Passenger Network	A network of providers, vehicles, and drivers offers diverse transport services to help people access care services, connect with training opportunities, and engage in social activities within the local community and region.	LGA / Place	Transport companies, social businesses and community organisations
Inclusive Communities	Research and program of initiatives coordinated by a program officer to enhance cultural inclusion, connection, social cohesion and wellbeing across the region and within town/village- based communities.	LGA/ Place	Local government or community organisation
Community Welcome Committee	A community and economic development initiative to connect new residents to other members of the community as well as the information or resources they may need to thrive and feel supported.	Place	Community groups and volunteers

Action	Details	Scale	Potential Action Leads
Future Ready Businesses	Capacity development initiatives to support the capacity of the local business and not-for-profit ecosystem to be innovative and prepared for disruptions and change.	LGA	Local employers and businesses, local and state government
Workforce Development Ecosystem	A network of partnerships and initiatives working together to promote a thriving workforce development ecosystem that generates economic opportunities for businesses, helps existing workers build transferable skills and provides supported pathways into employment for job seekers and young people in our communities.	LGA	Local and state government, local businesses and training providers
Training and Employment Pathways Hub	Program, partnerships and service offering to leverage and create opportunities for education, training and employment.	LGA	Coalition of local and regional training and education providers, local businesses and industry groups, local and state government
Building Social Innovation Capacity	An incubator to support local community members, young people and businesses develop mindsets and capacities to design and activate innovative responses and alternative solutions to the provision of goods and services across the region.	LGA / Region	Local business network or community progress association/taskforce
Doing Business - Our Way	A B2B shared workforce group that supports local businesses and major employers to take a collective approach to closing the workforce gap through 'sharing employees'.	Place	Local employers and businesses

## Strategy 3: Reimagined Care Economy

A wealth of people and organisations provide healthcare, education and social services to community members in formal and informal settings across our region. This work constitutes the region's care economy which is integral yet often overlooked. It can deliver a range of co-benefits such as increased social participation, greater workforce participation for parents/carers, local economic stimulus and promoting the liveability of our region.

Our community identified a strong and accessible regional care economy as necessary for the physical, psychological and social well-being of children, young people, First Nations people, the elderly, people with different abilities and other marginalised groups. Despite incremental efforts to improve services across the region, pockets of our care system are under stress making our community vulnerable to shocks and stresses.

**Our goal: Our region has a sustainable care economy that improves people's lives, strengthens community capacity to adapt to stresses and drives the region's economic growth.**

**Strategy Facilitator:** Local and regional health service organisations and providers with State Government support

*Note: This Regional Resilience Strategy focuses on Priority Actions that specifically address the provision of care across the region for particular groups. The need for improved health, wellbeing and care services more broadly are also identified as important and considered across a range of Priority Actions within other strategies, particularly Strategy 1.*

Action	Details	Scale	Potential Action Leads
The Care Economy - Strategy and Coordination	A regional taskforce and strategy to foster new collaborations to collectively develop and establish connected and alternative models of care across the region, drawing on evidence-based approaches.	LGA	Coalition of community organisations, local business, health services, care providers and social businesses
Growing Together - New Regional Childcare System	New 'childcare' initiatives to support more families return to work and increase early childhood outcomes through the delivery of innovative models for decentralised childcare services.	LGA/ Place	Health services, care providers and social businesses
Innovative Models of Care	Trialling new ways to provide intergenerational care across our region, through innovative partnerships and approaches (formal services and community-led initiatives)		

## Strategy 4: Placemaking with Purpose

We value and take pride in our regional lifestyle, the wide-open spaces our region affords, and the connection to a unique landscape of waterways, vegetation and abundant wildlife. It is this relationship with the landscape, our remote context and the geographical spread of our townships and villages, however, that also means our places and people are vulnerable to drought, heat, flood and economic disruptions.

Placemaking is an overarching and broad approach to recreating and activating local public and cultural spaces into inviting and vibrant areas to re-establish and foster connections between people, the natural environment and their built environment.

Community members across the Hay and Carrathool region identified a range of opportunities to enhance our local places and strengthen community life. From outdoor play spaces, to new events and co-location of activities, to community energy options, these ideas respond to the unique context, challenges and opportunities of each township or village, with inspiration sometimes drawn from them for activities and initiatives in other parts of the region.

**Our goal: Our communities have liveable, resilient, and lively public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness and wellbeing.**

**Strategy Facilitator:** Local community groups with support from Local Government, philanthropic organisations and/or corporate partners

Action	Details	Scale	Potential Action Leads
Housing Our Future	A business case and investment prospectus to drive an innovative, flexible and adaptable local housing system for livable, healthy and resilient communities.	Place/ LGA	Local government
Shaping Our Places	Community-led placemaking initiatives to create opportunities for local people to connect and enjoy local places whilst providing opportunities for visitors to enjoy what the region has to offer.	Place / LGA	Community organisations, recreational groups, local businesses
Reimagining Our Visitor Economy	An Action Plan to enhance and invest in the natural, lifestyle and historical assets of the region to expand the local tourism economy.	LGA / Place	Coalition of local government, local businesses and local and regional tourism operators
Enabling Community Placemaking	A participatory grant-making program for communities to develop and activate strategic placemaking initiatives that reimagine and revitalise our shared spaces in towns and villages for improved social, environmental and economic outcomes.	LGA/ Region	Local government and funding partner

# Strategy 5: Coordinated Action for Climate Resilient Economic Development

The Hay and Carrathool region boasts vast space, strong networks, and rich natural assets. With the right conditions in place, the region is well-positioned to move towards a sustainable economy that benefits people, the planet, and place. With a diverse, innovative agricultural sector open to economic diversification, the region is ready to reimagine its economy and supply chains. There is capacity and will to address complex trade-offs and options around climate mitigation and adaptation as well as explore opportunities for circularity and new industries.

**Our goal: Our region is an innovative economic hub looking at the whole picture: building resilience to the impacts of climate change whilst driving a rapid transition to net zero emissions for a sustainable regional economic system that works for the benefit of people, the planet and our local places.**

**Strategy Facilitator:** Local Government with State and Federal Government support

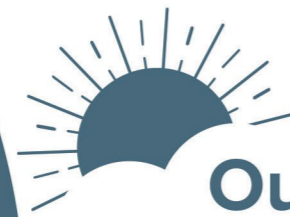


“ All Priority Actions should be informed by climate risk and contribute to resilience in different ways. This Regional Resilience Strategy brings together actions that directly sit at the nexus of economic development, climate adaptation and climate mitigation. ”

Action	Details	Scale	Potential Action Leads
Our Community Changemakers	An annual program to invest in local leadership capacity (young people and adults) to support, lead and manage positive change.	LGA / Region	Local government and community groups
Climate Resilient Councils	A program to increase institutional capacity to plan for and respond to the challenges/opportunities of climate change including ongoing delivery of services.	LGA	Local government
Primary Production Innovation Network	A network for regional producers and industry innovation to support on-farm and regional adaptation/transition efforts in agriculture and primary production.	LGA / Place	Primary producers, landholders and local land services
Regional Economic Transition Roadmap	A roadmap to build the capacity for a coordination, collaborative approach to economic development for a net zero, climate resilient future.	LGA	Local government, local industries and community
Every Drop Counts	Research, partnerships, place-based pilots and foresight papers to drive the adoption of more innovative and sustainable approaches to efficiently capture, manage and safeguard valuable water resources on farms and across local industries.	Place	Local primary producers, landholders, research institutions, First nations organisations, local land services
Climate Resilient Lifelines	Participatory climate adaptation planning to reduce the direct impact of disasters on the region's critical infrastructure and road networks, maintain the services they provide and ensure connectivity, productivity and safe mobility into the future.	LGA	Local and state government authorities and infrastructure developers
Regional Environmental-Economic Account	Initiative and cross-sector partnership to collect, track and integrate environmental and economic data for effective analysis, decision-making, investment, as well as facilitate access to emerging environment markets.	LGA / Region	Local primary producers, natural resource management and environmental organisations
Promoting Net Zero Regional Transport	A region wide 'Net Zero' vehicle charging network to enable greater connectivity, reliability and range for transport and travel within and across the region that services local industries, freight, communities and visitors.	LGA/ Region/ Place	Local government, community groups and local businesses



# Theory of CHANGE



## Our 2035 Vision

In 2035, our communities, including our local governments, institutions, businesses, industries and households, will have greater capacity to adapt to climate, environmental, social, and economic challenges and opportunities while remaining healthy and vibrant, with safe places to live, work, and raise future generations.

## Strategies & Actions

### ✓ Inclusive and Empowered communities

Our communities look out for each other. We celebrate our unique strengths and contributions, support each other through hard times, and welcome diverse perspectives and experiences.

#### Actions:

- Community Impact Fund
- The Community Taskforce
- Community Hubs
- Community Passenger Network
- Inclusive Communities
- Community Welcome Committee

### ✓ Future Ready Businesses

Our region's workforce development ecosystem, local businesses and workers are thriving before, during and after drought and other disruptions.

#### Actions:

- Future Ready Businesses
- Workforce Development Ecosystem
- Training and Employment Pathways Hub
- Building Social Innovation Capacity
- Doing Business – Our Way

### ✓ Reimagined Care Economy

Our region has a sustainable care economy that improves people's lives, strengthens community capacity to adapt to stresses and drives the region's economic growth.

#### Actions:

- The Care Economy – Strategy & Coordination
- Growing Together – New Regional Childcare System
- Innovative Models of Care

### ✓ Placemaking with purpose

Our communities have liveable, resilient, and lively public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness and wellbeing.

#### Actions:

- Housing Our Future
- Shaping Our Places
- Reimagining Our Visitor Economy
- Enabling Community Placemaking

### ✓ Coordinated Action for Climate Resilient Economic Development

Our region is an innovative economic hub looking at the whole picture: building resilience to the impacts of climate change whilst driving a rapid transition to net zero emissions for a sustainable regional economic system that works for the benefit of people, the planet and our local places.

#### Actions:

- Our Community Changemakers
- Climate Resilient Councils
- Primary Production Innovation Network
- Regional Economic Transition Roadmap
- Every Drop Counts
- Climate Resilient Lifelines
- Regional Environmental – Economic Account
- Promoting Net Zero Regional Transport

## Aspirations



Healthy and connected communities



Prosperous regional economy



Sustainable development



Thriving ecosystems

## Forces and Pressures Effecting Change

Cost of living

Drought

Flood

Policy and Regulation changes

Limited health, medical and care economy providers

Changing climate

Extreme weather events

Limited education and employment options

Increasing pressure on infrastructure

## Our Strengths

Human connections that bind people and place; our community spirit



Regional economy driven by agricultural production and local businesses

Resilience is the capacity to plan for, respond to and recover from disruption in positive ways

A foundation of services and infrastructure that allow us to innovate



Rich natural landscapes and ecosystems

“ We know the best solutions will come from within our region. The Plan is an invitation for all to contribute to the delivery of actions and initiatives that will turn the Hay and Carrathool region into the future we want. ”

