

# Balranald Shire Council

## Local Strategic Planning Statement



# CONTENTS

Foreword.....	3
Acknowledgement of Country.....	4
The Statement (LSPS).....	5
Statement Purpose	
Policy context	
Consultation	
Vision.....	8
Balranald Shire.....	8
Our Economy, Society and Environment .....	11
Local Strategic Planning Statement.....	16
Planning Priorities	
Actions	
Industry.....	17
Agriculture.....	19
Resources.....	21
Utility Infrastructure.....	23
Tourism.....	25
Sustainable Settlements.....	27
Vibrant Places.....	31
Environment and Heritage.....	33
Table 1: Relationship with Regional Plans and Strategies.....	36
References.....	36

## FOREWORD

Since 1849, when Lands Commissioner McDonald named Balranald after his Scottish birthplace, the town's existence has been maintained and reinforced through the importance of location and transport.

From a punt stock-crossing on the Murrumbidgee River; the first river bridge of the new municipality in 1888; the arrival of the rail line in 1926; the continuing importance of the Sturt Highway; and the emergence of Lake Mungo National Park, Balranald has a travel / transport identity.

With its origins as a remote station, Euston slowly evolved to be a proclaimed town in 1885. In 1924 the railway reached Robinvale on the Victorian side of the Murray River. The road bridge built at the intersection of the Murray Valley and Sturt Highways in 1928 linking the two towns, secured Euston's economic future.

Looking forward twenty years, we aspire to see continuing development of the Balranald Shire economy, continual improvements to its social fabric, and greater respect for and management of our environment. With five rivers designating the Shire's southern boundary, water is and will be influential in this scenario.

This Local Strategic Planning Statement is legally connected, by the New South Wales planning legislation, to the NSW local government legislation, specifying that a Council must have a Community Strategic Plan.

Planning is an essential facilitator of regional development. It provides a framework for long-term visions and distils them into the orderly use and management of our natural and built environment. The support of the Local Strategic Planning Statement, for Council's Community Strategic Plan is essential.

It was inconceivable a few years ago, that the Shire would host two huge solar power farms. Commercial competitive advantage delivered them to Balranald. It also highlighted the needs for different housing, flexibility in making sound yet quick decisions and the importance of having a robust strategy and good planning.

We have no certainty how Balranald Shire will change in twenty years' time. There are differences now to the Millennium twenty years ago.

This Local Strategic Planning Statement is a central mechanism for the next twenty years, helping to take advantage of opportunities which appear in that time.

.....

Michael Colreavy  
Administrator  
Balranald Shire



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*Council acknowledges the traditional Custodians of the lands and waters within our Shire and recognises their ongoing responsibility to care for Country and of teaching and learning.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations Peoples.*

## THE STATEMENT

This Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) sets the land use framework for Balranald Shire Council's economic, social and environmental land use needs over the next 20 years. It addresses the planning and development issues of strategic significance to the Council through planning priorities and actions, spatial land use direction and guidance.

The LSPS gives effect to the Far West Regional Plan 2036 by implementing the directions and actions at a local level. It is also informed by other State-wide and regional policies including Future Transport Plan 2056 and the NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2018 – 2038.

The LSPS works with Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP), which has a similar but broader purpose, on how Council will meet the community's needs through land use planning.

The LSPS planning priorities and actions provide the rationale for decisions about using our land to achieve the community's broader goals. It underpins the updates required to the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP).

This work will also inform future versions of Council's Operational Plan and will be an integral element of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

### Purpose of this Statement

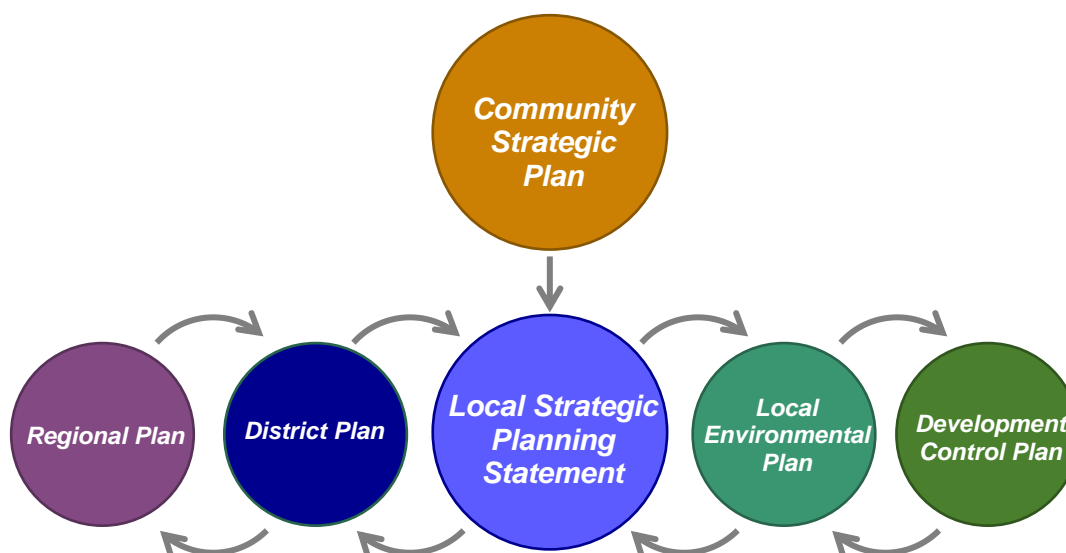
This local strategic planning statement (required under the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979) focuses on the vision and priorities for land use in our Shire. In contrast to this, our community strategic plan (required under the Local Government Act 1993) has a broader, overarching focus on achieving the long-term social, environmental and economic aspirations of the Shire's community. It is the central governing document for our Council in its strategic business planning across all its activities.

Balranald has experienced increased economic development interest with horticulture, mining and solar operations providing further opportunities. To manage this growth and build capacity in our townships and rural communities, the Balranald Local Strategic Planning Statement sets a 20-year plan which integrates land use, transport and infrastructure planning. The statement will also link to directions set out in the Far West Regional Plan 2036.

To ensure consistency in strategic planning approaches, all councils within NSW are required to prepare an LSPS to act as a link between identified regional

strategic priorities and more specific, detailed local level planning – expressed in council’s local environmental plan and development control plans (Figure 1).

The relationship between Council’s Planning Priorities and the Far West Regional Plan 2036 and other regional and state strategic planning instruments (Western Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy) is illustrated in Table 1 on the following pages.



## Policy context

This Statement has been prepared in accordance with section 3.9 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act) which requires that it include or identify the following:

- a. the basis for strategic planning in the area, having regard to economic, social and environmental matters,
- b. the planning priorities for the area that are consistent with any strategic plan applying to the area and (subject to any such strategic plan) any applicable community strategic plan under section 402 of the *Local Government Act 1993*,
- c. the actions required for achieving those planning priorities,
- d. the basis on which the council is to monitor and report on the implementation of those actions.

## Consultation

Council prepared this Statement by building upon the results of extensive engagement undertaken in creating Council’s Community Strategic Plan, during

2017-2018. This included a community economic forum held 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> October 2018, identifying what residents would like retained or changed.

Workshops were held with Councillors in early 2020 to confirm the values and planning direction for Balranald Shire, as articulated in Council's current strategic plans.

A revised Balranald Shire CSP is being developed in parallel with this statement.

## STATEMENT VISION

To use this Local Strategic Planning Statement to achieve Balranald Shire's vision in its Community Strategic Plan (stated below) and to deliver the broader aims of the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036.

**STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ECONOMY**

**MAKE BALRANALD SHIRE THE BEST-POSSIBLE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND INVEST**

**ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING RESULTS IN MANAGING, ENHANCING AND IMPROVING OUR NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

## BALRANALD SHIRE

The Far West Region of NSW covers a vast area of landscapes with extreme environmental diversity, ranging from the 'outback' semi-arid salt bush plains to rich farmlands, rangelands and wetlands.

The nationally significant Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers provide water for agricultural-based communities across the region. This includes intensive and irrigated horticulture, kangaroo and wild goat production, cropping and pastoral farming. Agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism make up the key regional economic specialisations in the Western Murray functional economic area<sup>1</sup>.

Urbanising rural cities and increasingly connected markets for resources and agricultural produce are creating a range of new opportunities for Far West communities. Leveraging natural assets, economic strengths and industry specialisations is key to unlocking new economic opportunities in:

- high-value agriculture and value adding in agricultural product manufacturing.
- mining and construction industries which capitalise on the region's mineral and solar endowments, particularly near existing infrastructure (transmission infrastructure, settlements or industries).
- tourism which focuses on the unique culture, history and environment of the Far West. Aboriginal cultural heritage (including Mungo Man and Mungo Lady), nationally and internationally significant wetlands, and protected environmental areas are all attractions in the area.

Balranald Shire is located on the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, Wakool and Edward Rivers.

It shares strong links through the Sturt, Murray Valley and Calder Highways, into the Victorian Local Government Rural City Councils of Swan Hill and Mildura, and further on to the capital cities of Adelaide and Melbourne. The Sturt Highway also connects Balranald to the Riverina Murray Region and further to Canberra and Sydney.

Progressive construct and seal of the "Wool Track" route from Balranald to Cobar improves the direct connection from Western Queensland to Western Victoria and the South Australia Riverland. Balranald Shire is uniquely located at the primary interstate crossroads of South Western NSW. The strategic location



of Balranald and Euston on the Sturt Highway, in conjunction with emerging industries, places Balranald Shire in a strong position to capitalise on those economic opportunities.

Balranald Shire's future is seen to be bolstered by known diverse developments, but concurrently exposed to potential difficulty when water availability and management is challenged by the warming and drying trends of climate change.

Tourism has a sound role in future developments but is susceptible to global issues which can adversely affect travel, such as fuel price increases, currency exchange rate cycles and at the time of writing, global health risks.

Maximising economic diversity will help to moderate the inevitable economic shifts. Planning has a major role in assisting and supporting these changes,

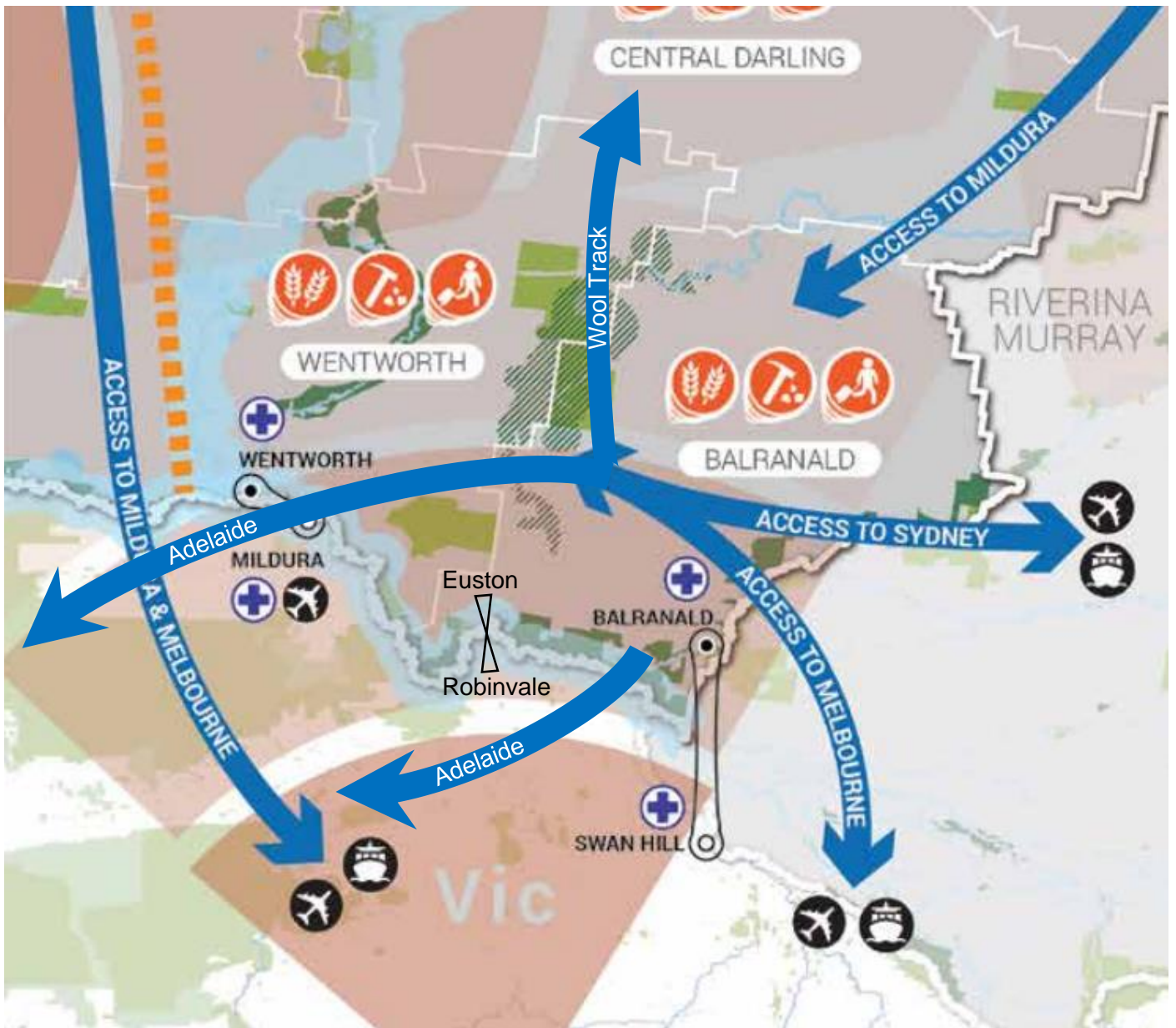


Figure 2: Our place in the region map  
 Source: Far West Regional Plan 2036

# OUR ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

## Our Economy

Agriculture is the largest industry in the Shire by land use, employment and value of production. Traditionally, this was largely comprised of dryland cropping and grazing. However, high value irrigated horticultural production has begun to rapidly emerge, underpinned by historically secure access to water from the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers.

Balranald's southern communities and economy are highly reliant on guaranteed and predictable water supply. Historically secure water supply in the hot summers and mild winters of southwest NSW make Balranald Shire an attractive location for irrigated horticulture but also recreation and tourism.

Developments in mining and renewable energy projects in the Shire provide opportunities to bolster the economies of our townships. The West Balranald rutile-rich mineral sands deposit situated 10km north of Balranald township is the largest in the Murray Basin and is currently undergoing a Definitive Feasibility Study. The deposit represents a significant source of global supply, especially high value minerals such as rutile and zircon.

Likewise, in the central area of Balranald Shire, 90 km north of Balranald, the Atlas-Campaspe mineral sands deposit is about to enter production with an expected mine life of twenty years. The \$8 million Definitive Feasibility Study has been completed.

As Australia transitions into using renewable energy, Balranald is ideally situated to capitalise on its ability to provide solar energy. Balranald has already seen the construction of two large solar energy farms that have access to transmission infrastructure, land availability and favourable climate conditions.

Tourism is a significant industry in the Shire contributing \$7.0M/annum. The growth of tourism will increase economic diversity and reduce the region's reliance on agriculture and water dependent industries. Council will need to facilitate opportunities to leverage off our natural and cultural heritage assets including five significant rivers, national parks, iconic world and national heritage sites.

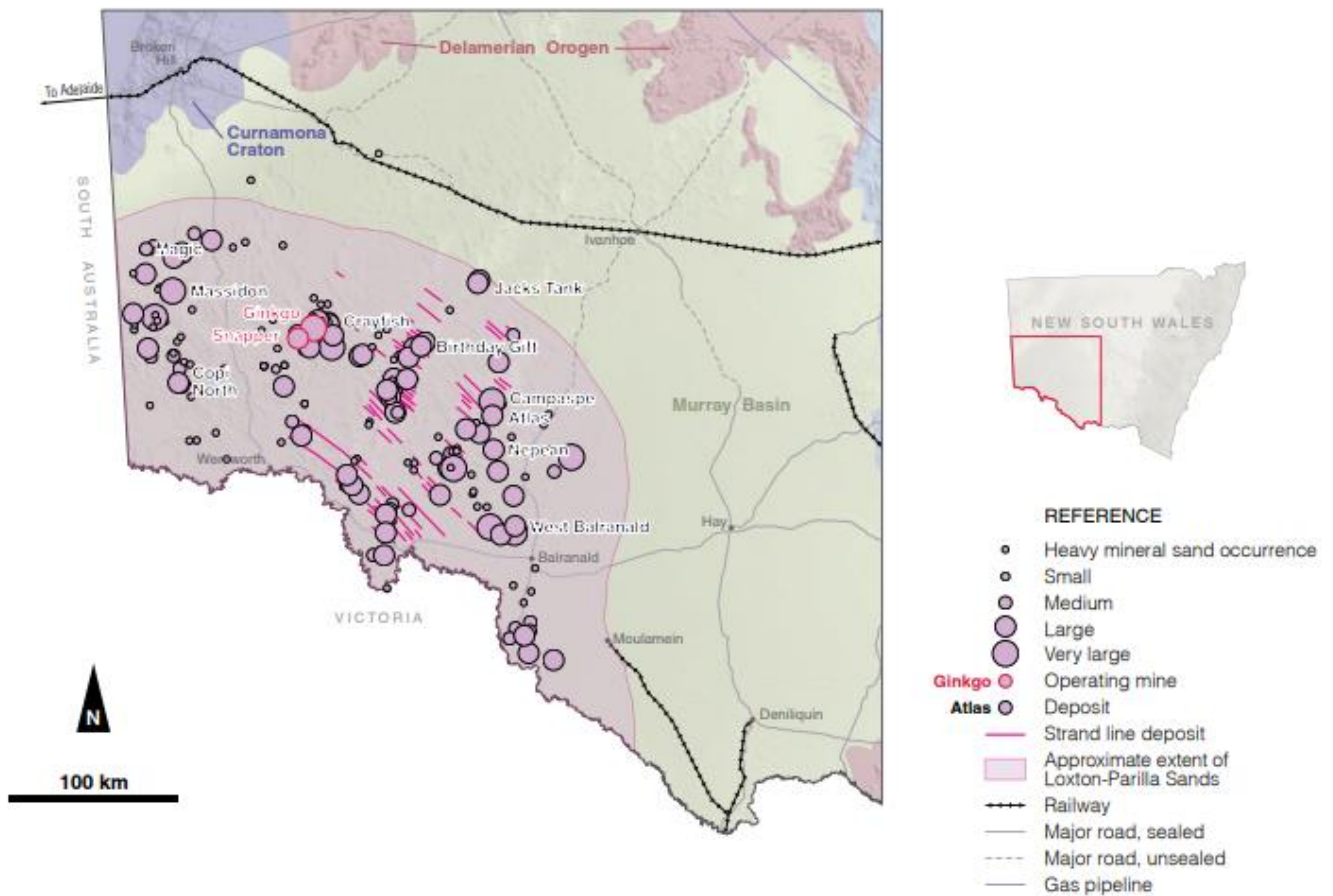


Figure 3 Mineral Sands Deposits

Heavy mineral sands Opportunities in New South Wales, Australia, NSW Resources & Geoscience, Oct. 2019

## Our Society

Balranald Shire is attracting significant investment into a range of emerging industries (almonds, solar and mining). It is anticipated that the population could increase by approximately 850 people by 2041 to a total of approximately 3,200 (2019 NSW Population Projections), dispersed predominately through our two main townships of Balranald and Euston. Our communities are ageing. Balranald Shire population has a median age of 41 and 24.6% aged 60 years and over (2016 census), which is expected to increase in future.



## Balranald vs. NSW Age Anomaly

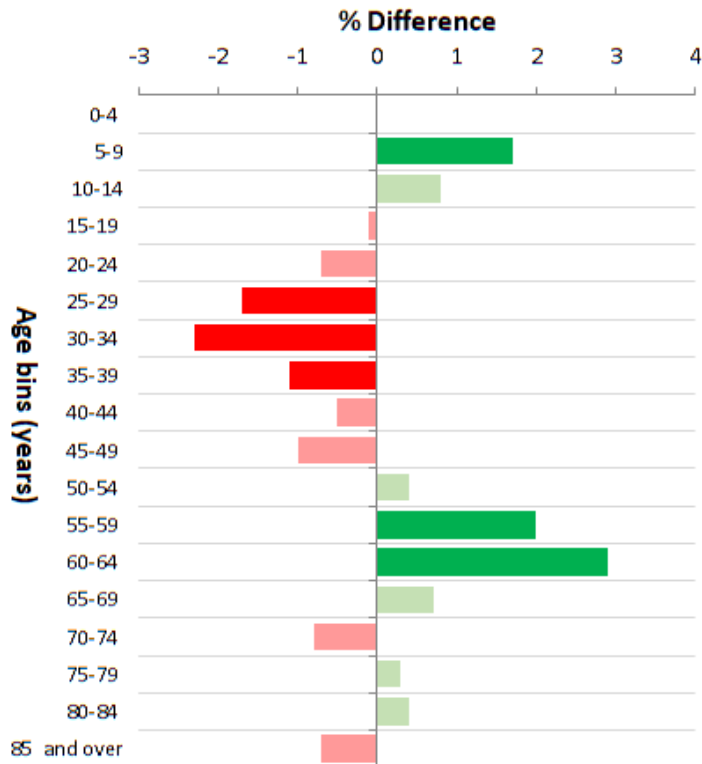


Figure 4: Age difference table  
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

This change in the population demographic will continue to increase the importance of the health care and social assistance sector in Balranald, with employment in the sector rising since 2011.

As confirmed by Figure 2, Balranald 20-40 age group is the largest age group migrating out of the Council area, to other nearby Victorian regional centres of Bendigo, Mildura and Swan Hill. Providing and facilitating opportunities to attract and retain this age group through employment opportunities within the Balranald Shire will be an important challenge for Council.

Our residents have a long connection to the agricultural sector, where approximately 290 people in the Shire work in the agricultural industry. Balranald residents also have a strong sense of community with 30.7% of the community participating in voluntary work in 2016 and health and community professionals being the second highest employment industry.

## Our Environment

Balranald Shire contains a notable variety of endowments and plays an integral role in the economic, social and environment makeup of the LGA.

These endowments have been utilised by the traditional landowners, the Mutthi Mutthi, Ngiyampaa, and Barkindji people, who recognised the favourable climate and water resources and continue to have long standing cultural and community connection with the lands and waters.

Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, Wakool and Edward Rivers; several lakes including Lake Benanee near Euston; and Mungo and Yanga National Parks are environmental assets that have a regional, state, national or international significance.

The internationally significant Willandra Lakes area contain RAMSAR wetlands and Mungo National Park which is home to Mungo Man and Mungo Lady – the earliest evidence of humans outside of Africa and the oldest known cremation in the world. These incredible sites are part of a rich indigenous history with records of human occupation dating back over 40,000 years.

Most of our Shire remains under native vegetation. It provides habitats for 28 threatened species, including a variety of native birds, frogs, mammals, fish, reptiles and plants. This is also reflected in the scale of bushfire prone land, where 733,335ha (33%) of the Shire is identified as bushfire prone.

Balranald's competitive and comparative advantages include elements of its transport corridor centrality; regionally significant environmental and economic features; and established cross-border relationships; all of which tie the Shire's environmental features to conservation, tourism and commercial opportunities.

Balranald has a dry climate. The Shire area experiences a distinct seasonal and spatial temperature variation. There is little variation in the winter minimum temperatures; however, maximum summer temperatures increase towards the north. In summer, average daily temperatures throughout the Shire range from 22–24°C with maximum temperatures regularly in the low 40's. In winter, average temperatures are 8–10°C. The climate changes over decades are consistent with national warming and drying trends

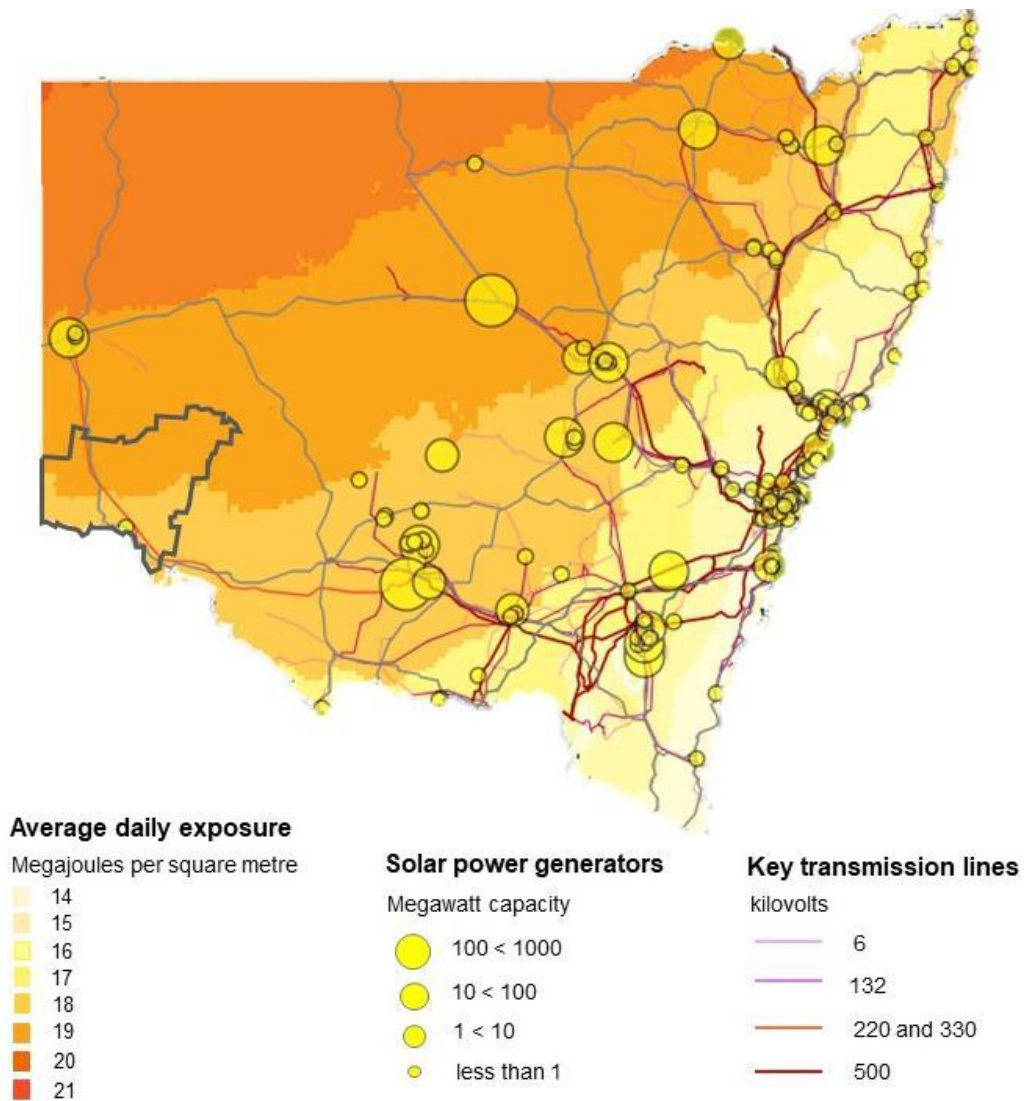


Figure 5

(NSW Planning to provide Balranald map, with solar generators indicated)

# LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT

## Planning Priorities and Actions

To achieve the 20-year vision for Balranald, Council is committed to achieving a sound correlation between this *Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)* and the draft *Community Strategic Plan (CSP)*, the community centrepiece required by the Local Government Act.

Each has a 20 years' focus, with the structure and content of each co-ordinated to the greatest extent possible, as the *LSPS* is a key mechanism for delivering the *CSP*.

Both documents are intended to be consistent with the directions of the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan*

Balranald's planning priorities as outlined here are long-term and shared with the features of the Community Strategic Plan, each designated as twenty-year frameworks.

They do not preclude other opportunities and actions being taken and delivered. They do represent the likely core areas of planning and economic development activity for the foreseeable future.

Council's planning instruments need to be of sufficiently high quality to support and assist opportunities. They should be effectively located to produce the best results as the balances of planning both expect and require.



## OUR ECONOMY

- Industry
- Agriculture
- Resources
- Utility Infrastructure
- Tourism

### Industry

Because Balranald Shire located on interstate crossroads in South Western NSW, there is long-term opportunity for Balranald to strengthen its industrial economy based on the resource, transport and agricultural sectors. This will be based on comparative advantages of input costs and any strategic locational advantages. A diverse industrial sector would assist both the Shire and the region.

Currently, Balranald's townships provide small tracts of land on the periphery, housing small industry and agri-business operations. To create opportunity for any larger industries, Council will identify suitable land supported by utility infrastructure, transport options and other aspects of locational comparative advantage.

To support diversifying our industry in Balranald Shire, Council will also investigate all opportunities to improve the freight and logistic network. Currently, the Balranald aerodrome is utilised for small passenger and hobby flights. Council will investigate potential upgrades the Balranald aerodrome in-step with future industry demand (freight, tourism and corporate) and provide opportunity for industrial lands adjacent for processing, handling and provision for freight businesses and exporters/importers.

An opportunity also exists for Council to investigate the broad concept and feasibility of a logistics and transport hub, on land adjoining the Sturt Highway, to the south of Balranald.

Council will:

- Ensure strong engagement with regional agencies and organisations to expand knowledge of and linkages with the private sector.
- Improve understanding and application of comparative and competitive advantage to deliver optimum locational results and planning outcomes.
- Support existing industrial land uses and precincts for freight and logistics, industry, warehousing and similar activities in locations that minimise amenity impacts.
- Investigate, with proponents, the comparative advantages of sites for the expansion of existing and new industrial precincts.
- Protect and recognise existing industrial precincts and uses to avoid any land use conflicts from future residential development, especially for land surrounding the Balranald aerodrome and logistics hub.
- Encourage the co-location of complementary industry alongside agricultural enterprises that enhance the efficiency of the agricultural land use.
- Advocate for upgraded aerodrome facilities in-step with industry air transport/freight demand.

Action	Timeframe
1. Investigate opportunity to establish a heavy transport hub located adjacent to the grain rail siding and old sale yards along Sturt Hwy (over the bridge ~2km out of town, past Malcolm Street on left heading south)	2025
2. Undertake a 20yr infrastructure plan identifying key road assets that support our industries	2022
3. Finalise roads asset management plan	2021
4. Ensure planning applications and approvals are completed within the statutory timeframes	Continuous

## Agriculture

Agriculture is the major industry in the Balranald LGA due to a favourable climate, good soil types, plentiful supply of large tracts of land and access to irrigation water. In order to leverage these strengths and take advantage of growing demand for fresh, high quality produce, Council will protect important agricultural land. This planning priority reflects Balranald's aspirations to support its agricultural identity and to ensure a strong local economy that capitalises on the favourable climate and strategic connectivity to domestic and international markets via regional freight routes.

The Department of Primary Industries (Agriculture), intends to prepare maps identifying the important agricultural lands in the Balranald Shire area. This will assist planning processes to confidently proceed with agricultural and related industry investment and development. Some examples of the emerging land uses of strategic planning concern include;

- the establishment of tree nut farms on irrigated pasture and cereal farming (through the Weimby-Windomal area)
- any urban expansion of Euston into existing, high-quality horticultural land;
- extractive industries (Gypsum, Bentonite, Gravel and Mineral Sands); and
- large scale solar projects.

Balranald is taking proactive steps to manage land use conflicts and impacts on primary producers by committing to the NSW Right to Farm Policy. This aims to reinforce rights and responsibilities, strengthen land use planning, improve education and awareness that supports farmers exercising their right to farm.

However, to ensure land use planning conflicts between emerging land uses, more work is required. Understanding the full extent of a changing agricultural area is a key priority. Balranald will collaborate with industry and the NSW Department of Primary Industries to investigate and implement measures supporting emerging horticultural land uses (such as the nut plantations) and traditional agricultural practices.

In response to growing demand from Asian economies both volume and high-value agricultural food produce, the local irrigated horticulture is expected to continue to grow steadily. The associated value-added manufacturing sector may expand through competitive advantages. This has been observed along the NSW and Victorian sides of the Murray River as investors seek to establish new irrigated horticultural plantings close to water sources and new manufacturing plants near transport routes, which Balranald Shire offers.

As these sectors grow Balranald's population is expected to increase. Whilst the majority of growth and related workers' accommodation will be focused in our towns, Council will support/facilitate/educate/work with the agricultural industry to establish quality on farm accommodation that supports a seasonal workforce and agricultural practices.

Council will:

- Provide the capacity for the horticulture industry to grow on large and relatively unencumbered areas of land close to the Murrumbidgee or Murray rivers, or existing water infrastructure and the Sturt Highway and Murray River crossings

- Advocate for and collaboratively provide efficient and competitive transport and infrastructure connections to domestic and international markets
- Support the transition of agricultural land uses subject to site and soil suitability, water entitlements and statutory land management considerations that may apply in lease agreements issued under the *Western Lands Act 1901*.
- Protect important agricultural lands in local planning controls.
- Facilitate the development of new, innovative and compatible non-agricultural land uses and development, particularly tourism development, on or near productive agricultural land while protecting productive agricultural land use.
- Prioritise new value-added manufacturing (food processing, packaging and manufacturing) including on site sales (farm gate retail) and related transport facilities, on land with safe and efficient access to the Sturt and Murray Valley Highways.
- Continue to implement and advocate the *NSW Right to Farm Policy*.
- Avoid agricultural land fragmentation by maintaining the existing rural lands minimum lots size provisions in the Balranald Shire Local Environmental Plans.
- Manage agricultural land use conflict by:
  - Supporting pre-existing, lawfully operating agricultural land uses, in cases of vexatious complaints
  - Avoiding locating incompatible land uses in and adjacent to agricultural production areas.
  - Preventing the encroachment of incompatible land uses.
  - Ensuring that land use standards for LEP minimum subdivision sizes enable an economically viable agricultural sector.
- Assess our Shire's applicability to be a special activation precinct should industry start to get significant traction.

Action	Timeframe
<b>5. Approve on-farm residential applications in line with the Balranald Local Environmental Plan 2010</b>	Continuous
<b>6. Commission a rural land use strategy</b>	2025
<b>7. Value agriculture in decisions about land uses</b>	Continuous
<b>8. Adopt <i>Right to Farm</i> policy</b>	December 2020



## Resources

Balranald Shire has natural resources that are economically and environmentally important to the region and to the State including large deposits of mineral sands. There are currently several solar projects in the early stages of investigation or under construction that represent a potential combined investment of \$425 million and possibly 400 construction jobs.

Within Balranald Shire there are several large-scale extractive industries providing a range of quarry products. Gypsum is an important product for agricultural soil conditioning. Gravel quarrying provides a strong local pavement/foundation material for civil construction. This is essential for the general construction industry and rail and road construction purposes, as well as a valuable employment activity.

Council will support new and existing extractive industries in locations with safe access to a well maintained local and regional road network and minimal impacts on surrounding residents and agricultural lands. Although mineral prospectively and mine development is covered by the NSW Mining Act, Council will need to ensure it has a broad-based, collaborative process for planning issues which arise.

Access to transmission infrastructure, land availability and favourable climate conditions make Balranald Shire a competitive location for large scale solar, energy storage, and associated renewable energy generation technologies. There are significant long-term, sustainable benefits of renewable resources that Balranald Shire could leverage to provide necessary infrastructure, energy security, employment and education and community investments benefitting the economy and residents.

Balranald Shire Council aspires to become an International Centre for Excellence in Solar Renewable technologies. It needs to undertake a focussed investment attraction strategy, to establish and develop research facilities. Planning needs to account for further investment in solar infrastructure, subject to Balranald maintaining its comparative advantages and collaboration with the private sector.

When reviewing the implications and impacts of large-scale solar farms and other major projects, strategic planning must include the potential corollary of conflict between project-driven urban expansion and productivity of agricultural land.

This requires a strategic approach, streamlining large scale solar operations and identifying optimum land to support solar infrastructure. Balranald Shire will collaborate with industry and other levels of government to ensure quality development in accordance with economic and environmental balance.

Council will:

- Support solar energy projects using the principles of comparative and competitive advantage, which minimise impacts on productivity of agricultural land, Aboriginal cultural heritage, biodiversity, and the amenity of residents.
- Advocate for and negotiate local community contributions by all new major power generation projects, to benefit the Balranald Shire community.
- Protect the Shire's road transport networks from the heavy traffic demands of extractive industries ensuring these roads can be maintained through equitable cost arrangements.

- Identify suitable areas for transmission grid capacity, while minimising the potential impacts on residents, agricultural lands and natural assets.

Action	Timeframe
<b>9. Ensure roads used for extractive material haulage have the capacity to support the activity</b>	Continuous
<b>10. Activate contributions from solar farm proposals for community projects through negotiations in stakeholder consultation and pre consent stages of proposals</b>	When proposals are submitted within the LGA
<b>11. Commence analysis of transmission grid corridor options through collaboration with utility agencies</b>	2025

## Utility Infrastructure

Infrastructure is critical to the proper functioning and wellbeing of the community so timely, well-managed maintenance and development programs are a key to economic development.

Understanding the current capacity and planned investments in utility infrastructure throughout the Shire will enable Council to capitalise on any opportunities for economic and housing growth. Critical infrastructure investments will be identified through Council analysis. Planned growth should be aligned with upgrades to town water, wastewater, electricity and telecommunication facilities. Aligning these utility infrastructure projects with future growth opportunities and *Operational Plan (2019-2020) and Overarching Asset Management Plan (2017)* is a key initiative of this planning priority.

Water sensitive urban design techniques will be incorporated through the strategic planning and development phases, to relieve pressure on Council's existing stormwater and water infrastructure networks and to respond to the fluctuation in climatic events and water security challenges. They will support catchment, retention and reuse both on private and public land. Balranald Shire Council should show planning initiative - leading by example.

To meet the future needs of the community, several sewer networks and sewer treatment projects are currently being earmarked at a local level. These include the integrated water cycle management plan and construction upgrades of water infrastructure (on the Murray and Murrumbidgee) and the extension of water and sewer to Euston's irrigation co-operative area. Securing future funding opportunities to contribute to the ongoing management, upgrade and construction of these facilities will be crucial to the delivery of this priority.

Digital services will play a greater role in the connectivity of communities for social and economic purposes, such as

- distance education;
- training and health services for communities;
- accessing customers and suppliers for growers and producer;
- enabling precision agriculture techniques such as spraying, virtual fencing and optimal harvesting; and
- supporting digital trends in product differentiation such as distributed ledger tracking and verification for farm-to-plate goods.

Council has a critical collaborative role by working together with telecommunication providers and other level of Government, identifying new suitable locations to fill telecommunication gaps in the Balranald Shire. Council will assist providers to identify these areas and facilitate the establishment of upgraded or new telecommunication facilities.

Essential Energy is the state-owned electricity infrastructure company which owns, maintains and operates the electrical distribution within Balranald Shire. The existing electricity network capabilities rely on sourcing electricity from other areas. In advocating for the growing economy and population have access to a reliable energy source, Council will be required to collaborate with Essential Energy to identify potential future demand.

Transgrid operates and maintains the high voltage electricity transmission in NSW. As Balranald Shire is on the route of the proposed high voltage interconnector (HVI) between NSW and South Australia, there is an expectation that several more solar farms will be built in the immediate area within a decade. The current corridor runs East-West through the south of Balranald Shire. Council has successfully lobbied for the proposed HVI alignment to utilise the current HV corridor. This upgrade will incentivise further renewable electrical generation projects within Shire creating land demand adjacent to future substations along the corridor.

Council will:

- Align plans for residential, industrial and commercial growth with water and wastewater capabilities.
- Investigate funding opportunities to upgrade utility infrastructure facilities.
- Lobby for improvements to mobile phone coverage across the Shire.

Action	Timeframe
<b>12. Advocate for and support land use for improved telecommunications</b>	Continuous
<b>13. Complete identified upgrades and construction projects within Councils Operational Plan and Overarching Asset Management Plan (2017)</b>	Continuous
<b>14. Develop a 20-year infrastructure plan in accordance with the Community Strategic Plan 2020-2040</b>	2022
<b>15. Make application to undertake Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy</b>	2021
<b>16. Promptly investigate water infrastructure upgrades for both townships to increase capacity</b>	2022
<b>17. Extend Euston town water/sewer to Euston irrigation co-op area (the village)</b>	2025



## Tourism

Tourism is an emerging driver of growth in Balranald Shire and opportunities presented by sustainable, nature-based, cultural, and experiential tourism will enhance and diversify the economy.

Tourism offerings include the five major rivers, national parks, and aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultural heritage. Popular visitor areas include picturesque Euston on the Murray River, as well as Yanga National Park and the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area which includes the internationally renowned Mungo National Park. Food and agri-tourism have future opportunities, supported by this LSPS and the Community Strategic Plan.

River-based tourism is increasingly popular with much of the region's tourism, driven by recreational and river experiences along the Murray, Wakool and Murrumbidgee rivers. Euston is a riverside gem, surrounded by grapevines and boasting historical and modern infrastructure, lazing on the banks of Australia's highest-profile river.

Improving access and connections to our rivers will play an important role in continuing to attract visitors to Balranald Shire. Healthy and functioning waterways will be a priority to ensure the continued growth of tourism in the Shire and region.

The Shire will further its reputation as a 'Gateway to the Outback' by marketing its high quality, modern tourism offerings and attracting others to locate onto sites that take advantage of the river, rural landscape or nature-based settings.

### Council will:

- Continue to develop tourism capacity within Balranald, Euston and surrounds.
- Develop and implement marketing activities that increase awareness of the tourism brand and products, drives visitors to the Shire, converts travellers into visitors and encourages visitors to stay longer.
- Improve and maintain the presentation of all Shire towns and localities including their atmosphere, facilities, assets and infrastructure, recognising the importance of tourism to the region.
- Deliver exceptional visitor services that will motivate visitors to stay longer, to return and to share their positive experiences with others.
- Seek out grant opportunities to enable investment in quality infrastructure and assets.
- Increase and update tourism assets and associated wayfinding and notification signage within the Shire.
- Provide visitors with outstanding unforgettable experiences that keep them coming back and encourage them to travel further and explore outback and remote destinations.

Action	Timeframe
18. Work with other entities such as Service NSW/ Easy to Do Business and BEC Business Advice and encourage business initiatives that target tourism and visitation to the shire	Continuous
19. Recognise our 'hero' iconic and unique destination landscapes and grow marketing strategies to attract visitors to the region	Continuous
20. Increase collaboration within all levels of NSW Destination networks, including cross border organisations, to deliver value in partnership cooperative programs	Continuous
21. Seek out grant opportunities to enable investment in quality infrastructure and assets	Continuous

## OUR SOCIETY

- Sustainable Settlements
- Vibrant Places

### Sustainable Settlements

Balranald Shire's continuing economic development will require a better and broader commitment to improving housing. Council has an influential but not solo role in achieving this. Housing diversity will be achieved gradually with the benefit of a sound planning strategy

According to the 2016 ABS Census, housing in Balranald, Euston, Kyalite and Oxley is dominated by single dwellings (90.6% of all housing), with 77.3% of housing containing 3 or more bedrooms. Home ownership is notable with 41.3% of homeowners owning their property outright and 24.6% owning with a mortgage. There is a significant rental market with 28.7% of residents renting properties. In the five years 2014-2019, eighteen new homes have been built in Balranald and Euston. In small rural towns, these properties represent confidence in and commitment to the future.

#### Balranald

Located on the Sturt Highway and the Murrumbidgee River, Balranald's history is tied to agriculture and transport industries. The Shire's largest town has a population of 1,343 people.

Balranald is dominated by separate houses and sheds on large standard residential allotments or larger residential lots. In accordance with the *Balranald Strategic Planning Framework 2005*, housing blocks have been strategically planned by Council to minimise subdividing agricultural lands and utilise existing infrastructure capacities and investments.

Recent emergence of irrigated tree nut farms and large-scale solar farms has caused a rise in local full-time employment; some 30 new FTEs for Horticulture/Irrigation; 20 new FTEs for Solar Farms representing an estimated five percent rise in Balranald township's population.

Future demand needs to be reconsidered. Balranald Shire Council will partner with NSW Crown Lands to negotiate redevelopment of Freehold lands and Crown Reserve lands encompassing the Balranald Golf Course (assigned for recreational use) identified in Figure 3.

The strategic and practical intent is to achieve housing to suit temporary workforces, DIDO workers and aged care housing. Council's strategic and functional partnerships with other organisations should deliver a practical and diverse result.

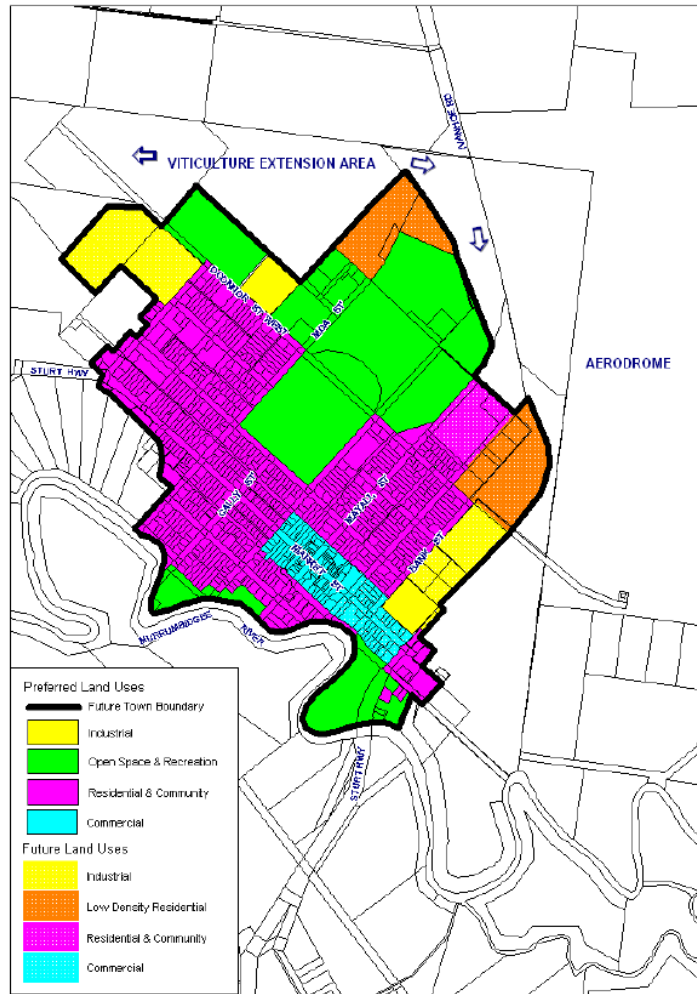


Figure 3: Balranald Land Use Map

## Euston

Located 80km west of Balranald, on the Sturt Highway close to the western end of the 663 km Murray Valley Highway, Euston is the Shire's second-largest settlement.

Its location on the Murray River encouraged horticulture, especially table grape growing and it is economically influenced by the nearby larger Victorian township of Robinvale. It has a successful club, housed in a large contemporary and spectacular building on the Murray River foreshore.

Typical of a country town the housing allotments are generally large with detached dwellings. The recent residential subdivision north of the town centre, fronting the Murray River, has proven successful through a combination of allotment size, affordability and the generally good quality houses built there.

Any expansion of the area will require careful planning due to the proximity of quality horticultural land.

Euston's horticultural area is highly productive with a high number of seasonal and itinerant workers. Council will use the planning system in Euston to accommodate this workforce through a variety of housing.

Euston also adjoins the township of Robinvale.

According to the 2016 Census, Robinvale has a resident population of 3,531 but this does not take into consideration seasonal contract labour which is estimated to add an extra 3,000 people into the region to fulfil horticulture, agriculture and manufacturing shortfalls during peak times.

The challenge of inadequate accommodation is a critical issue for the seasonal workforce and is an economic constraint on the agricultural sector. A lack of seasonal accommodation is seen as a risk to the availability of workers. Currently large numbers of people are sharing single houses and seasonal workers often do not have their own transport nor hold a local driver’s licence. Workforce housing issues are identified as:

- Shortage of low-cost accommodation;
- Shortage of high-quality short-term accommodation suitable for professionals (other than motels);
- Shortage of temporary accommodation to suit more transient workforce populations;
- Styles of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of diverse groups; and
- Accommodation for specific industry workforce.

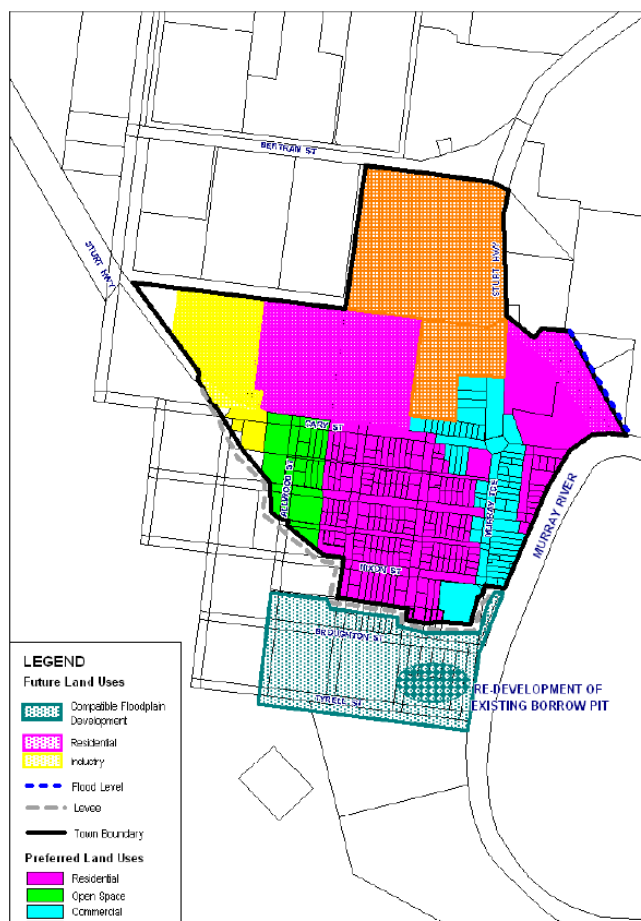


Figure 4: Euston Land Use Map

## Kyalite

Like many small Australian towns, Kyalite provided housing and basic retail service in a past era. The small collection of buildings is focussed on the local pub and there is a grain receival facility. Only some



investment decision, based on surrounding, significant economic productivity will change the location's future. It acts as a community point for properties in the locality.

Council will:

Undertake a range of actions, driven by economic development imperatives, in accordance with the Community Strategic Plan and given planning support by this LSPS as specified in the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979, as follows:

- Partner with Crown Lands to enable the development of land under the Western Land Lease around Balranald.
- Seek innovative and cost-effective housing to suit contemporary needs and costs
- Facilitate new residential development opportunities in locations identified in the Balranald Shire Strategic Framework.
- Collaborate with aged care providers to investigate opportunities to expand aged care housing opportunities, including aging in place.
- Facilitate new residential development opportunities in locations identified in the Balranald Strategic Framework. These areas will:
  - Be located to avoid areas that are identified as important agricultural land or areas that create potential for land use conflict;
  - Ensure land use planning facilitates diverse housing solutions;
  - Align with the utility infrastructure network and its capabilities;
  - Avoid or mitigate the impacts of hazards, including the implications of climate change;
  - Protect areas with high environmental value and/or cultural heritage value and important biodiversity corridors;
  - Not hinder development or urban expansion and will contribute to the function of existing townships;
  - Create new neighbourhoods that are environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, easy to get to, healthy and safe.
- Continue to recognise and respect the opportunities and constraints around each settlement area as identified in the Balranald Strategic Framework.

Action	Timeframe
<b>22. Prepare a Land Release Strategy for Euston and Balranald</b>	2030
<b>23. Economic Development Strategy to identify market accommodation needs</b>	2025
<b>24. Continue to develop aged care facility options</b>	Continuous
<b>25. Transient population study</b>	2025

## Vibrant Places

There are two basic elements to the vibrancy of communities – the physical setting whether natural or built, and the activities which routinely or occasionally happen.

Balranald and Euston have sound examples of each. The built environments include some of the historic buildings, many with changes of use since construction so their maintenance and preservation is a valuable part of community vibrancy. Contemporary buildings, like the Balranald Discovery Centre and the Euston Club have contributed to the vibrancy dynamic, with potential to influence their surroundings in the long-term.

The range of basic facilities and places found in a community, provide for lifestyle and community engagement. Open space, reserves and parks, sporting facilities and streetscapes are often taken for granted. Balranald and Euston have these, and the Shire is mindful of its central role in managing and improving them.

With the Sturt Highway passing through both Balranald and Euston, streetscape design parameters, to balance the legal requirements of a national highway standard and the appearance and ambience of a main business street, are happening as projects or included in strategic planning.

Vibrancy is not the responsibility of Council or government alone. Privately owned properties are often the largest group of buildings and facilities which reflect the physical activity and values of a community. Hotels, commercial properties and private homes indicate the personal and collective values of a community.

Through Council's Operational and Delivery Plans, Council has committed to several key community infrastructure projects. To ensure the success of these and future projects Council will actively pursue funding opportunities so that as development occurs, community facilities will also be improved.

### Council will:

- Protect the function of core commercial areas and provide opportunity to generate additional services and offerings.
- Provide accessible pedestrian areas within main commercial areas, while maintaining the character of main streets.
- Actively seek opportunities/funding to upgrade/ provide community facilities throughout the shire.
- Provide and review community infrastructure to cater for the changing population.
- Explore opportunities to further enhance and develop Euston/ Robinvale walking track.

Action	Timeframe
<b>26. Design and execute township masterplans implementation for both Euston and Balranald incorporating places and spaces that are healthy to live in, to work in and to visit</b>	2030
<b>27. Design and execute Greenham Park and Euston Recreation Complexes masterplans</b>	2025
<b>28. Review and expand the pedestrian access management policy to permit sustainable transport options</b>	2025

## OUR ENVIRONMENT

- Environmental and Heritage Assets

### Environment and Heritage

Balranald has a diverse natural environment that is valued by residents and visitors alike.

Broadly, Balranald Shire can be divided into two geographic regions: the wetlands (incorporating the five rivers and their associated wetland connectors and lakes) and the outback including such environmental assets as the Mungo National Park and the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area.

These two segments encompass contrasting ecosystems that provide significant wildlife habitats for a wide range of native flora and fauna. They also provide opportunity for the Shire to attract visitors for outback and wetland journeys, with many of the national parks providing great places to camp, hike and undertake 4WD touring, contributing to the 'Outback' experience for both international and domestic travellers.

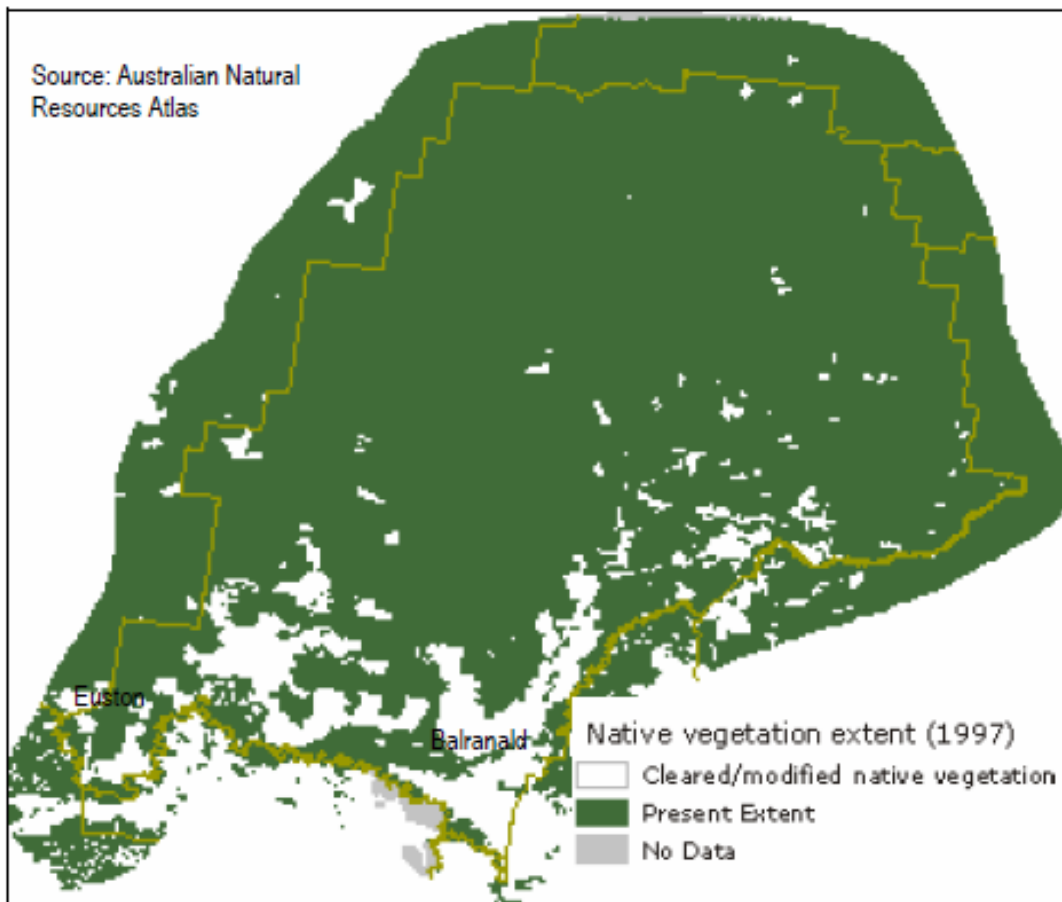
As part of the *Balranald Shire Strategic Framework Plan*, Council understands the importance of environmental assets (vegetation, wetlands, rivers and catchment areas) and Council's planning documents recognise them.

The importance of the Mungo National Park and the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area has been identified and marketed. Their environmental significance has been recognised through World Heritage and National Parks planning controls and land management programs. Council will seek opportunity to facilitate and support both conservation and remediation efforts in these areas and the protection of habitat and threatened species. These environmental values and the extent to which new development may impact them are part of the planning process.

The Murray River, Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Wakool Rivers are integral to Balranald Shire. Irrigation, tourism and settlements rely on these river systems to survive and prosper. Both aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultural heritage are inherently connected to the rivers and waterways. Ensuring that river and wetland ecosystem services are optimised, to support the environment and the economy, is a key goal of Council, requiring the strengthened collaboration of Council and community with both State and Commonwealth Governments.

The environmental values and assets along the river systems are dependent on environmental water flows, as well as the general health of the river and wetland ecosystems.

Within the broader context of water management in the Murray-Darling Basin, Council will contribute to sustainable river and wetland ecosystems through consideration of land uses along the river. It will commit to using water resources responsibly and efficiently, championing sustainable water use and delivering upgraded waste disposal infrastructure.



Council will:

- Promote and preserve our natural environment and wildlife habitat.
- Support NSW Government agencies to further develop and provide opportunity for the natural areas of Mungo National Park, the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area, Murray, Lachlan, Edward, Murrumbidgee and Wakool Rivers.
- Advocate to State and Commonwealth for improved river weir and regulator infrastructure to optimise both operational flexibility in delivering irrigation water, and efficiently managing wetland ecologies through regulated environmental flows.
- Seek (funding) opportunities to undertake environmental management studies in consultation with government and community to update and inform new biodiversity mapping layer in the BLEP.
- Protect, conserve and promote the world heritage values of the Willandra Lakes region for future generations in accordance with:
  - i. *'Sustaining the Willandra' Plan*
  - ii. Mungo National Park Plan of Management
  - iii. *Willandra Lakes Regional Environmental Plan No 1*; and
  - iv. the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999



Action	Timeframe
<b>29. Fix the Balranald Weir pool infrastructure to deliver optimal environment and economic outcomes</b>	2035
<b>30. Relentlessly advocate to regional, state and national organisations to commit to managing and improving the supply and use of water resources</b>	Continuous
<b>31. Through knowledge networks, ensure support for landholders in their understanding and management of dryland ecologies</b>	Continuous
<b>32. Use the planning system to the limit, to deliver economic/environmental balance in zonings and processing Development Applications</b>	Continuous
<b>33. Include heritage and outstanding contemporary assets in community asset planning and the Balranald-Euston brand</b>	Continuous
<b>34. Prepare Cultural Heritage Studies to inform amendments/review of Council's LEP</b>	2030

**Table 1: Relationship with Regional Plans and Strategies**

LSPS Priority	Liveability			Productivity			Environment and Resources		
	Sustainable settlements	Vibrant Places	Utility Infrastructure	Agricultural Lands	Supporting Our Industry	Grow Tourism	Resources	Natural Environment	Climate Change and Natural Hazards
<i>Far West Regional Plan Directions</i>	<p><i>Direction 20: Manage change in settlements</i></p> <p><i>Direction 25: Provide greater housing choice</i></p> <p><i>Direction 29: Manage rural residential development</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 5: Promote Tourism Opportunities</i></p> <p><i>Direction 25: Improve public and community transport services</i></p> <p><i>Direction 30: Create healthy built environments</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 26: Manage and conserve water resources for communities</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 1: Grow the agribusiness sector, value-added manufacturing opportunities and supply chains</i></p> <p><i>Direction 2: Protect agricultural land and plan for greater land use compatibility</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 6: Unlock economic potential through improved freight transport infrastructure</i></p> <p><i>Direction 7: Improve regional air connections</i></p> <p><i>Direction 12: Enhance the productivity of employment lands</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 5: Promote Tourism Opportunities</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 9: Direction 3: Sustainably manage mineral resources</i></p> <p><i>Direction 4: Diversify energy supply through renewable energy generation</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 13: Protect and manage many environmental assets</i></p>	<p><i>Direction 17: Manage natural hazards</i></p>
Western Murray REDS				<p><i>Drive growth in high-value agriculture and value adding in agricultural product manufacturing</i></p>		<p><i>Enhance and diversify the economy by leveraging growth opportunities in Tourism</i></p>	<p><i>Grow the Mining industry and Construction industries by capitalising on the Region's mineral and solar endowments</i></p>		

**REFERENCES**

---

<sup>i</sup> Western Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2018