



# **FAR NORTH WEST**

JOINT ORGANISATION

## **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE STATEMENT**

**2024-2025**

*Prepared in accordance with the provisions of section 428(1) of the Local Government Act 1993 and sections 217 and 397(j) of the Local Government (General Regulation) 2021.*

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# About the Far North West Joint Organisation

## Membership

The Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO) was proclaimed under the *Local Government Act 1993* in May 2018 with the inaugural board meeting held on 20 July 2018 in Bourke. Membership of the Organisation is voluntary, and the current membership is made up of:

- Bourke Shire Council
- Cobar Shire Council
- Walgett Shire Council

The FNWJO Board comprises the Mayors of the Member Councils (the voting members), as well the NSW Government, represented by a nominee of the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, currently the Regional Director, Coordination Western at the Department of Premier and Cabinet (NSW) (a non-voting member) an Engagement Officer appointed by the Office of Local Government (non -voting member) and the General Managers of the Member Councils (also non-voting members). The Board is supported by an Executive Officer who was appointed on a fixed-term contract working 21 hours per week.

## Purpose

Joint Organisations (JOs) are legal entities established by the NSW Government to work across traditional council boundaries. JOs aim to transform the way that the NSW Government and local councils work together to collaborate, plan, set priorities and deliver projects on a regional scale across the state.

## Role and Function

The principal functions of the FNWJO are defined in section *400R of the Local Government Act 1993* and are as follows:

### **1. Strategic Planning:**

Establish strategic regional priorities for the Joint Organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.

### **2. Leadership and Advocacy:**

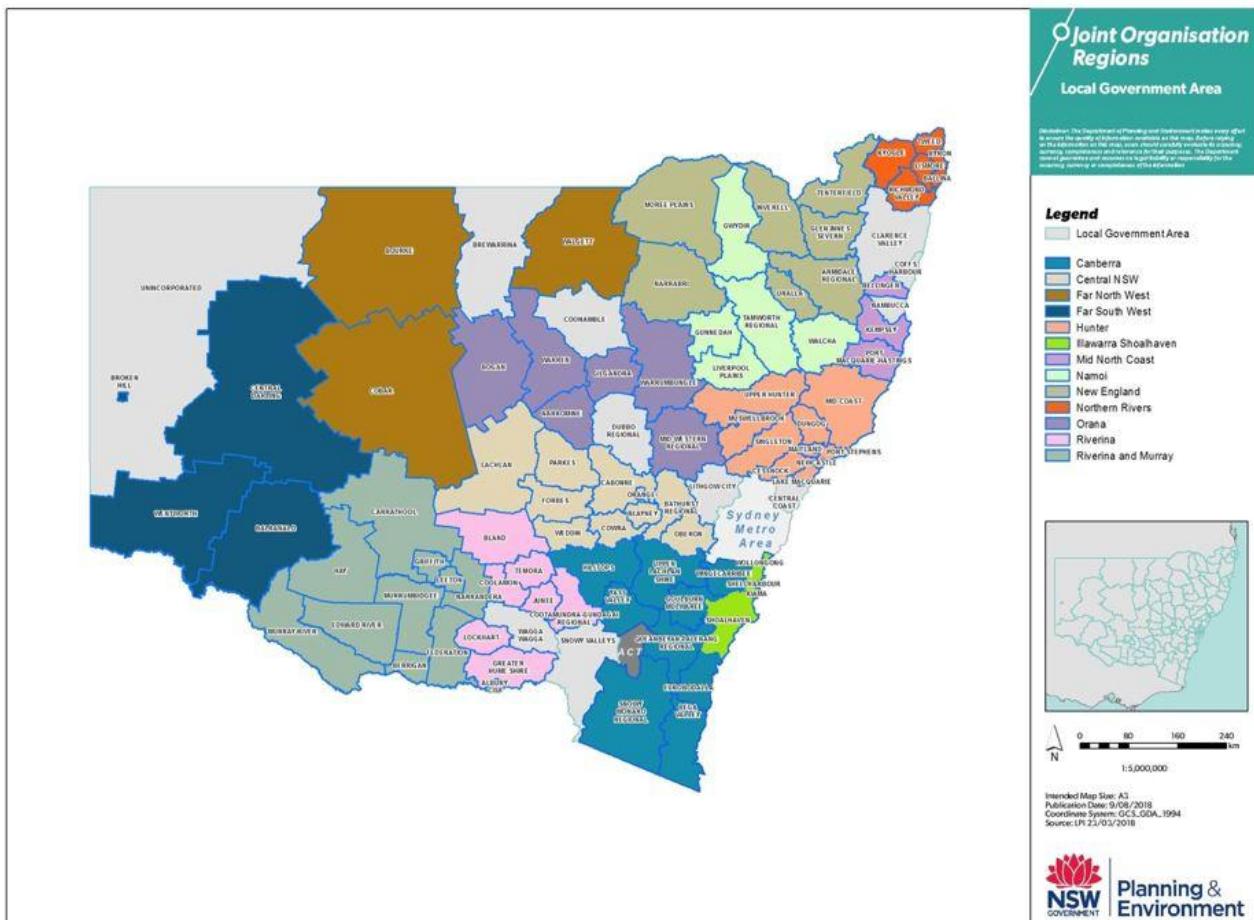
Provide regional leadership for the Joint Organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.

### **3. Intergovernmental Collaboration:**

Identify and take up opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation on matters relating to the Joint Organisation area.

In addition, the Far North West Joint Organisation will also provide support for the operations of its Member Councils aimed at strengthening local government in the Joint Organisation area.

## MEMBERSHIP OF JOINT ORGANISATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES



# Our Vision and Principles

## Our vision for the Far North West

***“A connected region of diversity and opportunity that cares for its people and environment.”***

We acknowledge the challenges that we face but we are committed to working in collaboration to address these challenges,

### **The principles we are committed to.**

- We will make decisions and support initiatives, programs and projects based on the evidence and what is best for the entire region.
- We will focus on the strategic vision for our region and our communities.
- We will be respectful of our member Councils' representatives, work cooperatively, communicate often and ensure good governance.
- We will work collaboratively across all levels of government and with other key partners and stakeholders in the region.
- We will make informed decisions that consider the risks and benefits.
- We will deliver projects, initiatives and programs, applying sound project management methodologies and financial rigour.
- We will support others' project delivery that benefits our region and aligns with our strategic vision.
- We will support and celebrate the success of our member Councils and identify strategies and actions where we can share and work together for service delivery.
- We will embrace technologies to address our priorities.

## Delegates to the Far North West Joint Organisation as of 30th June 2025

COBAR SHIRE COUNCIL- MAYOR COUNCILLOR JARROD MARSDEN

COUNCILLOR MARSDEN IS CHAIR OF THE FAR NORTH WEST JOINT ORGANISATION



WALGETT SHIRE COUNCIL- MAYOR COUNCILLOR JASEN RAMIEN



BOURKE SHIRE COUNCIL – MAYOR COUNCILLOR LACHLAN FORD



EXECUTIVE OFFICER – ROSS EARL



# Regional Priorities

## Where do we want our region to be in the future?

While the Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities primarily provides direction for the Joint Organisation during the current local government term (to 2025), it will also identify our objectives and shape our direction beyond that. It should be noted that the Statement of Regional Priorities is due to be updated within twelve (12) months of the quadrennial Local Government elections, and it is anticipated that the updated Statement of Regional Priorities will go to Council prior to that time for review, amendment as necessary and adoption. Given strong possibility of both Central Darling Shire and Coonamble Shire also becoming members a further review would enable the document to reflect the contemporary membership.

Its priorities and goals have been identified through inputs from each of our member Councils and their communities (as described in each Shire's Community Strategic Plan). In addition, State Government planning has also identified priorities and objectives for the Far North West which have been considered in this planning process.

To summarise, our region's goals include:

<b>Liveable communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Connected communities (digital, transport, social connection)</li><li>✓ Enhanced access to health services</li><li>✓ Communities that people want to live in</li><li>✓ Things for our residents and visitors to do.</li><li>✓ Housing development</li><li>✓ Education opportunities</li><li>✓ Safe communities</li><li>✓ Sustainable employment opportunities</li></ul>
<b>Sustainable environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Healthy river systems</li><li>✓ Resilience to climate change impacts</li></ul>
<b>Prosperous economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ A vibrant, flourishing regional tourism industry, including cultural tourism experiences and products... a tourism destination.</li><li>✓ Business development</li><li>✓ Self-sufficient air service</li><li>✓ Increased investment in the region</li></ul>
<b>Leadership and governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ A sustainable Joint Organisation</li><li>✓ Combined efforts to get best value for investment.</li><li>✓ Share resources to maximise outcomes (procurement practice, technical and specialist skills, Audit Risk &amp; Improvement committee)</li><li>✓ Technology is embraced</li></ul>
<b>Community infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Water security, and secure supply for our towns and villages</li><li>✓ Energy security and sustainable power supply</li><li>✓ Improved transport routes, including enhanced north/south freight corridor</li></ul>

## Chairman's Report



It is my pleasure to provide my first report as Chairperson of the Far North West Joint Organisation.

I have served on the Far North West Joint Organisation since September 2023 when I was elected Mayor of Cobar following the decision of the then Mayor Councillor Peter Abbott not to seek re-election and was elected as Chairman of the Far North West Joint Organisation on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 following the 2024 Local Government quadrennial elections.

I am joined on the Board by Councillor Jason Ramien who was also appointed to the Board in September 2023 following his election as Mayor of Walgett Shire and Councillor Lachlan Ford Bourke Shire who was elected Mayor of Bourke Shire in September 2024.

The previous Chair of the Far North West Joint Organisation, Councillor Barry Hollman, chose not to contest the 2024 quadrennial elections. Councillor Hollman served as Chairperson of the Joint Organisation since the passing of the inaugural Chairperson Councillor Lilliane Brady in February 2021 up until September 2024.

On behalf of all member Councils, I would like to thank Councillor Hollman for his service with the Far North West Joint Organisation firstly, as a member of the initial Board, and then as Chairperson for three and a half years.

Councillor Hollman provided great leadership to the Far North West Joint Organisation during his period as Chair and not only worked to ensure that the Board worked collaboratively but also built strong relationships with its member Councils and other Councils with which it interacted. Councillor Hollman also appreciated the value of establishing strong relationships with all levels of government.

Councillor Hollman and his fellow Board members worked hard to continue the efforts to build relationships with the previous state Government and continued these efforts with renewed vigor following the election of the Labor Government led by the current Premier Hon Chris Minns MP.

On behalf of the residents of Far North West Joint Organisation I thank Councillor Hollman for his efforts, as I do to all members both past and present.

Together with my fellow board members I have continued to try and build strong relationships with all Ministers and Departmental Officers to ensure that they get a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing communities in the Far West of the State. We have endeavored to highlight the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities that residents and Councils within the FNWJO face and what can be done to improve the amenity and livability of the area, recognising the significant contribution that the area has to the New South Wales economy.

One of the features of the FNWJO has been the strong desire of all delegates and Board Members over that time to ensure that positive outcomes were achieved for communities within the footprint of the FNWJO. This has been demonstrated by the strong collaborative relationship that exists and the willingness of all Board Members to work for the benefit of the region as a whole and not be focused on their own local government area.

The FNWJO is the smallest Joint Organisation in New South Wales in terms of population and number of Councils. Despite the membership of the FNWJO being only three Councils, those being Cobar, Bourke and Walgett and the combined geographic area of the three Councils being more than 110,000 square Kilometres or 13.5% of the State of New South Wales the success of the FNWJO is obvious.

At this point in time Coonamble Shire Council and Central Darling Shire have expressed interest in becoming members of the Far North West Joint Organisation, firstly as associate members then as full members. This increase in membership will provide the Far North West Joint Organisation with not only a larger membership base but also a stronger financial base and given that fixed costs will remain stagnant in most instances it will assist in the longer-term sustainability of FNWJO.

With the inclusion of Coonamble and Central Darling Shires the area of the Far North West Joint Organisation will increase to 172,900 square kilometres or around 22% of the land mass of New South Wales which is a very significant portion of the state. Although sparsely populated the area provides a significant injection into the economy of both New South Wales and Australia and although not without challenges the area offers a unique lifestyle the benefits of which in my view are markedly undervalued by those who have yet to experience it.

There has been a review of Joint Organisations in New South Wales which has been ongoing for some time, however, at this stage it has not progressed as quickly as it should, given that some JOs across the state have gone into recess or are functioning at a significantly reduced level. The concept of Joint Organisations has been embraced by some, but others see them as another level of bureaucracy rather than a conduit to regional cooperation and efficiency.

The Minister has several changes under consideration regarding the make-up of the Joint Organisations, and his preferred option is to make all those legislative changes at one time.

The FNWJO would welcome applications from other Councils should they wish to join the FNWJO and in particular those Councils who faces similar challenges to the current members.

The Far North West Joint Organisation continues be involved in advocacy on a number of issues working closely with both the Chairs of the Joint Organisation group and the Executive Officer's network to assist in providing a greater statewide perspective on issues and at the same time speaking of behalf of a significant portion of the regional population

The 2024- 2025 financial year has seen another positive year for the FNWJO and the Board Members both voting and non- voting should be proud of their efforts and achievements.

The Annual Financial Reports and Auditor Reports form part of this report and I am pleased to note the positive report from the Auditors in respect of the way our finances have been managed. Cobar Shire Council undertakes the bulk of the work involved management of the FNWJO financial functions on a fee for service basis and has done so extremely well since the inception of FNWJO.

Briefly some of the major projects that have continued or been undertaken during 2024-25 have included the following and in most instances will be subject to further detail elsewhere in this Statement Annual Performance

### **Provision of Western Air Services**

Without a doubt the ongoing provision of air services to the communities within the FNWJO has been and continues to be perhaps greatest achievement of the FNWJO.

While the services to Bourke, Walgett and Lightning Ridge have not reached the patronage levels anticipated they still provided a valuable resource and connectivity for the residents of those areas.

The Cobar service continues to grow with six return services each week from Cobar to Sydney, all of which are well patronized.

The FNWJO welcomed the funding provided by the State Government in September 2024 that should allow the services to continue until the second half of 2026.

The FNWJO will continue to work hard to ensure ongoing funding becomes available. It would be a major blow for the area socially and economically if the lack of funding support caused the suspension of the air services as they provide significant benefits to the local community and local businesses.

### **Joint Organisation Net Zero (JONZA) Acceleration Program**

The FNWJO is one of nine JOs across regional NSW participating in the Joint Organisations Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Program which is funded by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The aim of the project is to provide support to local government to assist them in contributing to achieving the State's Net Zero targets of 50 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and Net Zero emissions by 2050.

FNWJO has been awarded further JONZA funding to continue the engagement of a Net Zero Manager (as an additional resource to councils) to continue the work commenced in 2023-24 to identify energy and GHG emissions profiles for each Member and Associate Councils up until December 2026

### **Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program**

The other major project is the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program, which is a program jointly funded by the Federal and State Governments which is aimed in part at addressing the impact of drought and looking at ways to reduce the impacts of drought in communities.

The FNWJO has undertaken the role of facilitating development of the Plans for the seven Councils who are part of the Western Plains Functional Economic Zone. The zone has two consortia:

- Consortia RDRP 004 (Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar and Walgett Councils).
- Consortia RDRP 016 (Bogan, Coonamble and Warren Councils).

Consultants were engaged in the preparation of the Plans following comprehensive stakeholder consultation, facilitated by a project Officer engaged by the FNWJO. Each of the plans was subject to a review by the CSIRO.

The plans have been finalised, and the project is now in the implementation stage which involves implementing the strategies and projects identified in the plans and these need to be finalised by the end of November 2025 under the funding agreement.

### **Historical Hotels Tour**

The Historical Hotels Tour has been completed after a long process with the meticulous and time-consuming research being the basis of the tour content. Many of these hotels have been abandoned or no longer exist as the passage of time, the development of transport and changes to the economic and social activities have seen their demise. The tour highlights the importance of these hotels and their communities to the development of Western New South Wales.

The infrastructure being installed at the historic hotel sites sees a blending of history and current technology as the sites will be identified by signposts. In many instances "QR" codes will be included so that visitors can hear about the history on a specially designed mobile application and immerse themselves in the history and visualise what may have been there.

The collaborative efforts of the Board and the Councils are yet another example of not letting lines on maps dictate a project and the project was designed to boost tourism numbers in the west and in particular the three FNWJO members.

## **Facilitation of Shared Audit Risk and Improvement Committees**

In 2023 Far North West Joint Organisation established a shared Audit Risk and Improvement Committee to service its three member Councils being Walgett, Bourke, and Cobar Shires together with Castlereagh Macquarie County Council and the Joint Organisation itself.

The Far North West Joint Organisation facilitates the operation, the shared committee including the recruitment of the independent members and allocation of expenses and in conjunction with the Chair the scheduling and location of meetings.

The facilitation of the Shared Audit Risk and Improvement Committee has resulted in a more cost-effective operation of the committees of all five participating Councils/ Joint Organisations

## **Statement of Strategic Priorities**

The FNWJO has reviewed its Statement of Regional Priorities which required to be done within twelve (12) months of the quadrennial Local Government elections, and the updated Statement of Regional Priorities will go to Council for review, amendment as necessary and adoption. Given strong possibility of both Central Darling Shire and Coonamble Shire also becoming members a further review would enable the document to reflect the contemporary membership.

As I have mentioned previously, the success of the FNWJO to date has been built on the high level of collaboration that has been demonstrated by all Board Members, and I would like to thank all members of the Board both past and present and voting and non- voting for their untiring efforts.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Member for Barwon Roy Butler MP and the staff from The Department of Primary Industry and Regional New South Wales (DPIRD) for their assistance in ensuring that strong cases are presented for funding and issues of concern are able to be highlighted to the responsible Minister and Departments.

These thanks also extend to Gerry Collins Director Regional Coordination Western NSW Premiers Department who is a non-voting member of the FNWJO Board and the Department of Local Government Engagement Officer Katrina Annis-Brown.

I would also like to thank the soon-to-be again retired Executive Officer Ross Earl for his dedicated efforts in his role.

Councillor Jarrod Marsden

Chairperson  
Far North West Joint Organisation

## Update on Regional Priorities

### Role and Function of Joint Organisations

The principal functions of the Far North West Joint Organisation are:

#### 1. Strategic Planning:

Establish strategic regional priorities for the Joint Organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.

#### 2. Leadership and Advocacy:

Provide regional leadership for the Joint Organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.

#### 3. Intergovernmental Collaboration:

Identify and take up opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation on matters relating to the Joint Organisation area.

In addition, the FNWJO will also provide support for the operations of its Member Councils aimed at strengthening local government within the Joint Organisation area.

## Update on Each of the Statutory Functions

### Strategic Planning

The FNWJO adopted a revised Statement of Strategic Priorities in 2022, and a copy of that document is contained in (**Attachment 3**). The periodic revision of the Statement of Regional Priorities ensures the currency of the priorities with a rapidly changing world and legislative requirements.

The FNWJO is required to update its State of Regional Priorities within twelve months of the quadrennial election, and the Board will ensure that the updated Statement of Regional Priorities is reflective of contemporary issues within the footprint of the FNWJO.

The Statement of Strategic Priorities adopted by the Board has five (5) distinct themes and a summary of the progress of each will be provided later in this report.

- Liveable communities
- Sustainable environment
- Prosperous economy
- Leadership and governance
- Community infrastructure

### Leadership and Advocacy

- The Chairman and Executive Officer continue to support the meetings of the Chairs of the Joint Organisations and where possible attend the quarterly meetings either in person or by audio visual link.
- The meetings of the state based Executive Officers network are an important forum for the dissemination of ideas and sharing of information and the Executive Officer is encouraged to actively participate in these meetings and further develop the strong collaborative relationship that exists amongst the Executive Officers of Joint Organisations across the state as well as representatives from various Government Departments
- The Executive Officer is a member and a regular attendee of meetings of the Western Regional Leadership Meetings convened by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

- The Executive Officer maintains regular communication with member Councils particularly with the General Managers and other staff at the appropriate levels.
- The Executive Officer maintains regular contact with the Office of Local Government and in particular the appointed Engagement Officer for the FNWJO.
- The FNWJO has regular contact with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development NSW and also continues to work closely with the Premier's Department
- The FNWJO has regular liaison with Regional Director Riverina Western of Public Works Advisory.
- The FNWJO has established a joint approach to the establishment of an Audit and Risk Committee to service each member Council with the Castlereagh Macquarie County Council also participating in this shared service arrangement. (**Attachment 4**)
- The FNWJO, in conjunction with Cobar Shire Council, has established a Code of Conduct Review Panel as a good governance measure to ensure that, should the need arise, a panel is available to members and others who have expressed interest in accessing the panel to resolve complaints, issues of conduct or other matters.
- Where applicable the FNWJO has provided letters of support for funding requested by member Councils and other organisations within the FNWJO area where there is a regional benefit directly or indirectly.
- The FNWJO has agreed to facilitate the participation of the seven Councils in the Western Plains Functional Economic Zone in the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program. (**Attachment 7**)
- Through the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Program the FNWJO member Councils are aware of their responsibilities in regard to achieving the NSW Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions target and are pro-active in identifying and implementing strategies to assist in reducing emissions. While this Program targets the Joint Organisation member and associate councils, information and advice have been shared with Councils adjoining those in the FNWJO when requested or though be relevant. (**Attachment 5**)

## Intergovernmental Collaboration

- The Chairman and Executive Officer attend the Chairs of JOs regular meetings.
- The Executive Officer attends the meetings of the Executive Officer network meetings.
- The Executive Officer is a delegate to the Western Regional Leadership Group and attends meetings convened by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- The Executive Officer has regular Contact with Office of Local Government Engagement Officer and other officers from the Office of Local Government.
- Regular contact with the Director and staff of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. (DPIRD)
- Regular collaboration with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – in particular the Sustainable Councils Team and the EPA.
- Regular contact with Regional Director Riverina Western of NSW Public Works Advisory.
- The FNWJO has established an Historical Hotels Tour the project provides a strong linkage amongst the communities within each of the member Councils and provides an additional tourism feature to complement the significant investment already undertaken by the member Councils. (**Attachment 6**)
- Where applicable the FNWJO has provided letters of support for funding requested by member Councils where there is a regional benefit.
- Support and advice are provided to member Councils as required.
- Preparedness to liaise with both State and Federal Government agencies on behalf of individual Councils and as a collective as the circumstances warrant such action.
- The FNWJO continues to work both independently, and as part of the broader JO network, to build relationships with agencies at both a State and Federal level.

# Update on the Strategic Priorities of the FNWJO

## Liveable communities

- Continued operation of air services to the towns of Bourke, Cobar, Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Bourke. (**Attachment 8**)
- Allocated funding for the revitalisation and/or establishment of tourism facilities in each Council area to cater for the growing and economically important tourism market.
- The FNWJO is looking to assist Councils in overcoming the housing shortage within the JO area that has become a significant impediment to economic and population growth.
- Supporting member Councils to ensure the availability of medical practitioners on a full- time basis in each town and ensuring that each of the towns retains a medical service which is able to meet the needs of each of the communities.
- Supporting member Councils in ensuring that the ongoing losses of services and facilities is reversed. Maintaining these services and facilities is vital to the sustainability of all towns within the FNWJO area.
- With member Councils looking at initiatives to assist in the attraction and retention of staff and the potential for shared staff if the opportunities arise.
- Monitor statistics and information in relation to crime particularly youth crime which has been highlighted recently and subject to concern of a number of Councils across the State and has been the catalyst for meetings with the Premier and other relevant Ministers.

## Sustainable environment

- Participated in the implementation and coordination of a Contaminated Lands Project on behalf of member Councils and has available an extensive resource pack.
- Member Councils continued to be actively involved with the Western Weirs Strategy and other matters impacting on water security across the region.
- Member Councils are actively involved in the Murray Darling Basin Plan as it impacts on the regional area and monitors developments in this regard.
- Member Councils actively involved in ensuring water security, given the fact that water is effectively the lifeblood of the Far West.
- Member Councils take an active interest in ensuring that the health of the river systems is maintained given that the river systems are effectively the lifeblood of each of the communities.
- The funding provided for the development of tourism facilities also has the additional benefit of preserving the culture, heritage and history of the region.
- The FNWJO is an active member of Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program looking at assisting Councils better utilise various sources of energy and bringing about efficiencies and cost savings (**see Attachment 5**). Whilst primarily a sustainability initiative, the JONZA Program has far reaching impacts and effectively touches on all the major components of the State of Regional Priorities.

## Prosperous economy

- Worked with each member council to develop Regional Tourism Initiatives. (**Attachment 6**)
- Allocated funding for the revitalisation and/or establishment of tourism facilities in each Council area to cater for the growing tourism market. (**Attachment 6**)
- Continued the operation of air services to the towns of Bourke, Cobar, Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Bourke. (**Attachment 8**)
- Actively seeking funding to ensure that the air services currently being provided are able to continue into the future providing much needed connectivity for residents, tourist and providers of specialist services.

- The FNWJO, along with member Councils, liaise with the Federal Member and Telstra to ensure that the region is able to secure state of the art telecommunications and that the “black spots” within the JO are gradually reduced.
- Adopted a pro-active approach in relation to economic investment.
- Allocated funding for the development of an Historical Hotels tour involving all member Councils to further enhance the tourism offering of the area and develop the region as a “destination”. **(Attachment 6)**
- The FNWJO has monitored the impact of the withdrawal or reduction of banking services across the region and the impact on both residents and businesses.

## Leadership and governance

- Coordinated the establishment of a shared Audit Risk and Improvement Committee involving the FNWJO and all member councils together with Castlereagh Macquarie County Council. **(Attachment 4)**.
- Coordinated the lodgement of applications from seven (7) Far West Councils spread over two (2) consortia to enable them to access to obtain funding to establish and implement a Drought Resistance Program. **(Attachment 7)**.
- Executive Officer is a member of the Orana and Far West Leadership group.
- The FNWJO meets legislative requirements and has adopted numerous polices that ensure that there is a strong level of governance and transparency.
- Sought to expand the membership base of the FNWJO with discussions held with Coonamble Central Darling and Brewarrina Shires. Brewarrina has deferred any decision regarding membership. Coonamble has made an application to the Minister for Local Government to join the FNWJO and that application has received the support and endorsement of the FNWJO Board. The Minister is dealing with several issues regarding membership of JOs at the moment and has elected to make all required changes at the same time and as such Coonamble’s application is still awaiting final approval and the future of the Far South West Joint Organisation will influence Central Darlings decision.
- Both the Chairman and the Executive Officer are regular attendees at the meetings of the Chairs of all the JOs across the state and find it valuable for knowledge sharing and the dissemination of ideas.

## Community infrastructure

- Supported efforts by Cobar Shire in seeking funding for funding for the sealing of what is referred to as the Wool Track which would have the benefits of both saving time for the transport industry and providing economic stimulus for several communities along the route.
- Supported a number of organisations across footprint of the FNWJO in their application to obtain funding to improve infrastructure in various towns within the area to provided improved amenity for residents.
- Worked with the NSW DCCEEW to identify the need for additional electric vehicle charging stations in preparation for the anticipated substantial growth in this mode of transport across regional NSW.
- The FNWJO has undertaken a study to determine the need for additional /Upgraded rest areas to improve driver safety. **(Attachment 10)**
- Reviewed the recommendations of the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission’s alternative funding models for Local Water Utilities.
- The FNWJO undertook a condition assessment of Council owned pools within the three (3) Local Government areas. **(Attachment 9)**

# Attachment 1



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

## Statutory Information

## **ATTACHMENT 1A      Additional Information required under section 428(4) of the Local Government Act 1993 to be included the Annual Performance Statement of a Joint Organisation**

In accordance with Section 428 (4) of the *Local Government Act 1993* a Statement of Annual Performance must contain the following:

- a) a copy of the council's audited financial reports prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting* published by the department, as in force from time to time:

***This Information is detailed in Attachment 2***

- b) such other information or material as the regulations or the guidelines under section 406 may require.

For the purposes of section 428(4)(b) of the Act, a Statement of Annual Performance of a Joint Organisation is to include the following information which is detailed in section 217 and 397J of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.

### **For Section 217 (1)**

- (a) details (including the purpose) of overseas visits undertaken during the year by councillors, council staff or other persons while representing the council (including visits sponsored by other organisations),

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (a1) details of the total cost during the year of the payment of the expenses of, and the provision of facilities to, board members in relation to their civic functions (as paid by the JO, reimbursed to the board member or reconciled with the board member), including separate details on the total cost of each of the following—

- (i) the provision during the year of dedicated office equipment allocated to board members on a personal basis, such as laptop computers, mobile telephones and landline telephones and facsimile machines installed in board member's homes (including equipment and line rental costs and internet access costs but not including call costs),

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (ii) telephone calls made by board members, including calls made from mobile telephones provided by the council and from landline telephones and facsimile services installed in board member's homes,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (iii) the attendance of board members at conferences and seminars,

***There were no expenses incurred in 2024-25.***

- (iiia) the provision of induction training for board members, supplementary induction training for chairman and professional development programs for the chairman and other board members,

***Under Clause 397J this item is not applicable to Joint Organisations***

- (iv) other training of Chairperson and board members and the provision of skill development for the chairman and board members,

***Under Clause 397J this item is not applicable to Joint Organisations***

- (v) interstate visits undertaken during the year by board members while representing the JO, including the cost of transport, the cost of accommodation and other out-of-pocket travelling expenses,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (vi) overseas visits undertaken during the year by board members while representing the JO, including the cost of transport, the cost of accommodation and other out-of-pocket travelling expenses,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (vii) the expenses of any spouse, partner (whether of the same or the opposite sex) or other person who accompanied a board member in the performance of his or her civic functions, being expenses payable in accordance with the *Guidelines for the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities for Mayors and Councillors for Local Councils in NSW* prepared by the Director-General from time to time.

The FNWJO has developed and adopted a policy in regard to the Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities. However, no claims have been made up to 30 June 2024.

***As such this is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (viii) expenses involved in the provision of care for a child of, or an immediate family member of, a board member, to allow the board member to undertake his or her civic functions,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (a2) details of each contract awarded by the JO during that year (whether as a result of tender or otherwise) other than—
  - (i) employment contracts (that is, contracts of service but not contracts for services), and
  - (ii) contracts for less than \$150,000 or such other amount as may be prescribed by the regulations, including the name of the contractor, the nature of the goods or services supplied by the contractor and the total amount payable to the contractor under the contract,

***There were two (2) new contracts over \$150,000 let during the 2024-25.***

**1. Aither Pty Ltd** -Consultancy services for the Development of a Water Security Baseline Project with a Total value of \$200,00

**2. NALAG** – Consultancy Services for the Development of a Drought Preparedness – Education and Social Revitalisation Project with total value of \$150,000.00

- (a3) a summary of the amounts incurred by the JO during the year in relation to legal proceedings taken by or against the council (including amounts, costs and expenses paid or received by way of out of court settlements, other than those the terms of which are not

to be disclosed) and a summary of the state of progress of each legal proceeding and (if it has been finalised) the result,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (a4) details or a summary (as required by section 67(3) of the Act) of resolutions made during that year under section 67 of the Act concerning work carried out on private land and details or a summary of such work if the cost of the work has been fully or partly subsidised by the JO, together with a statement of the total amount by which the council has subsidised any such work during that year,

***Under Clause 397J this item is not applicable to Joint Organisations***

- (a5) the total amount contributed or otherwise granted under section 356 of the Act,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (a6) a statement of all external bodies that during that year exercised functions delegated by the JO,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (a7) a statement of all corporations, partnerships, trusts, joint ventures, syndicates or other bodies (whether or not incorporated) in which the JO (whether alone or in conjunction with other councils) held a controlling interest during that year,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-2025***

- (a8) a statement of all corporations, partnerships, trusts, joint ventures, syndicates or other bodies (whether or not incorporated) in which the JO participated during that year,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-25***

- (a9) a statement of the activities undertaken by the JO during that year to implement its equal employment opportunity management plan,

***The FNWJO with only the one part-time employee and the one employee on a short-term fixed contract has not developed an equal opportunity management plan.***

- (b) a statement of the total remuneration comprised in the remuneration package of the Executive Officer during the year that is to include the total of the following—
- (i) the total value of the salary component of the package,
  - (ii) the total amount of any bonus payments, performance payments or other payments made to the general manager that do not form part of the salary component of the Executive Officer,
  - (iii) the total amount payable by the council by way of the employer's contribution or salary sacrifice to any superannuation scheme to which the Executive Officer may be a contributor,
  - (iv) the total value of any non-cash benefits for which the Executive Officer may elect under the package,
  - (v) the total amount payable by the council by way of fringe benefits tax for any such non-cash benefits

***The Executive Officer's Contract provided for a total of \$153,734.41 including a cash component of \$130,634.52 plus superannuation of \$23,099.89,***

- (c) a statement of the total remuneration comprised in the remuneration packages of all senior staff members (other than the Executive Officer) employed during the year, expressed as the total remuneration of all the senior staff members concerned (not of the individual senior staff members) and including totals of each of the following—
  - (i) the total of the values of the salary components of their packages,
  - (ii) the total amount of any bonus payments, performance payments or other payments made to them that do not form part of the salary components of their packages,
  - (iv) the total amount payable by the JO by way of the employer's contribution or salary sacrifice to any superannuation scheme to which any of them may be a contributor,
  - (v) the total value of any non-cash benefits for which any of them may elect under the package,
  - (vi) the total amount payable by the JO by way of fringe benefits tax for any such non-cash benefits,

***This is not applicable to the FNWJO in 2024-2025 who only have the one employee who is classified as senior staff and employee is referred to in the previous section.***

- (d) a statement of the total number of persons who performed paid work for the council on the relevant day (4<sup>th</sup> December 2024), including, in separate statements, the total number of the following—
  - (i) persons employed by the council on a permanent full-time, permanent part-time or casual basis or under a fixed-term contract,

***The FNWJO had two (2) employees one of whom was on a fixed term contract consistent with the grant funding provided and the other was the Executive Officer who worked 21 hours per week.***

- (ii) persons employed by the council as senior staff members,

***Only the Executive Officer is classified as a Senior Staff Member***

- (iii) persons engaged by the council, under a contract or other arrangement with the person's employer, wholly or principally for the labour of the person,

***One person was engaged as a casual Contract Project Officer***

- (iv) persons supplied to the council, under a contract or other arrangement with the person's employer, as an apprentice or trainee,

***The FNWJO had no-one employed under this category.***

- (e) if the JO has levied an annual charge for stormwater management services—a statement detailing the stormwater management services provided by the FNWJO during that year,

***Under Clause 397J this item is not applicable to Joint Organisations***

- (e1) if the JO has levied an annual charge for coastal protection services—a statement detailing the coastal protection services provided by the FNWJO during that year,

***Under Clause 397J this item is not applicable to Joint Organisations***

- (f) a detailed statement, prepared in accordance with such guidelines as may be issued by the Director-General from time to time, of the JOs activities during the year in relation to enforcing, and ensuring compliance with, the provisions of the Companion Animals Act 1998 and the regulations under that Act.

***Under Clause 397J this item is not applicable to Joint Organisations***

## ATTACHMENT 1. B Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, Section 125 (1) requires government agencies to report annually to parliament.

Section 8 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018* states that the annual report must include:

Clause 8 (a): Details of the review carried out by the agency under Section 7 (3) of the Act during the reporting year and the details of any information made publicly available by the agency as a result of the review.

Review carried out by the agency	Information made publicly available by the agency
N/A	N/A

<b>The following disclosures were made public, pecuniary interest disclosure and related parties. Information relating to approved development applications.</b>
None

Clause 8 (b): The total number of access applications received by the agency during the reporting year (including withdrawn applications but not including invalid applications).

Total number of applications received
0

Clause 8 (c): The total number of access applications received by the agency during the reporting year that the agency refused either wholly or partly, because the application was for the disclosure of information referred to in Schedule 1 to the Act (information for which there is conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure).

Number of applications refused	Wholly	Partly	Total
	0	0	0
% of Total	0%	0%	

**GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) REGULATION 2018**  
**Clause 8, SCHEDULE 2**

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT ACCESS APPLICATIONS (SCHEDULE 2)**

Table A: Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome*								
	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Sector business	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not for profit organisations or community groups	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of the public (application by legal representative)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of the public (other)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\*More than one decision can be made in respect of a particular access application. If so, a recording must be made in relation to each such decision. This also applies to Table B.

**Table B: Number of Applications by type of application and outcome**

	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Personal Information applications*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\*A personal information application is an access application for personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule to the Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual).

**Table C: Invalid applications**

Reason for Invalidity	No of applications
Application does not comply with formal requirements (section 41 of the Act)	0
Application is for excluded information of the agency (section 43 of the Act)	0
Application contravenes restraint order (section 110 of the Act)	0
Total number of invalid applications received	0
Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	0

**Table D: Conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure: matters listed in Schedule 1 to Act**

	<b>Number of times consideration used*</b>
Overriding secrecy laws	0
Cabinet Information	0
Executive Council Information	0
Contempt	0
Legal professional privilege	0
Excluded information	0
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	0
Transport safety	0
Adoption	0
Care and protection of children	0
Ministerial code of conduct	0
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	0

\*More than one public interest consideration may apply in relation to a particular access application and, if so, each such consideration is to be recorded (but only once per application). This also applies in relation to Table E.

**Table E: Other public interest considerations against disclosure: matters listed in table to Section 14 of Act**

	<b>Number of occasions when application not successful</b>
Responsible and effective government	0
Law enforcement and security	0
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	0
Business interest of agencies and other persons	0
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	0
Secrecy provisions	0
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information	0

**Table F: Timeliness**

	Number of applications
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	0
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with application)	0
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	0
<b>Total</b>	0

**Table G: Number of applications reviewed under Part 5 of the Act (by type of review and outcome)**

	Decision Varied	Decision upheld	Total
Internal review	0	0	0
Review by Information Commissioner*	0	0	0
Internal review following recommendation under section 93 of Act	0	0	0
Review by ADT	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	0	0	0

\*The Information Commissioner does not have the authority to vary decisions but can make recommendations to the original decision-maker. The data in this case indicates that a recommendation to vary or uphold the original decision has been made by the Information Commissioner.

**Table H: Applications for review under part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)**

	Number of applications for review
Applications by access applicants	0
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see section 54 of the Act)	0

**ATTACHMENT 1C      Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022****SECTION 31 PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES REGULATION 2022 Clause 5**

Council must report annually on its obligations under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022*. The report for the year ended 30 June 2024, advised that there had been no Public Interest Disclosures (PID) during the financial year.

**Section 5 (1) – Voluntary public interest disclosures received during reporting period.**

<b>Voluntary public interest disclosures</b>	<b>Total/Action taken</b>
Total number of voluntary public interest disclosures received.	0
(a) how disclosure received (including date received).	N/A
(b) whether the disclosure was a purported public interest disclosure.	N/A
(c) the nature of the serious wrongdoing the disclosure was about.	N/A
(d) if applicable—the relationship between the maker of the disclosure and the public official whose serious wrongdoing the disclosure was about.	N/A
(e) whether the serious wrongdoing involved 1 public official or more than 1 public official.	N/A
(f) action taken to deal with the disclosure, including the date on which the agency ceased to deal with the disclosure.	N/A
(g) if the agency investigated the serious wrongdoing—a description of the results of the investigation.	N/A
(h) if applicable—the corrective action taken, proposed to be taken or recommended to be taken by the agency.	N/A

**Section 5 (2) – Purported public interest disclosures that were not in fact public interest disclosures:**

<b>Disclosures not deemed as public interest disclosures</b>	<b>Total</b>
(a) number of disclosures received by the agency during the return period	0
(b) number of disclosures that were made by public officials	0
(c) reasons agency did not deal with, or ceased to deal with, each disclosure as a public interest disclosure	N/A

## ATTACHMENT 1D      **Modern Slavery Act 2018**

Section 31 of The NSW *Modern Slavery Act 2018* requires government agencies to make annual reports of risks of modern slavery occurring in their supply. In particular, reporting must address the following matters:

- **Section 31, 1(a) a statement of the action taken by the council in relation to any issue raised by the Anti-slavery Commissioner during the year concerning the operations of the council and identified by the Commissioner as being a significant issue.**

There have been no issues raised by the Anti-Slavery Commissioner with FNWJO during the year concerning the operation of the Joint Organisation.

- **A statement of steps taken to ensure that goods and services procured by and for the council during the year were not the product of modern slavery within the meaning of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*.**

The FNWJO is mindful of its obligations in relation to the procurement of goods and Services to ensure that they were not the product of modern slavery within the meaning of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*.

The FNWJO commits to implementing suitable measures to mitigate the likelihood of modern slavery within the procurement procedures of its member Councils.

## Attachment 2



# **FAR NORTH WEST**

JOINT ORGANISATION

**Audited Financial Reports**  
**2024-2025 Financial Year**

## Attachment 3



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

## Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities 2022



# **FAR NORTH WEST**

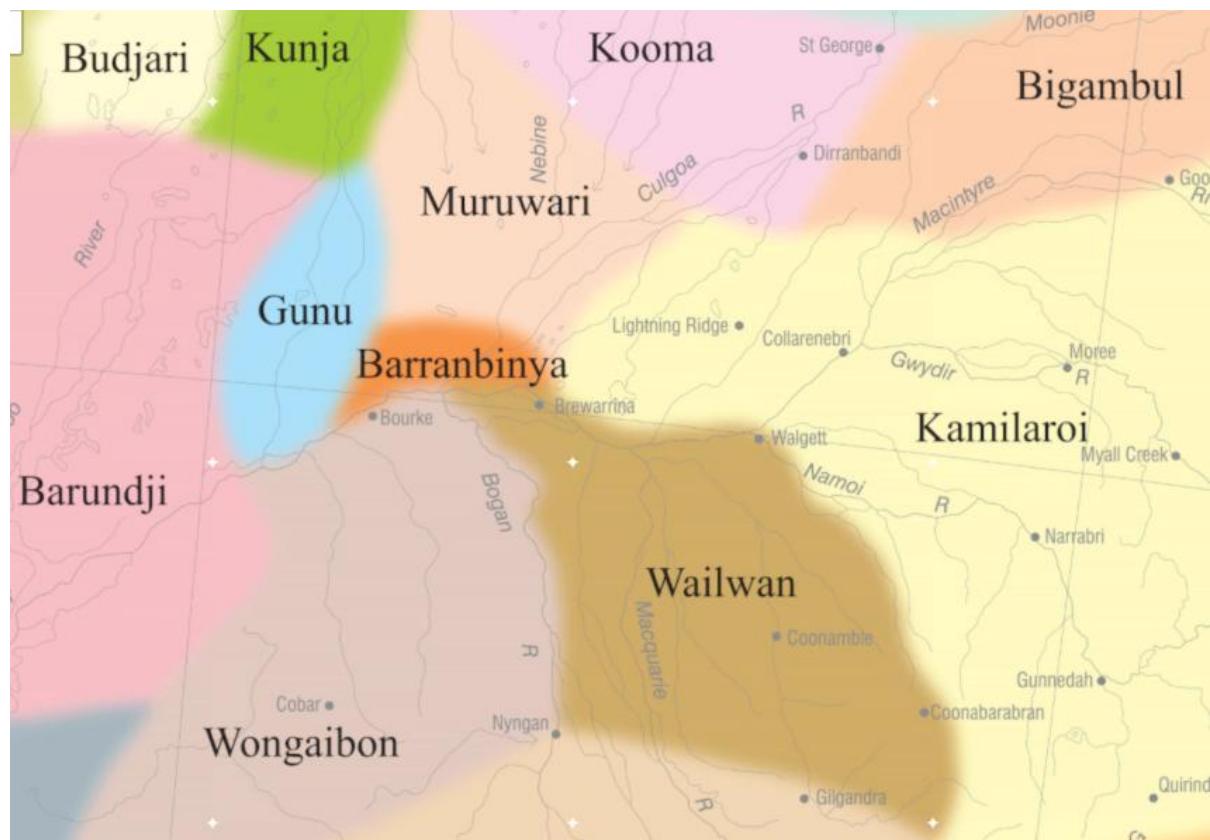
JOINT ORGANISATION

## **Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities 2022**



## Acknowledgement

The Far North West Joint Organisation acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.



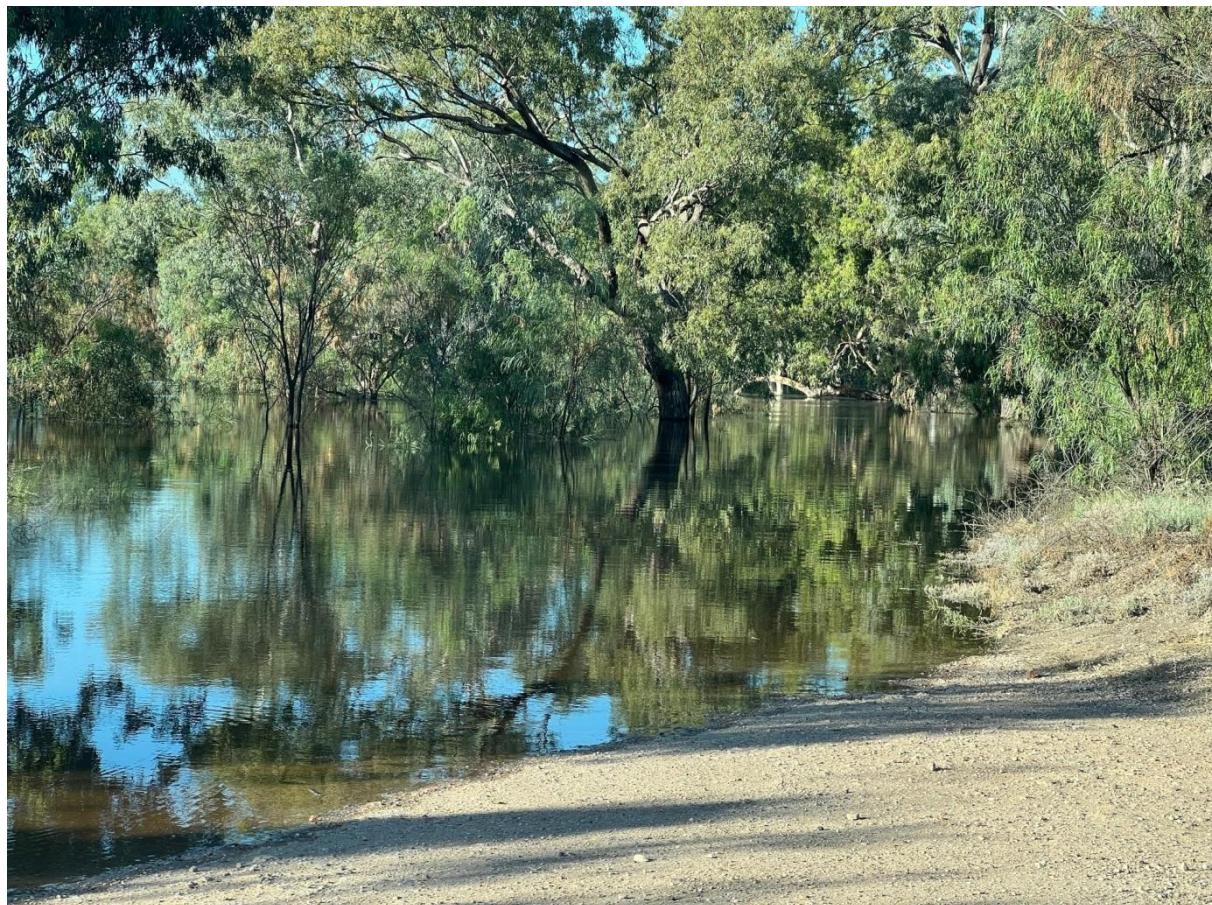
(Map reproduced from: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>)

## Where to go for more information

For further information about the Far North West Joint Organisation, please visit our website: <https://www.farnorthwestjo.nsw.gov.au> or contact us by email: [eo@farnorthwestjo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:eo@farnorthwestjo.nsw.gov.au)

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## About the Far North West Joint Organisation

The Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO) was established by the NSW Government in 2018 as part of a network of Joint Organisations across regional NSW. The FNWJO is comprised of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett Shire Councils. Brewarrina Shire Council has been invited to the FNWJO so that the region is more completely represented by this regional body.

The Far North West region covers an area of approximately 111,000 square kilometres (or more than 13% of the area of NSW).

The primary purpose of the Joint Organisation is to facilitate State and local government collaboration, planning, priority setting and delivery of important projects on a regional scale. The FNWJO has also identified support for the operations of its member Councils, aimed at strengthening local government in the region, as a role for the Joint Organisation.

The principal functions of all Joint Organisations are:

- **Strategic regional planning**
- **Regional leadership and advocacy**
- **Intergovernmental collaboration.**



## Our Vision for the Far North West

*A connected region of diversity and opportunity that cares for its people and environment.*

We acknowledge the challenges that face us, but we are committed to working in collaboration to address these.

### The principles we are committed to.

- ✓ We will make decisions and support initiatives, programs and projects based on the evidence and what is best for the entire region.
- ✓ We will focus on the strategic vision for our region and our communities.
- ✓ We will be respectful of our member Councils' representatives, work cooperatively, communicate often and ensure good governance.
- ✓ We will work collaboratively across all levels of government and with other key partners and stakeholders in the region.
- ✓ We will make informed decisions that consider the risks and benefits.
- ✓ We will deliver projects, initiatives and programs, applying sound project management methodologies and financial rigour.
- ✓ We will support others' project delivery that benefits our region and aligns with our strategic vision.
- ✓ We will support and celebrate the success of our member Councils and identify strategies and actions where we can share and work together for service delivery.
- ✓ We will embrace technologies to address our priorities.



## Far North West region: Fast facts

This snapshot includes collated information about the Far North West region, including Bourke, Cobar and Walgett Shires.

Fast facts		As at (date)
Total land area	10,948,324.3 ha	2020
Population	11,652	2021
Median age	39.3 years	2021
% of population of working age (15-64 years)	60.8%	2021
% of population who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	21.9%	2021
Number of households	4,757	2016
% of adults who have completed Year 12 or equivalent	29%	2016
% of 15–19-year-olds fully engaged in education and/or employment	67.9%	2016
Top self-reported health conditions	Asthma Arthritis Mental health condition	2021
% of local councillors who are women	29.5%	2021
Total length of roads (local and regional)	7,156 km	2019-20
Total number of registered vehicles	10,670	2020
Total number of businesses (number of businesses with one or more employees)	1,490 (490)	2020
Industries with the most businesses	Agriculture/forestry/fishing Construction Transport Real Estate/hire	2020
Annual tourist numbers	284,000	2019
Median house sale price	\$90,667	2020

## About this Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities

Following each local government election (generally every four years), the Joint Organisation prepares a Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities to identify the key priorities and actions for that term. The Statement describes the programs, projects and other initiatives that will be the focus of delivery during the term to support achievement of those regional priorities.

By making clear what the Far North West region's priorities are, and the role our member Councils have identified for the FNWJO to best add value and make progress towards achieving our shared vision, this Statement provides us with a clear direction for our work.

We trust that funding partners and delivery collaborators will refer to this Statement when identifying how they can best support the Far North West region to achieve its objectives. We look forward to working collaboratively with our intergovernmental partners and other key organisations across the Far North West to support our communities to reach their potential.

This Statement captures the outcomes of a strategic planning workshop held with the FNWJO Board and State Government representatives and takes into account the Community Strategic Plans of each of our member Shires, as well as key State and regional plans and priorities identified by others for our region. It has been prepared to reflect five key themes that are shared across all our region's communities:

**Liveable communities**

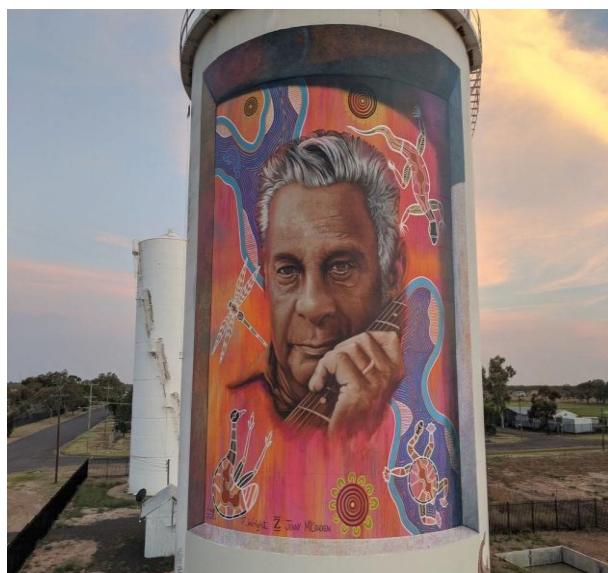
**Sustainable environment**

**Prosperous economy**

**Leadership and governance**

**Community infrastructure**

This Statement makes clear the role of our Joint Organisation in leading particular initiatives that support regional outcomes but also identifies some of the local issues our member Councils are pursuing on behalf of their own communities which the FNWJO will support and advocate for. We look forward to using this Statement to drive delivery of results for our regional communities across the Far North West.



## Where are we in 2022?

Since its establishment, the Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO) has focused on three regional priorities, based on a foundation of a strong, capable and resourced organisation:

- **Resilient and functioning communities**
- **A strong regional economy**
- **A sustainable natural environment.**

In response to these priorities, the FNWJO has undertaken a number of activities. These include:

- Managed the contract for the continued operation of air services, particularly during COVID disruptions, and commenced advocacy for further funding.
- Receiving funding for tourism facilities and the development of a Regional Tourism Strategy
- Involvement with the Orana Water Utilities Alliance to enable member Councils to meet best practice for urban water supply.
- Working with member Councils to improve staff attraction and retention
- Advocating for improved telecommunications, particularly to reduce black spots across the region
- Coordinating a Contaminated Lands Project on behalf of member Councils.

As we move forward, it is time to review our priorities in light of the current regional landscape. Across our region a number of challenges and opportunities exist that will help to shape the FNWJO's activities over the coming years.

Over recent years, the region has grappled with issues including:

- Impacts of droughts and floods
- Global pandemic impacts
- Lagging digital connectivity and participation in the digital economy, coupled with the tyranny of distance.
- Housing availability
- A continued decline in the region's population
- Access to secure and sustainable energy and water supply and impacts that this has had on business and industry investment and expansion.
- Movement of young people out of the region as they pursue education and employment opportunities.
- Ageing local business owners and operators, with a lack of certainty about who will take up these businesses in the future.
- Cost of upgrades to significant regional infrastructure (for example key water pipelines)
- Difficulty attracting and retaining skilled labour to the region.

The FNWJO has been successful in achieving grants and project funding to date but also recognises that our financial viability may be a challenge in the future as we are so reliant on external funding for the achievement of our service delivery commitments.

Retaining specialist skills and staff numbers across our member Councils is an ongoing challenge, as it is for many regional councils. The impacts of COVID have further exacerbated reduced staffing numbers and the capacity of our local governments to deliver services.

NSW Government regulations impose requirements that come with significant cost burden for our local councils and communities, including those related to the biodiversity legislation that appear not

to take into account the Far North West region's characteristics. Such regulations are providing additional hurdles that impact on local economic development opportunities. The FNWJO will continue to advocate for policy that takes into account our regional context, and push for changes to reflect this.

In response, our region has demonstrated continued resilience and capacity to adapt. Over recent years our communities and our member Councils have collaborated to address shared needs and have taken steps to improve our digital connectivity, driven in part by the impacts of COVID.



## Where do we want our region to be in the future?

While this Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities primarily provides direction for the Joint Organisation during the current local government term (to 2025), it will also identify our objectives and shape our direction beyond that. Its priorities and goals have been identified through inputs from each of our member Councils and their communities (as described in each Shire's Community Strategic Plan). In addition, State Government planning has also identified priorities and objectives for the Far North West which have been considered in this planning process.

To summarise, our region's goals include:

<b>Liveable communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Connected communities (digital, transport, social connection)</li><li>✓ Enhanced access to health services</li><li>✓ Communities that people want to live in</li><li>✓ Things for our residents and visitors to do.</li><li>✓ Housing development</li><li>✓ Education opportunities</li><li>✓ Safe communities</li><li>✓ Sustainable employment opportunities</li></ul>
<b>Sustainable environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Healthy river systems</li><li>✓ Resilience to climate change impacts</li></ul>
<b>Prosperous economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ A vibrant, flourishing regional tourism industry, including cultural tourism experiences and products... a tourism destination.</li><li>✓ Business development</li><li>✓ Self-sufficient air service</li><li>✓ Increased investment in the region</li></ul>
<b>Leadership and governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ A sustainable Joint Organisation</li><li>✓ Combined efforts to get best value for investment.</li><li>✓ Share resources to maximise outcomes (procurement practice, technical and specialist skills, Audit Risk &amp; Improvement committee)</li><li>✓ Technology is embraced</li></ul>
<b>Community infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Water security, and secure supply for our towns and villages</li><li>✓ Energy security and sustainable power supply</li><li>✓ Improved transport routes, including enhanced north/south freight corridor</li></ul>

We invite our State and Federal Government colleagues, as well as industry and other regional stakeholders, to join us in delivering projects that will see our region's goals realised.

Through collaboration, investment, leadership and commitment we can build a strong and sustainable Far North West region.

## What will we do to progress our region's priorities?

Our Joint Organisation will progress our region's priorities in two key ways:

- Attracting grant funding to support the delivery of targeted projects that address specific priorities.
- Advocating for our region, and in support of our member Councils, to other levels of government and industry stakeholders to ensure our region's voice is heard.

The activities we will pursue are grouped under the five goals of our region.

The activities we will undertake to progress our goals include:

<b>1. Liveable communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 In collaboration with the NSW Government and housing industry stakeholders, develop a Regional Housing Strategy that supports access to affordable housing across the region and promotes liveability</li><li>1.2 Advocate to NSW Health and other health service providers to ensure access to health services by Far North West communities is maintained</li><li>1.3 Encourage our member Councils and their communities to promote opportunities for volunteering and social connection</li><li>1.4 Advocate for digital connectivity enhancements across the region, including enhanced mobile phone reception and NBN access</li></ul>
<b>2. Sustainable environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 Advocate for water security across the region, including achievement of the Western Weir initiative and implementation of a Regional Water Strategy</li><li>2.2 Continue to deliver the Contaminated Lands project on behalf of our member Councils</li><li>2.3 Work with member Councils to pursue sustainable energy options (for Council power supply and the broader community and industry)</li><li>2.4 Continue to contribute to the delivery of the NetWaste initiative</li><li>2.5 Advocate for a healthy river system across the Barwon Darling and tributaries</li></ul>

<b>3. Prosperous economy</b>	<p>3.1 Identify key actions from the NSW Government's Regional Economic Development Strategy for JO action and advocacy</p> <p>3.2 Prepare and promote a Regional Investment Prospectus that builds upon local economic development strategies and identifies possibilities for growth and investment across the region and opportunities to grow our region's employment base</p> <p>3.3 Work with Visit NSW to market the Far North West region as a tourism destination, and encourage the expansion of opportunities and activities to celebrate our culture</p>
<b>4. Leadership and Governance</b>	<p>4.1 Strengthen collaboration in the region to pursue regional objectives (including inviting Brewarrina Shire to join FNWJO)</p> <p>4.2 Actively participate in regional and State forums with other levels of government to ensure the FNWJO has a seat at the table on any policy or program development affecting the region</p> <p>4.3 Identify, promote and pursue opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing across the region</p> <p>4.4 Develop and implement a regional local government Workforce Strategy to support the attraction and retention of Council staff across the region (including finding solutions to recruiting hard-to-fill roles and providing professional development opportunities)</p> <p>4.5 Promote the objectives and activities of the FNWJO and celebrate our achievements with our regional stakeholders</p> <p>4.6 Secure the FNWJO's future through targeted grant applications that include allowance for administrative on-costs</p>
<b>5. Community infrastructure</b>	<p>5.1 Continue to ensure air services are available to communities across the region, and pursue funding to support sustainable air service provision</p> <p>5.2 Advocate to the NSW Government for funding to replace key water pipeline infrastructure</p> <p>5.3 Advocate for connected communities through funding for road upgrades that enables transport access across the region</p> <p>5.4 Advocate for an enhanced freight corridor between Adelaide and Brisbane through upgrades to the Wool Track between Balranald, Central Darling and Cobar</p> <p>5.5 Advocate for equitable service provision and government infrastructure investment for our regional communities</p>

## Monitoring our progress

Each year, in our Annual Performance Statement, we will provide our communities and partners with an update on the progress of implementing the activities of this Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities in support of achieving our regional goals.

In addition, we will monitor and periodically report on some key regional indicators that will help us to know if our region is progressing towards its goals. This will support us to review and update this Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities in 2025. The key indicators we will monitor in relation to each of our five goals are described below.

Regional objective	Indicator
Liveable communities	Regional population
	% of residents experiencing housing stress
	Homelessness rate
	Residential rental vacancy rate
	% of residents who volunteer for an organisation or group
	% of residents who can access the internet at home
	Number of children enrolled at preschool, primary school and secondary school; and number of people attending a tertiary institution
	Number of domestic violence assaults
	Number of thefts from dwellings
	General crime rate trends
Prosperous economy	Gross Regional Product
	Nett business growth (entries less exits)
	Number of jobs
	Median weekly personal income
	Unemployment rate (15 years and over)
	Number of tourism businesses; number of tourists/visitors; average visitor nights of stay; and average visitor spend
	Number of DAs determined, and value of DAs determined

Regional objective	Indicator
Sustainable environment	Total CO2 emissions and CO2 emissions per capita
	Annual domestic waste generated; weekly waste generated per capita; and recycling rate
Leadership and governance	Amount of funding received by the JO
Community infrastructure	Air service passenger numbers
	Amount of RMCC (State roads) funding received in the region
	Nature and value of infrastructure projects delivered

**Data sources:**

- 2021 Census (<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>)
- 2016 Census and other Australian Bureau of Statistics data collections (<https://dbr.abs.gov.au/index.html>)
- NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research ([https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar\\_crime\\_stats/bocsar\\_lgaexcelsables.aspx](https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_crime_stats/bocsar_lgaexcelsables.aspx))
- Snapshot Climate (<https://snapshotclimate.com.au/explore/>)
- NSW Environment Protection Agency (<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/waste/local-council-operations/local-council-waste-and-resource-recovery>)
- ID Economic Insights (<https://www.ideconomicinsights.com/2021annualeconomicupdate>)
- Tourism Research Australia (<https://www.tra.gov.au/Regional/Local-Government-Area-Profiles/local-government-area-profiles>)
- NSW Office of Local Government (<https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/comparative-council-information/your-council-report/>)
- Member Councils' data collections



This *Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities* was prepared with the assistance of Karen Legge Consulting

## Attachment 4



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

## Audit Risk and Improvement Committee

## AUDIT RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

The Local Government Act (section 428A) requires each council to establish an audit, risk, and improvement committee to continuously review and provide independent advice to the general manager and the governing body of the council on:

- whether the council is complying with all necessary legislation, regulations, and other legal requirements.
- the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's risk management framework, fraud and corruption prevention activities, financial management processes, and the council's financial position and performance.
- the council's governance arrangements.
- the achievement by the council of the goals set out in the council's community strategic plan, delivery program, operational plan, and other strategies.
- how the council delivers local services and how it could improve the performance of its functions more generally
- the collection of performance measurement data by the council, and
- any other matters prescribed by the Local Government Regulation (including internal audit). The Local Government Act (section 428B) allows councils to establish a joint audit, risk and improvement committee with other councils including through joint or regional organisations of councils to function as a shared committee.

### Shared Committees

As noted above, under the Local Government Act (section 428B) councils can share an audit, risk, and improvement committee. Councils can:

- share their committee with another council/s, county council/s, and/or joint organisation/s as part of an independent shared arrangement.
- utilise a committee established by their joint organisation that is shared with all member councils.
- for county councils - share their committee with a member council where possible or another council.
- for joint organisations - share their committee with a member council where possible or another council or joint organisation.

### Shared Committee Established by the Far North West Joint Organisation

In 2023 Far North West Joint Organisation established a shared Audit Risk and Improvement Committee to service its three member Councils being Walgett, Bourke, and Cobar Shires together with Castlereagh Macquarie County Council and the Joint organisation itself.

The Far North West Joint Organisation facilitates the operation the shared committee including the recruitment of the independent members and allocation of expenses and in conjunction with the Chair the scheduling and location of meetings.

The facilitation of the Shared audit Risk and Improvement Committee has resulted in a more cost-effective operation of the committees of all five participating Councils/ Joint Organisations.

The Structure and operation of the committees do vary slightly with each Council who have developed their own terms of reference consistent with the guidelines issued however, each Committee operates with the same shared committee chairperson and independent members, however, members of individual council only attend their own Council committee meeting

## **Annual attestation**

It is important that councils are accountable to their communities for the efficacy of their internal controls and assurance mechanisms and the operations of their audit, risk, and improvement committees. Commencing with the 2024-2025 annual report/ Statement of Annual Performance, the General Manager/ Executive Officer is required under the Local Government Regulation to attest each year in the council's annual report/ Statement of Annual Performance whether the council has complied with the requirements prescribed under the Regulation in relation to its audit, risk and improvement committee.

That attestation form is included with this Annual Statement of Performance.

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# Internal audit and risk management attestation statement for the 2024-25 financial year for Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO)

I am of the opinion that [Far North West Joint Organisation](#) has an audit, risk and improvement committee, risk management framework and internal audit function that operate in compliance with the following requirements except as may be otherwise provided below:

## Audit, risk and improvement committee.

	Requirement	Compliance
1.	<a href="#">FNWJO</a> has appointed an audit, risk and improvement committee that comprises of an independent chairperson and at least two independent members (section 428A of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> , section 216C of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
2.	The chairperson and all members of <a href="#">FNWJO</a> audit, risk and improvement committee meet the relevant independence and eligibility criteria prescribed under the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> and have not exceeded the membership term limits prescribed under the Regulation (sections 216D, 216E, 216F, 216G of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
3.	<a href="#">FNWJO</a> has adopted terms of reference for its audit, risk and improvement committee that are informed by the model terms of reference approved by the Departmental Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government and the committee operates in accordance with the terms of reference (section 216K of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
4.	<a href="#">FNWJO</a> provides the audit, risk and improvement committee with direct and unrestricted access to the <a href="#">Executive officer</a> and other senior management and the information and resources necessary to exercise its functions (section 216L of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
5.	<a href="#">FNWJO</a> audit, risk and improvement committee exercises its functions in accordance with a four-year strategic work plan that has been endorsed by the governing body and an annual work plan that has been developed in consultation with the governing body and senior management (Core requirement 1 of the Office of Local Government's <i>Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW</i> ).	Non-compliant
6.	<a href="#">FNWJO</a> audit, risk and improvement committee provides the governing body with an annual assessment each year, and a strategic assessment each council term of the matters listed in section 428A of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> reviewed during that term (Core requirement 1 of the Office of Local	Compliant

	Government's <i>Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW</i> ).	
7.	The governing body of <b>FNWJO</b> reviews the effectiveness of the audit, risk and improvement committee at least once each council term (Core requirement 1 of the Office of Local Government's <i>Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW</i> ).	Not yet due but will be complete by August 2028.

### Membership

The chairperson and membership of the audit, risk and improvement committee are:

Chairperson	Liz Jeremy	23 May 2025	14 May 2029
Independent member	Liz Jeremy	16 November 2023	14 May 2025
Independent member	Ron Gillard	16 November 2023	November 2027
Independent member	Charbel Abouraad	15 May 2025	14 May 2028

### Risk Management

	Requirement	Compliance
8.	<b>FNWJO</b> has adopted a risk management framework that is consistent with current Australian risk management standard and that is appropriate for the Far North West Joint Organisations risks (section 216S of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant commensurate with the size and operational complexity of the JO.
9.	<b>FNWJO</b> audit, risk and improvement committee reviews the implementation of its risk management framework and provides a strategic assessment of its effectiveness to the governing body each council term (section 216S of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Not yet due but will be complete by August 2028.

### Internal Audit

	Requirement	Compliance
10.	<b>FNWJO</b> has an internal audit function that reviews the council's operations and risk management and control activities (section 216O of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
11.	<b>FNWJO</b> internal audit function reports to the audit, risk and improvement committee on internal audit matters (sections 216M, 216P and 216R of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
12.	<b>FNWJO</b> internal audit function is independent and internal audit activities are not subject to direction by the Far North West Joint	Compliant

	Requirement	Compliance
	Organisation (section 216P of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	
13.	<a href="#">Far North West Joint Organisation</a> has adopted an internal audit charter that is informed by the model internal audit charter approved by the Departmental Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government and the internal audit function operates in accordance with the charter (section 216O of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
14.	<a href="#">Far North West Joint Organisation</a> has appointed a member of staff to direct and coordinate internal audit activities or is part of a shared arrangement where a participating <a href="#">[council/joint organisation]</a> has appointed a staff member to direct and coordinate internal audit activities for all participating councils (section 216P of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
15.	Internal audit activities are conducted in accordance with the International Professional Practices Framework (Core requirement 3 of the Office of Local Government's <i>Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW</i> ).	Compliant
16.	<a href="#">Far North West Joint Organisation</a> provides the internal audit function with direct and unrestricted access to staff, the audit, risk and improvement committee, and the information and resources necessary to undertake internal audit activities (section 216P of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Compliant
17.	<a href="#">Far North West Joint Organisation</a> internal audit function undertakes internal audit activities in accordance with a four-year strategic work plan that has been endorsed by the governing body and an annual work plan that has been developed in consultation with the governing body and senior management (Core requirement 3 of the Office of Local Government's <i>Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW</i> ).	Non-Compliant.
18.	<a href="#">Far North West Joint Organisation's</a> audit, risk and improvement committee reviews the effectiveness of the internal audit function and reports the outcome of the review to the governing body each council term (section 216R of the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> ).	Not yet due but will be complete by August 2028.

## Non-compliance with the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*

I advise that the Far North West Joint Organisation has not complied with the following requirements prescribed under the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* with respect to the operation of its [internal audit processes](#).

Non-compliance	Reason	Alternative measures being implemented	How the alternative measures achieve equivalent outcomes
5 - Strategic Work Plan	The resourcing constraints within the JO.	ARIC is cognisant of the resourcing constraints and the risk profile within the JO. Decisions are taken within this context. ARIC understands that the JO is actively contemplating its member base and its financial sustainability in that context. The ARIC will continue to actively work with the JO and the EO for the JO to progress the preparation of the Strategic work plans within a reasonable period given the resourcing.	The ARIC is undertaking an assessment and developing the workplans with the mitigation being the active monitoring of activity in the intervening period.
17 – 4 Year Strategic Audit Plan	The resourcing constraints within the JO.	ARIC is cognisant of the resourcing constraints and the risk profile within the JO. Decisions are taken within this context. ARIC understands that the JO is actively contemplating its member base and its financial sustainability in that context. The ARIC will continue to actively work with the JO and the EO for the JO to progress the preparation of the Strategic work plans within a	The ARIC is undertaking an assessment and developing the workplans with the mitigation being the active monitoring of activity in the intervening period.

		reasonable time given the resourcing.	
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These processes, including the alternative measures implemented, demonstrate that the Far North West Joint Organisation has established and maintained frameworks, systems, processes and procedures for appropriately managing audit and risk within the Far North West Joint Organisation.

Ross Earl  
Executive Officer

12<sup>th</sup> September 2025

# Attachment 5



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

**Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration  
Project**

## JOINT ORGANISATIONS NET ZERO ACCELERATION PROJECT

The Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO) continues to advance the energy and emissions reduction agenda of its member (Bourke, Cobar and Walgett) and associate member Councils (Coonamble) through the Joint Organisations Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Program. The primary objective of this project is to build capacity within Council teams, enabling them to increase awareness of energy and emissions reduction pathways, while enhancing their ability to gather, manage and report on essential data. The FNWJO is one of nine JOs across regional NSW participating in the JONZA Program which is funded by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). Additional funding has been awarded for JONZA Round 3 to continue the project until December 2026.

The focus for the project to date has been collating and analysing energy data at the highest energy consumption sites. Energy audits were conducted at each of these council sites early in 2025 and the results provide direction in prioritising energy reduction and efficiency projects according to the best return on investment value and capacity of the councils to deliver. This information will form the basis for developing Energy Savings and Emission Reduction Plans for each Council, which are strategic roadmaps aimed at improving energy efficiency, cutting operational costs, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and supporting data-driven decision-making and targeted investment across Council assets.

A detailed evaluation of current electricity network tariffs across council sites was conducted, resulting in the identification of potential annual cost savings. By transitioning a number of sites to lower-cost network tariffs, Councils can redirect funds towards further emissions reduction projects, whilst also demonstrating financial responsibility and innovation.

Additional funding was made available in JONZA Round 2 to support councils to participate in the Electric Vehicle (EV) transition. As part of the EV project, FNWJO collaborated with other JOs in the development of a Guide to Making Your Town EV Friendly, an interactive map focusing on tourism and economic development targeting EV drivers ([www.eventuremap.nsw.gov.au](http://www.eventuremap.nsw.gov.au)), a public EVCI policy - a Guide to Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure on Public Land -Local Government. These projects were aimed at increasing awareness and capability within Councils of the need to promote EV charging infrastructure within the region to ensure that regional areas are not left behind during the transition to EVs and that they are primed for the economic benefits of emerging and future EV tourism.

In collaboration with the FNWJO, the councils took part in a trial of two long-range electric SUVs to test the vehicles in the local conditions to identify whether these or other EVs can meet the requirements of the Council fleets. The EVs were leased for three months, and the vehicles were shared amongst the four councils during this time. The trial showed that the switch to EVs in regional areas requires behavioural change in trip planning to account for the range of the vehicle and the availability and operational status of public charging infrastructure.

The trial has allowed for practical experience of operating EVs for council officers and provides insight into how EVs can assist in reducing energy and greenhouse gas emissions across Council operations. The next step is to develop Transition Plans in the coming year to identify opportunities, costs, and any potential savings for councils to consider switching fleet and plant to electric.

A significant portion of GHG emissions within the Councils is attributed to landfill operations. Establishing a comprehensive baseline for landfill-related emissions is challenging due to inconsistent data collection practices—many landfill and waste management facilities lack weighbridges or standardized load monitoring for both volume and type of waste. Nevertheless, the project has identified and begun applying estimation methodologies to project emissions and develop complete emissions profiles.

Focus for the coming year will be to continue the capacity building for Councils in establishing regular data collection and analysis within each Council, using a reporting tool developed by DCCEEW as part of the JONZA program. This provides Councils with a measure against which they can monitor and report on progress of their energy and emissions reduction actions and will empower Councils to be “reporting ready” when, at some stage in the future they will be required to report on their Net Zero actions in relation to the State targets.

Beyond technical solutions, FNWJO is actively identifying and applying for funding from Federal, State, and other sources to accelerate project implementation and maximise impact. This financial strategy is crucial for supporting the Councils as they strive to meet NSW Net Zero targets and to ensure that the momentum achieved to date is sustained well into the future.

The participation of the FNWJO in the JONZA Program marks a significant step forward in regional climate action. By building internal capacity, within councils pursuing targeted investments and fostering cross-council collaboration, the FNWJO is providing leadership for a sustainable future across the region.

## Attachment 6



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

### Development of Historical Hotel Tours

## Historical Hotel Tour

After a lot of hard work, the Historical Hotel Tours have been operation for almost twelve months.

Since the Historic Hotels Tour Project contract was let in May 2023 the Poetry on Plate Trading as Gidgee Media who were the consultants responsible for undertaking the project have pieced together an exciting a unique tour which has involved considerable effort research and of course travel. The following gives an insight into some of the work which it has involved.

Since being award the contact in May 2023 Gidgee Media facilitated the following

- over 250 different sites have been identified and digitally mapped.
- 3 rounds of community consultation have occurred.
- 22 existing hotel operators have been engaged along with numerous tourism operators.
- dozens of field trips have been undertaken to research, engage, and gather stories.
- hundreds of digital assets have been gathered and developed.
- 8 separate touring 'loops' have been defined and mapped across 3 Shire Councils.
- a website has been initiated along with interconnected social media sites on multiple platforms.
- A Booklet has been produced to supplement information available
- an interactive mapping application has been initiated and paired with the website.
- 5 different classes of signage have been developed and are being printed and installed around the region with the support of Councils and hotel owners.
- A feature article has been produced for the RM Williams OUTBACK Magazine and was released earlier this year to coincide with the tourism season.

All this infrastructure is aligned to engage potential travellers with the stories of the hotels of Western NSW, and to provide even more reasons for them to visit the region.

In comparison to similar products developed with multi-million-dollar budgets, the standard of what has been created is a testament to the contractors involved, but more importantly to the ready participation of Councils and their relevant staff.

It probably prudent at this stage to recap on the development of the Historical Hotel Tour to enable readers to have a background to the development of an Historical Hotel Tour encompassing all three Council areas aimed at further enhancing the tourism-based attractions within the area and try and build tourist numbers which have become increasingly important to our economy.

*Across the Local Government Areas of Walgett, Bourke and Cobar, there are hundreds of sites where pubs once stood, and while we can't access many of these sites, it's important that that the fascinating stories attached to them were recorded and told.*

*These stories form an important part of the area's history and should not be lost. The legacy of their existence and the sites of what remains are like remote monuments to the development of modern Australia and the identity of the Outback.*

*The project was a large undertaking but one that has gained the support of a variety of people and stakeholders across the footprint of the FNWJO.*

*The project focuses on the history of the region the fact that hotels to a large degree were a result of economic success such as with the wool booms and river traffic, however, there are many other reasons that we saw the development of hotels and the subsequent demise of these establishments as times changes.*

*Many hotels were established as part of the Cobb and Co coach network with horses having to be changed at regular intervals and passengers needed to have comfort and refreshment stops with mode of transport and the comfort level a far cry from what we enjoy today.*

*The existence of many small holdings of yesteryear and the fact that the agricultural industry and indeed most industry was much more labour dependant than today that we saw the establishment of a number of small villages with each generally having a school, churches, general stores, post office, police station and of course a hotel.*

*The development and demise of many of these small villages was as a result of improvement in transport, improvement in food storage and as mentioned the changing economic landscape and employment opportunities.*

*These small village are still scattered across the footprint of the FNWJO but in some instance a significantly reduced size and in others a skeletal state whilst in some instances only the bricks and mortar of the foundation remain.*

*The Historic Hotel Tour aims to recreate the wonder of yesteryear by bringing these villages back to life at least on paper and be able to relay their importance to the development of the far west as we know it.*

*A considerable amount of research and trawling through old newspapers held by repositories such as Trove has been undertaken to identify the location of these old hotels and the communities in which they were located. Old photographs will help with the visual story and provide an indication in relation to the types of building these hotels were and in turn how they contributed to the landscape of each location.*

*The Project has seen the development of a dedicated website detailing the locations on many of the hotels and the history attached thereto.*

*As mentioned earlier some of the locations of the hotels will not be accessible due to the changed in land tenure but none the less will be identified.*

*The project will see a blending of history and current technology when sites will be identified sign post and, in many instances, those sign post will encompass a "QR" code so that person who are at the site can hear about the history on a specially designed app and immerse themselves in the history and visualise what may have been there.*

*We often hear that the Pub is the focal point of many small towns and it is in keeping with this thought that the project not only seeks to capture the locations of hotels but their importance to the towns and surrounding districts and the constant change over the past two centuries in both technology and social activity.*

*The Tourism staff at each of the Councils have embraced the project and can see not only the preservation of history as important but will allow those exploring the old hotel sites to feel part of the era as they listen to the stories that will be available at many of the old sites.*

*The collaborative efforts of the board and the Councils is yet another example of not letting lines on maps dictate a project and it is designed to be able to boost tourism numbers in the west and in particular the three FNWJO members.*

*The project is unique and will enhance the experience of those who visit the area in an attempt to absorb the history and reflect on the hardships and challenges faced by those who have the courage to move to what were deemed inhospitable areas.*

## Attachment 7



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

## Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program

## Project Background

Development of Regional Drought Resilience Plans (RDRP) is an initiative of the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and State Governments, with carriage of the project plan delivery process given to the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and including a review by CSIRO.

The FNWJO was successful in its application to develop two (2) RDRPs in western NSW:

- RDRP004 – Cobar, Bourke, Brewarrina, and Walgett LGAs
- RDRP016 – Coonamble, Warren, and Bogan LGA's

A Project Control Group (PCG) was established for each RDRP group consisting of a nominated General Manager representative, EO of the FNWJO and NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development representatives – this group provided strategic direction and decision making on behalf of the members of each RDRP group.

The RDRPs focus was to develop drought resilience through a lens of regional development at both community and Local Government levels. A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan was established by FNWJO to guide the collaborative development of the RDRP's to ensure comprehensive representation.

Concurrently, the PCG recruited and selected The Stable Group to undertake the "Desktop Research" phase of the project and the development of both RDRP004 and RDRP016 plans using community consultation information provided by FNWJO.

The Draft Plans were provided to the PCG and each Local Government Council for feedback as well as being reviewed by CSIRO for procedural fairness and compliance with RDRP development guidelines. Feedback was then provided by CSIRO and forwarded to the Stable Group to accommodate CSIRO amendments.

Prior to the plans being adopted and approved by both the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the NSW Government Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional NSW, feedback and adoption was received from Local Government representatives from each RDRP area:

1. Concerns were expressed that information contained in the plans were not time relevant there had been changes since the publication of the research documents.
2. The existing plans developed by the Stable Group focused on large scale projects; these would be difficult to achieve without considerable Government funding.
3. Councils felt timelines were "rushed" to meet funding requirements and made it difficult to undertake consultation across vast areas.

*It is important to note that both RDRP004 and RDRP016 are living documents and can evolve, be reviewed and renewed at any time in the future, however a starting point was required for adoption.*

Funds were released for the implementation of projects identified in each of the RDRP Plans and through consultation with members of the PGC and participating Councils the following projects were identified as priorities and contractors selected to deliver each project.

### RDRP004

- Project 1 - Water Security Baseline Project
- Project 2 – Drought Preparedness – Education and Social Revitalisation

### RDRP016

- The Country Heartline – Country Charm, Country Calm

All projects are due to be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

## Attachment 8



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

### Provision Of Western Air Services

## **PROVISION OF THE FAR WESTERN AIR SERVICES**

### **BACKGROUND**

Living in remote localities in Regional New South Wales presents its own challenges in relation to access to services and facilities. Notwithstanding, the resilience of our residents has seen many of these challenges regarded as hiccups rather than impediments to living in a remote locality.

To assist in addressing this issue of 'the tyranny of distance', the NSW Government in 2019 provided funding of eight million dollars the FNWJO to allow it to re-establish manage and operate air services for an initial estimated period of four (4) years to/from destinations within each of the JO member council's area.

After an absence of air services in excess of ten (10) years in Bourke and Walgett, and whilst a lesser period in Cobar, the return of flights was widely applauded.

Following a public procurement process, two (2) contracts to separate airline companies were awarded by the Joint Organisation. One contract was awarded to FlyPelican in respect of the Cobar to Dubbo and Sydney routes. In this regard FlyPelican initially provided round trips between Cobar and Dubbo on Monday and Thursday and Cobar and Sydney on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. The Cobar to Dubbo route was subsequently terminated due to insufficient demand and, this terminated route replaced by an additional flight to and from Sydney.

The other contract was provided to Airlink Airlines in respect of the routes to Bourke and Walgett/Lightning Ridge from Dubbo. Separate aircraft are utilised on each of these routes.

Flights are currently operated as follows.

<b>Airport</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Bourke	Dubbo	3 x Return Flights per week
Cobar	Sydney (Kingsford Smith Airport)	6 x Return Flights per week
Walgett/Lightning Ridge	Dubbo	3 x Return Flights per week

The increased connectivity achieved as a result of the re-establishment of the flights has been welcomed by the various communities across the vast expanse of the Far West Region and others requiring access to our regional towns, such as medical specialists and other professions. A considerable amount of work has gone into the establishment of these air services.

The Cobar/Sydney route has seen passenger numbers continue to grow and the introduction of a Thursday service commenced on a trial basis to cater for the fact that some existing flights are close to capacity and to increase the degree of flexibility for mine workers and community travel for recreation, business and medical purposes.

Whilst passenger numbers to/from Bourke and Walgett/Lightning Ridge have not yet achieved the levels anticipated, the services to these communities proved invaluable during the period of recent flooding which saw the Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett/Lightning Ridge areas effectively isolated except for air travel.

Both contracts were linked to available funding, and as mentioned, an initial (4) year service period was initially anticipated to finish in the latter part of 2023, however, the initial contracts provided for options to extend for two (2) one (1) year periods. Utilising these options and the funding already provided the contracts were able to be extended finish in 2025.

The continuation of the air services was seen as being critical by the Board of the Far North West Joint Organisation who had extensive discussions with the State Government through the Minister for Western New South Wales Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC and staff from the then Department of Regional New South Wales which is now part of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)

The Board was extremely pleased with the support received and that their representations were successful with additional funding of \$2,000,000 being made available from the Regional Development Trust which should see both services continue until the latter part of 2026.

Part of the funding provided was for an evaluation of the services to take place as the Far North West Joint Organisation strives to secure longer term funding.

This Evaluation was undertaken by CJC Ports and Air Port Ltd and included a comprehensive community consultation process which covered all sections of the various communities that are covered by the air services. There was an overwhelming support for the continuation of the air services noting their importance for the services both economically and socially.

Additionally, a Business Case was prepared to demonstrate the economic benefit of the air services to the various communities.

The Board sees the retention of the air services as critical and continues to explore all avenues of potential funding which can be utilised to see the air services retained.

## Attachment 9



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

### Condition Assessment of Pools

## CONDITION ASSESSMENT OF POOLS

### 1.1 Background

The Far North-West Joint Organisation of Councils (FNWJO) which consists of Cobar, Bourke and Walgett Shire Councils each of whom own and operate community swimming pools located at various towns. Within each Local Government Area, with these swimming pools in some instances were built more than 50 years ago.

Far North West Joint Organisation approached NSW Public Works (NSWPW) – Riverina Regional Office at Dubbo to undertake condition assessment of these swimming pools.

Following pools are included for condition assessment:

1. Cobar Memorial Pool
2. Bourke Memorial Pool
3. Carinda Swimming Pool
4. Collarenebri Swimming Pool
5. Burren Junction Swimming Pool

Walgett Pool had recently undergone a similar exercise in relation to condition assessment and as such was not included and Lightning Ridge Pool not being owned by Walgett Shire was also not included.

The issues experienced by Walgett Shire earlier in 2024 had highlighted the fact that the pools were in most cases in excess of 50 years old whilst some had been subject to upgrades it was felt timely that the condition assessment be undertaken to allow Councils to look strategically as to what will be required to ensure the pools were able to continue to provide a valuable resource to their respective communities

### 1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the 'Structural Condition Reports' were to:

- Inspect and record the current structural condition of the swimming pools, concourse areas and amenities.
- Inspect and record condition rating of mechanical and electrical equipment.
- Make recommendations for further action based on the visual condition and discussion with staff responsible for maintaining the facility or who were present during site inspection.
- Highlight any Work Health and Safety issues observed at site

### 1.3 Scope of Works

A site inspection was organised for a visual inspection and photographic recording of the condition of each of the pools, their surrounds & amenities and condition rating of mechanical and electrical equipment.

The scope of works included the following:

1. Obtaining any existing structural drawings from NSW PW Plan or Council archives where available.
2. Reviewing drawings to gather information about construction.
3. Undertake site inspection and record visual condition of various elements.

4. Discussion with Council staff about the issues and problems.
5. Preparing a Condition Report/rating of equipment and recommendations.
6. Providing recommendations about any upgrading for each facility.

#### **1.4 Limitations**

These reports were based on a walkthrough survey and therefore are relatively general in nature. The reports were restricted to a visual assessment of the exposed structures only; inground structures concealed from view have not been noted and/or assessed in this report.

Destructive or non-destructive testing was not included in the scope of this report.

The report does did not cover safety audit and/or health guidelines for pools. Council or Pool operators are expected to follow the NSW Guidelines for Public Swimming Pools by NSW Health and pool regulations in running the pools.

#### **1.5 Outcomes**

All Councils received a comprehensive condition report on their pools to allow them to be aware of what they may need to provide for in both the short- term and longer-term and include provision for such work in their Assessment Management Plans and Long- Term Financial Plan.

## Attachment 10



**FAR NORTH WEST**  
JOINT ORGANISATION

### Report and Evaluation of Rest Areas Within the FNWJO Footprint

## Project Overview

The Project involved detailed review of all existing rest areas on state and regional roads, including site inspections, photographic evidence, amenities, classification, cellular-coverage assessments, infrastructure condition ratings, and safety observations.

The FNWJO engaged PV Consulting to undertake the review

Included in the work undertaken was

- Mapping and assessing existing rest areas across the FNWJO state and regional road network.
- Identifying network gaps on both state and regional roads.
- Recommending locations for new heavy-vehicle rest areas.
- Prioritising upgrades to existing facilities.
- Preparing strategic cost estimates to support future funding pathways.

The Project was aimed at addressing the following challenges;

- Extremely long travel distances between towns.
- Limited access to amenities suitable for modern heavy-vehicle standards.
- Traveller fatigue risks on remote road corridors.
- The absence of dedicated rest areas.

The work undertaken has delivered significant benefits to member organisations, providing each council with a regional roads rest-area master plan, a state roads improvement plan, and grant-ready project packages, including SLRIP submissions for priority routes. Collectively, these outcomes have positioned the Joint Organisation strongly for future funding opportunities and equipped all stakeholders with high-quality planning material to support implementation phases in the years ahead.

The Western Roads Driver Safety Project has delivered a comprehensive and highly actionable outcome for the Far North West Joint Organisation.

Through the development of the Master Plan, the identification of 84 rest-area sites, and the clear definition of the works required at each location, both member councils and TfNSW now have a solid and unified understanding of the steps needed to improve safety and amenity across the regional and state road network.

This project has acted as a key enabler providing an evidence-based roadmap, strategic costings, and grant-ready documentation that will guide future investment and streamline the delivery of rest-area infrastructure across the FNWJO footprint.