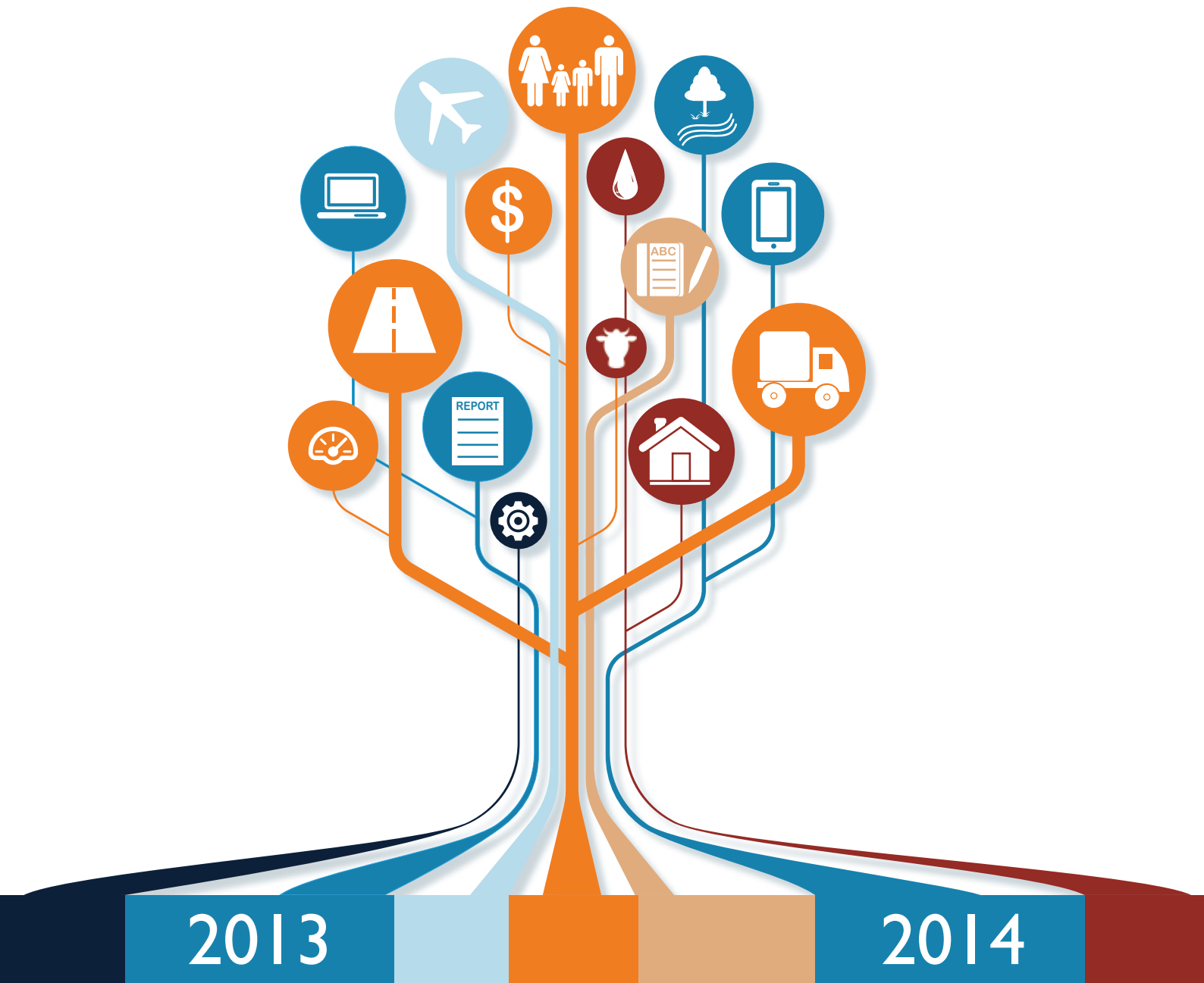


# A prosperous future for Outback Queensland



**RAPAD**  
Incorporating Central Western  
Regional Organisation of Councils



## REMOTE AREA PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

## about our plan

### REGIONAL PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS

TO ENSURE A RESPONSIVE AND PROACTIVE APPROACH TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY REPRESENT; DIRECTORS, THROUGH THE BOARD'S OCTOBER 2013 REVIEW PROCESS HAVE IDENTIFIED RAPAD'S REGIONAL PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS (RPFA), AND AN ASSOCIATED DESIRED REGIONAL OUTCOME (DRO):

#### **Transport**

*DRO: The Central West has affordable and accessible transport and transport infrastructure options for all human and freight needs, now and into the future*

#### **Services Retention and Expansion – emphasising Health, Education & Training, and Housing**

*DRO: That the Central West has sufficient and equitably available services to cater for the present, and to foster future growth and development*

#### **Technology, Communication and the Digital Economy**

*DRO: Metro-comparable communications technology*

#### **Sustainable Industries**

*DRO: The Central West's business community is supported to grow, thrive and adapt, and that the regional economic base is diversified*

#### **Regional planning & Capacity Building**

*DRO: Informed and unified Central Western local governments proactively implementing effective, local and regionally beneficial planning and capacity building processes*

**THROUGH THESE, RAPAD WILL DELIVER ON ITS VISION AND MISSION**

## about us STRUCTURE

RAPAD WILL STRUCTURE ITSELF ACCORDINGLY TO MAXIMISE RETURNS ON ITS RPFA'S.

RAPAD is:

- The Regional Economic Development Agency,
- The Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC) owned by and representing the local governments of CW Qld,
- A Registered Training Organisation through RAPAD Skilling,
- A joint venture partner in RAPAD Employment Services Qld,
- A credible and respected auspicing body for Federal and State Government programs and funding,
- A proactive partner of Federal, State and Local Governments, the LGAQ, and industry organisations,
- Any other mechanism the Board decides, from time to time, is strategically important to achieve the needs of its members and the Boards vision and mission.

RAPAD INC  
CENTRAL WESTERN  
QUEENSLAND REGIONAL  
ORGANISATION OF  
COUNCILS

Barcaldine

Barcoo

Boulia

Blackall-Tambo

Diamantina

Longreach

Winton

## Vision

A UNITED REGIONAL ORGANISATION PROACTIVELY SHAPING AND CREATING A PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR OUTBACK QUEENSLAND

## Mission

TO PLAN, FACILITATE AND ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CENTRAL WEST AND OUTBACK QUEENSLAND

### We will achieve this by:

- Being future focused
- Strategically supporting the regions existing business base
- Identifying and promoting shared regional investment priorities
- Identifying and facilitating development of new and innovative industries for our region
- Being a consultative advocate and lobbyist on regional issues
- Proactively networking, communicating and partnering with all levels of government, private and public sector organisations
- Supporting and facilitating constructive & relevant discussion and partnerships amongst member local governments and community organisations
- Adding value through mutually beneficial partnerships with state wide representative and other regional organisations

## Principles

Membership to RAPAD involves abiding by core principles, which will guide strategic decision making and governance by each Director of the Board. Through these principles, the Board will optimise its opportunities to support and facilitate a balanced sustainable future for the Central West and Outback Queensland.

### OUR STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING PRINCIPLES

RAPAD has, first and foremost, a 'regional' mandate.

Each strategic decision aims to achieve, where applicable:

- An outcome of multi-local government or regional benefit
- Economic, cultural and social development opportunities
- Equitable levels of service, and its delivery for all the regions residents
- Intergenerational equity
- Sustainable use of the regions natural resources
- Nil adverse outcomes for a member local government.

### OUR GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

Directors will:

- Be an advocate for the Central West and Outback region
- Practice open and transparent communication
- Aim for outcomes by consensus
- Remain informed on all RAPAD matters and make informed decisions
- Act for regional equity
- Act ethically, in the best interests of the Board, and at all times ensure knowledge of, and application to high levels of, corporate governance
- Act as a link between the Board and their Local Government
- Be apolitical when on the Board
- Be aware of contemporary community engagement and regional development findings and practice
- Ensure RAPAD is governed as a financially sustainable not-for-profit model.

# Regional Priority Focus Areas



## Transport

**DRO:** The Central West has affordable and accessible transport and transport infrastructure options for all human and freight needs, now and into the future.

### Goals:

1. The continued maintenance and enhancement of all transport services in Central West and Outback Queensland – air, road, rail.
2. Affordable and accessible human and freight transport choices for Central West and Outback Queensland that facilitates business and community growth and development.
3. Support the activities of, and work closely with the Outback Regional Roads Group.
4. Engage with the LGAQ, Federal and State policy makers to proactively influence policy to ensure that Central West and Outback Queensland receives continual increases in transport funding.



## Capacity Building and Regional Planning

**DRO:** Informed and unified Central Western local governments proactively implementing effective, local and regionally beneficial service delivery, planning, and capacity building processes.

### Goals:

1. That the seven local governments of RAPAD, State and Federal Government work together to implement and achieve effective regional planning; economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes
2. Facilitate and support the ongoing development and initiatives of the Outback Regional Water Group
3. Facilitate and support the ongoing development and initiatives of the Central West Regional Pest Management Group
4. Facilitate and deliver coordinated skilling and training to members and external clients through the registered RTO, RAPAD Skilling
5. That RAPAD is recognised as an organisation that can and will facilitate discussion on issues of importance to the regions, the states and nations future development.



## Services Retention and Expansion

### - emphasising Health, Education & Training, and Housing

**DRO:** That the Central West has sufficient and equitably available services to cater for the present, and to foster future growth and development.

#### Goals:

1. Effectively partnering and actively engaging with the LGAQ and government agencies, with particular emphasis on health, education and training, and housing, in the development of regional policy, associated strategies and models, and the where appropriate, the implementation and delivery of such policies, strategies and models.
2. Lobby and advocate for the maintenance and enhancement of sufficient, affordable services and associated infrastructure for the existing and future needs of the region and its communities.
3. Enhance employment opportunities for both unemployed and employed through ownership of a Registered Training Organisation and Remote Jobs and Communities Program provider.



## Technology, Communication and the Digital Economy

**DRO:** Metro-comparable communications infrastructure and a digitally skilled population.

#### Goal:

1. That Central West and Outback Queensland has broadband technology, communications infrastructure and the participation skills that supports competitive business in the global market and guarantees social equity.



## Sustainable Industries

**DRO:** The Central West's business community is supported to grow, thrive and adapt, and that the regional economic base is diversified.

#### Goals:

1. Support, at a strategic & regional level, growth and diversification of the regions economic, social and cultural base.
2. That the region has the human resource skills available to promote regional growth and development.
3. The region's businesses have access to business support, education, training and up-skilling that supports, the individuals personal growth, the businesses growth and the regions economic prosperity.
4. That all skilled Australians and overseas based persons see the Central West and Outback as an ideal location to settle and seek employment.
5. Effectively partner State and Federal government agencies with corporate responsibility for regional development and regional business assistance – both rural and non-rural.

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RAPAD asserts the right to be recognised as author of the original material in the following manner.

Design: Ascribe Communication

### Contact us

**Mail** 117 Eagle Street | PO Box 592

Longreach Qld 4730

**Phone** +61 7 4652 5600

**Email** [rapad@rapad.com.au](mailto:rapad@rapad.com.au)

**Website** [www.rapad.com.au](http://www.rapad.com.au)

### More information about the report

Enquiries regarding this report may be directed to:

General Manager, RAPAD

Phone: +61 7 4652 5600

Email: [gm@rapad.com.au](mailto:gm@rapad.com.au)



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# Chairman's report



IT IS WITH PLEASURE I PRESENT TO MY FELLOW DIRECTORS, MEMBER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND STAKEHOLDERS MY REPORT AND RAPAD'S 2013-14 ANNUAL REPORT.

This is my third term as Chairman and it is a rewarding task carrying out this role. I'm grateful for the support of my fellow Directors, and the faith they continue to have in me to undertake this important role.

As I said last year, RAPAD continues to be a facilitator of regional discussion and collaboration, among its members and in combination with our external stakeholders; an effective regional networking mechanism; and a service delivery agent for members and externally funded government programs. RAPAD is also an effective lobbying and advocacy mechanism for the region.

At the end of last year's reporting period I touched on the board's review of our strategic plan. While there were limited changes, the review allowed us to evaluate our direction, and chart an important course forward for the next four years. Our vision remains the same, while our mission has had minor amendments.

## VISION

A united regional organisation proactively shaping and creating a prosperous future for Outback Queensland.

## MISSION

To plan, facilitate and encourage sustainable growth for the future of the Central West and Outback Queensland

## WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- being future focused
- strategically supporting the regions existing business base
- identifying and promoting shared regional investment priorities
- identifying and facilitating development of new and innovative industries for our region
- being a consultative advocate and lobbyist on regional issues
- proactively networking, communicating and partnering with all levels of government, private and public sector organisations
- supporting and facilitating constructive & relevant discussion and partnerships amongst member local governments and community organisations
- adding value through mutually beneficial partnerships with state wide representative and other regional organisations.



It has been a learning process; difficult at times, but a rewarding establishment year for RESQ, all under the careful management of Tony Rayner.

Many of our programs and projects have rolled-over, while several have ceased. Last year I reported that the philanthropic arts company Red Ridge, a RAPAD via CICADAS@RAPAD initiative, had received triennial funding. We have maintained our support for, and close relationship with, Red Ridge, providing them with a major donation to support their fundraising initiatives.

David Arnold and I have completed our first full year as Director and Chair, respectively, of RAPAD Employment Services Queensland (RESQ) a joint venture between RAPAD and Employment Services Queensland (ESQ). ESQ also provides two Directors to the organisation. It has been a learning process; difficult at times, but a rewarding establishment year for RESQ, all under the careful management of Tony Rayner. I look forward to its continued contribution to the region's social and economic wellbeing. RAPAD's connectivity to various sectors is well illustrated through RESQ, Red Ridge and RAPAD Skilling and their inter-relationships in working with a number of clients on multiple levels. All three agencies, where appropriate, work together to provide outcomes for their clients.

RAPAD's own Registered Training Organisation (RTO), RAPAD Skilling, continues to grow, providing services to the private sector, RAPAD's member local governments as well as supporting the training needs of RESQ clients where RAPAD Skilling has the required skills.

**As the following pages will show, the work undertaken by RAPAD at the strategic and operational levels is diverse.**

A significant achievement this year has been our partnering with the Central West Hospital and Health Service, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Medicare Local and the Queensland Ambulance Service, in the first regional health plan.

We remain active in direct support, through Ray Heffernan, RAPAD's Executive Director of Innovation, for the Barcoo Diamantina bid and planning for optic fibre connection. Ray has maintained a leadership position in the Broadband for the Bush national alliance.

A significant achievement this year has been our partnering with the Central West Hospital and Health Service (CWHHS), Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), Medicare Local and the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), in the first regional health plan. This is a significant milestone for several reasons and for RAPAD health is one of our priority areas. A single regional health plan was discussed and proposed through RAPAD many years ago and it's welcome news that it has come to fruition. I am a supporter of the local health boards as it gives the region greater access to those who have the control.

RAPAD has continued to support the wild dog check fence committee's activities and this year we funded the community consultation into the proposed wild dog check fence. While this project brings mixed emotions there is no doubt the wild dog problem isn't going away. Wild dogs continue to affect the profitability of our region's sheep industry. How we as a region, as communities, as local governments, and as individual enterprises, address the problem going forward will be one of ongoing debate, but it is one we must work together on.

Our region's collaborative efforts are also emphasised through the achievements of the Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group.

---

Wild dogs continue to affect the profitability of our region's sheep industry. How we as a region, as communities, as local governments, and as individual enterprises, address the problem going forward will be one of ongoing debate, but it is one we must work together on.

The drought continues to plague the region and much of Queensland and it was pleasing to receive the Australian and Queensland government support packages. The Queensland Government funded a series of community events in every council area. The funding of \$255,000 for the seven local governments, focused on lifting the spirits of local communities.

The Australian Government's drought support for wild dog control was also welcomed. This support validated the collaborative manner in which a region works together. With short notice, our local governments through the Central West Regional Pest Management Group (CWRPMG) - a RAPAD collaboration initiative - Desert Channels Queensland and Biosecurity Queensland came to an agreement on a range of projects suitable for each local government area. The overall funding support is \$600,000. Wild dog control projects are now well underway and will continue into 2015.

The Outback Regional Water Group (ORWG) is inching forward with Queensland's Minister for Energy and Water Supply, Minister Mark McArdle's visit this year highlighting the importance of the model.

Our partners and funders in the ORWG: the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Department of Energy and Water Supply (DEWS) and Queensland Water Directorate (qldwater) again illustrate the important relationships RAPAD builds.

Our administration of the Rural Financial Counselling program as an important contributor to the social, economic wellbeing of the rural sector also continues. We have delivered this service across our region and much of Queensland for over a decade and it is one we want to continue past the contract end date in 2015. The Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) annual report for 2013-14 is attached at page 36.

The Outback Trailblazer has been taken on by RAPAD this year and it is progressing well under the guidance of Lance Smith and Kristine Arnold. The Outback Trailblazer helps boost the economies of the small communities where it goes, highlights the region, and provides much needed funds for Angel Flight.

Our region's collaborative efforts are also emphasised through the achievements of the Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group (ORRTG). Councils of RAPAD put forward a proposal to the State and Federal governments to co-fund roads in the region and in turn keep the region's workforce employed.

The Australian Government's drought support for wild dog control was also welcomed.

The Queensland Government funded a series of community events in every council area... focused on lifting the spirits of local communities.

This was a long-term effort and it was pleasing to see the outcome was a \$24.5M funding package. Like the ORWG, we value our partnerships with LGAQ and the Department of Transport and Main Roads in the ORRTG.

Key activities from this year are captured in the following pages. I hope you take time to peruse it and see for yourself the diversity of matters RAPAD becomes involved with. In closing I'd like to recognise my fellow Directors for their commitment, both the Australian and Queensland governments which we at all times aim to work in partnership with, and the LGAQ.

Finally I wish to thank David and his team for their ongoing commitment.

### **Cr Rob Chandler**

Chair, Central West Queensland Remote Area Planning & Development Board





**Invitation to attend the Queensland Government  
Sponsored Free Family Community  
Drought Relief Event**

**Come and lift your spirits with**

**Comedian –  
Fiona O'Loughlin, then dance  
the evening away with music by  
John O'Shea**

**June 29<sup>th</sup> 2014 \* Jundah Shire Hall \* 5:30pm – 12:00am**

This event is proudly sponsored by Queensland Government's Community Support for Drought Affected Areas funding and the Barcoo Shire Council.



**Bar in operation**  
*(Funds raised from Bar aids the  
Combined Churches), nibbles  
and 2 course dinner*

**TICKETS**  
*Please reserve your free  
tickets by calling 46386930  
by 20<sup>th</sup> June to assist with  
catering and seating ar-  
rangement*

## Board of Directors



CR RICK  
BRITTON  
Boulia Shire  
Council



CR JULIE  
GROVES  
Barcoo Shire  
Council



CR GEOFF  
MORTON  
Diamantina  
Shire Council



CR ROB  
CHANDLER  
Barcaldine  
Regional  
Council



CR BUTCH  
LENTON  
Winton Shire  
Council



CR BARRY  
MUIR  
Blackall-Tambo  
Regional Council



CR JOE  
OWENS  
Longreach  
Regional  
Council

## Board Meeting Register

Register of Board Meetings (Board members listed only)

Meeting date	Cr Chandler	Cr Groves	Cr Muir	Cr Lenton	Cr Britton	Cr Morton	Cr Owens
July 5 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
August 9 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
September 6 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
October 2 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
November 1 2013 including AGM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
December 16 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
February 7 2014	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
February 21 2014	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
March 6 2014	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
March 14 2014	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
May 30 2014	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

## RAPAD Staff

The RAPAD team skills reflect the diversity and needs of our region and projects.

The year saw RAPAD move to a new office location in Eagle Street. The new space works well with the diversity of work undertaken by staff and consultants and is able to adapt to changes in resourcing needs. The location will also serve to increase RAPAD's presence situated in a central location, the main street of Longreach.



DAVID ARNOLD  
General Manager



KRISTINE ARNOLD  
RAPAD Skilling Manager



SALLY GRAHAM  
Administration/Finance  
Officer



JILLIAN SINGLETON  
Payroll, Trainer and Assessor  
RAPAD Skilling



NICOLE AVERY  
Administration



STEPHEN ROSSBERG  
Trainer and Assessor RAPAD Skilling



MEGAN KUHN  
Compliance, Trainer and Assessor  
RAPAD Skilling



# General Manager's Report



THIS YEAR SEES ME BRING ABOUT 11 YEARS OF SERVICE TO RAPAD AND AS I HAVE SAID NUMEROUS TIMES BEFORE THE DIVERSITY OF MATTERS WE GET INVOLVED WITH CONSTANTLY EVOLVES.

In past years I've used this section to not only report on the year's events, but also offer some of my views. It's a bit like, my once a year statement. The Chairman has summarised many of the things we are engaged in already but I'd like to single out several for my own comments.

To give credit where it is certainly due I too would also like to acknowledge the Australian and Queensland governments for their financial support and partnering. We secured \$600,000 from the Australian Government's drought support package for feral animal control, and while the dollars gained were both welcome and needed I think we need to reflect on the process of gaining those funds. The attraction of these funds was a direct outcome of the CWRPMG. The CWRPMG started ... and floundered ... and reviewed itself ... and inched forward slowly, but without an impact of significance. This went on for several years and it is easy to forget these important storming, norming, performing stages.

The preceding comments shouldn't be interpreted as derogatory; rather the CWRPMG simply followed a well-worn process of group formation. Those development years however, provided the foundation for providing the Australian and Queensland governments with a regional collaborative group that included all stakeholders and was able to quickly come to an agreement on the spread of funds across the region on a needs basis. The next stage will be ensuring the funds do achieve an outcome, and that outcome is quantifiably reported.

Like the outcomes from the ORRTG or the CWRPMG, and many RAPAD and individual council projects, rewards only come with time, focus, learning from mistakes, and hard effort.

I think in some ways RAPAD over its life has followed a similar path. I can only speak on my time with the Board, however over the past decade RAPAD as an organisation has continued to build its capacity. I think again this capacity is reflected in the ORRTG's attraction of a \$24.5M funding package. It didn't happen overnight. It happened via a long process of lobbying, collaboration, partnership and relationship building and these things come about through capacity formed and developed over many years.

The Queensland Government also funded, through its Remote Area Board (RAB) program, the implementation of the Central West Tourism Development plan (attached at page 78). This year we have received \$140,000 in funding to undertake a similar project in the Far West (Barcoo, Diamantina and Boulia) council areas. As I write this report, and again funded via the RAB program, we have just completed mobile phone signal strength testing, and aim to deliver a report by December 2014.

RAPAD Skilling is continuing to grow and develop. The registered training sector is one that constantly evolves and Minister Ian McFarlane announced some changes to red tape at the National VET Conference 2014. The original vision of RAPAD Skilling being owned by and providing services to its owner local governments, but also to other sectors, remains as its core strategy. How the owner local governments wish to take it forward will require careful strategising over the coming years.



I am enjoying my role as Deputy Chair of the CWHHS. While I am appointed in my own individual capacity, as distinct from being a RAPAD nominee, I recognise the support of the Board in allowing me to undertake the role as without the Boards support I would probably not be able to do it. With health being a focus area of the board, past and present, it is an area we have had limited influence on despite its importance to rural communities. I'm obviously parochial however I believe the CWHHS has achieved significant outcomes since its inception and I would

**I am enjoying my role as Deputy Chair of the Central West Health and Hospital Service.**

recommend to readers that they take the time to read the CWHHS's regional health plan included at page 99 in this report.

On a personal note, and after 11 years of trying and 15 Ironman triathlons, I was fortunate to finally qualify for and compete in the World Ironman Triathlon Championships held in Hawaii. It was the most gruelling race I've been in and apart from the personal satisfaction in achieving this long-term goal, there were personal learnings - perhaps even enlightenment - and it proved for me again, that things don't come easily. So you're asking, what's this got to do with this report? Like the outcomes from the ORRTG or the CWRPMG, and many RAPAD and individual council projects, rewards only come with time, focus, learning from mistakes, and hard effort.

In closing I'd like to thank the Board for their commitment and also the staff.

**David Arnold**

General Manager, Central West Queensland Remote Area Planning & Development Board

This year we have received \$140,000 in funding to undertake a similar project in the Far West council areas.

RAPAD thanks the Queensland Government for funding our Remote Area Board and drought community events projects.

# KEY HIGHLIGHTS



# Sponsorship

Providing sponsorship is always a difficult choice. It involves balancing available funds, the event, and whether it matches with our core values. RAPAD provided sponsorship / partnering funds to the following events.

## Westtech Youth Scholarships

RAPAD was a major sponsor of the Westtech youth scholarship. Valued at \$5000 the scholarship provides winners with funds to support them through their chosen field of study and/or training.



## Way out West Fashion Quest

An initiative of Winton's Karin Robinson, the Way Out West Fashion Quest provides an avenue for young locals to potentially enter into a modelling career, as well as developing other personal outcomes. The feedback from Karin after the event, which saw a young local girl go on to a national level, shows the opportunities available.

I just wanted to write and say thank you again for your contribution and support for this years Way Out West Fashion Quest. Without your support we would not have found Venessa Harris.

Venessa Harris travelled to Brisbane, along with three other girls representing the Way Out West Fashion Quest to compete in the Tamblyn Models, Young Model Discovery Grand Final on the 28th September.

Venessa competed against approximately 70 other grand finalist to take out the major title - The International Winner.

The International Winner receives, amongst many other prizes, a chauffeured trip ... overseas to meet with all the top modelling agencies in Hong Kong, Milan, Paris and New York! This is an amazing opportunity for Venessa and she will do Australia and the far west proud as she is a beautiful girl inside and out...what an opportunity and it is partly thanks to you all for supporting me in running this year's Way Out West Fashion Quest!

The three other beautiful girls who travelled to Brisbane thoroughly enjoyed themselves and were appreciative of having the chance to experience this wonderful opportunity

*Karin Robinson*

## Agrihive

RAPAD, and the RFCSQCSR through its marketing budget, provided \$10000 support to the James Walker led initiative – the CEO Outback Business Summit.

Dear David

Thank you greatly for your support in creating the CEO Outback Business Summit event. It was reported we had over 200 people attend the summit, 100 at the dinner and over 500 registered for the livestream and online for the initiative. The engagement created over 40 video interviews that are still available online to anyone in remote and rural regions that they can access in the comfort of their own homes to date they have had over 30,000 minutes of viewing and generated over 50 individual news stories through various media partnering with Fairfax media. All videos of the event can be found at: [www.agrihive.com](http://www.agrihive.com).

The follow-up has been tremendous locally, from the visiting guests and from around Australia; as you can see from some of the overwhelming responses.

I would like to thank David Arnold CEO of RAPAD and Rob Chandler Chairman of RAPAD for their faith in investing to partner in a local initiative that drew National attention...

Once again thank you for making this possible.

James Walker

## Red Ridge

RAPAD's ongoing partnership with Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) continues the legacy from the 'Creative Generators' program under CICADAS@RAPAD.

As guided by the Garden of Arts Strategy, the transition from CICADAS@RAPAD to Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) offers an independent, not for profit regional arts body. Our ongoing partnership allows RAPAD to continue to invest in the arts and ensure creative regional opportunities continue to flourish.

RAPAD's confidence in the arts has realised outstanding results with Red Ridge delivering across the regions and achieving outcomes that impact on the social and economic growth through its community care and industry development strategies.

This year, RAPAD's \$25,000 partnership investment has allowed Red Ridge to leverage capacity through a combination of Australian Government and private funds, matched by its fundraising program through the Red Ridge Foundation. This investment aims to carve a pathway to build continued capacity for regional communities working individually and regionally. This future partnership with the Red Ridge Foundation aims to leverage greater financial gains and deliver extended industry support across the region.

## Networks

RAPAD, through its Directors and General Manager, maintain strong external networks throughout the region and beyond.

DAVID ARNOLD IS ALSO THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE CWHHS AND A MEMBER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA FITZROY CENTRAL WEST (RDAFCW). CR ROB CHANDLER, APART FROM HIS MANY ROLES UNDERTAKEN AS A MAYOR, IS ALSO A MEMBER OF RDAFCW AND RAPAD'S NOMINEE TO THE BOARD OF THE OUTBACK QLD TOURISM AUTHORITY (OQTA).

Cr Britton is a member of Regional Development Australia North West. Five RAPAD Directors are also Directors of Red Ridge, helping strengthen ties between council and the arts. Cr Owens maintains his role as an Executive of the LGAQ.

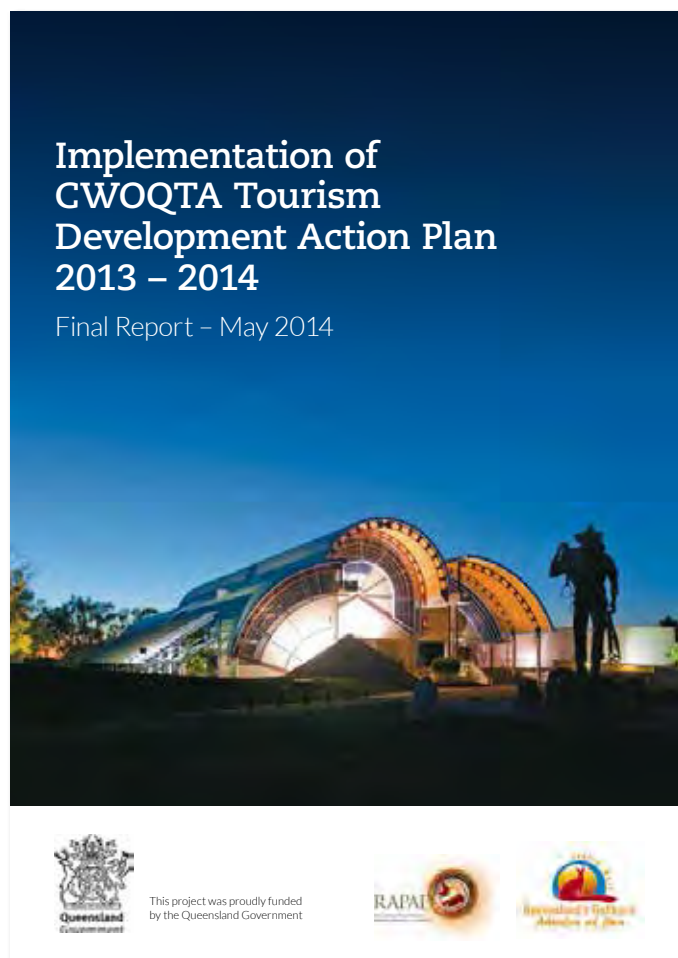
RAPAD, through Cr Rob Chandler and proxy Cr Joe Owens, along with the RFDS and Medicare Local, were participants in the CWHHS's regional health planning project.

RAPAD maintains a memorandum of understanding with the LGAQ that reinforces the strong working relationship both parties share. RAPAD is an active member of LGAQ's Regional Economic Development Action Group (REDAG) and recognises the important role LGAQ has taken in supporting the ORWG and regional groups like RAPAD.

## CWOQTA Tourism Development Plan Implementation Project

Through support from the Queensland Government's Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning Transition Funding program, RAPAD finalised the implementation of the *CWOQTA Development Action Plan 2013-14*.

The Development Plan was an industry led initiative commenced in early 2013. The outcome documents can also be viewed on the RAPAD website at: [www.rapad.com.au](http://www.rapad.com.au).



**The full plan is available at page 78.**



## Far West Tourism Action Plan Implementation

With the support of RAPAD, representatives of the Far West councils (Barcoo, Diamantina and Boulia) developed a tourism action plan.

The plan is consistent with all applicable Outback and Queensland tourism planning documents.

It aims to:

Ensure repeat visitation, attract new markets and extend length of stay through continual development and promotion of the drive and touring xperience.

Its strategies are to:

- Align touring route development and promotion with the overall Drive Strategy for Queensland
- Expand distribution of themed drive routes and related product
- Ensure marketing and promotion of regional events, experiences and regions is undertaken in a coordinated manner to maximise visitor expenditure on drive and touring routes
- Leverage existing Outback Education tourism strategies (specifically the Outback Queensland Education Subsidy Scheme) in the development and distribution of suitable product
- Reinvigorate local tourism products by leveraging the distinctive characters, stories and heroes synonymous with the region
- Expand profile of the region for adventure touring market and fly/drive market.

Experienced tourism consultant Anita Clark will be undertaking the implementation in close conjunction with representatives of the Far West councils.





## Regional Health Plan

The regional health plan is an initiative of the CWHHS in collaboration with Medicare Local, RFDS, QAS and RAPAD. The plan states in its opening pages:

*We—the five signatories to this plan—have worked closely together and closely with communities to develop the first-ever unified health service plan for central west Queensland.*

*This is our plan and way forward to address the major health issues identified through months of research and consultation with community members.*

*In this plan, we tackle the most significant health issues in the region. We also aim to improve services and systems to better deliver the healthcare that communities need.*

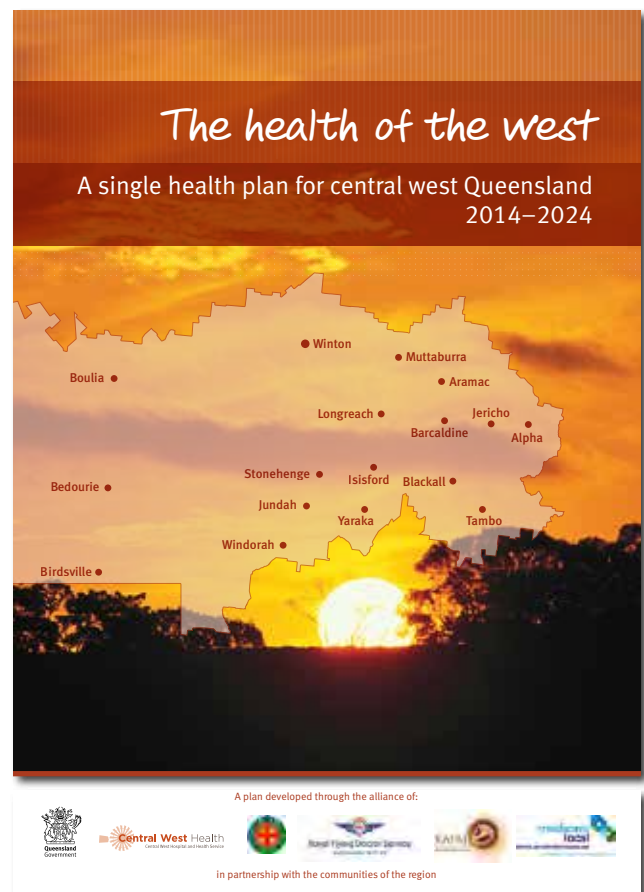
*Three broad service directions in this plan provide the vision for future healthcare in the region:*

**Service direction 1:** All healthcare agencies are part of a unified, integrated system that supports service delivery across central west to better meet the needs of the community.

**Service direction 2:** Services address the priority health needs of residents across the health continuum, improving life expectancy and reducing years spent in poor health.

**Service direction 3:** Services are organised and delivered across the health service continuum (and locally where possible) in a way that best meets the health needs of residents.

Through this commitment RAPAD, where it can, will strive to achieve the best health outcomes for the region.



# Community Events Funding

RAPAD, on behalf of its member local governments, was successful in attracting \$255,000 in funding from the Queensland Government for community events. This funding has provided a much-needed boost for rural communities in a time of severe hardship.

## Wild Dog Check Fence Feasibility Study

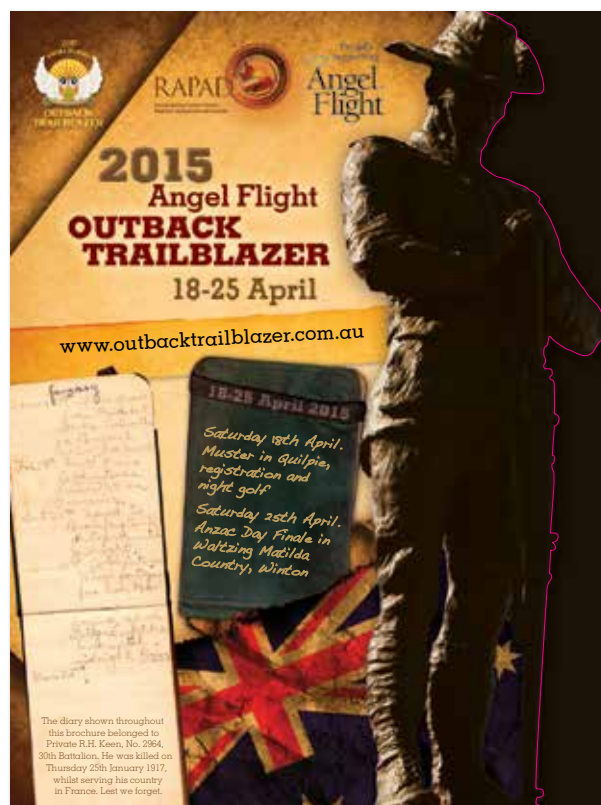
Last year RAPAD administered, managed, and provided in-kind support to, the feasibility study on behalf of the Wild Dog Check Fence industry steering committee. This year RAPAD has funded the community consultation report as well as providing in-kind support via the General Manager's time and input and secretarial support through teleconferencing facilities. RAPAD has provided approximately \$50,000 in direct and indirect support to this project. Councils are, at the time of writing, considering the project and any potential involvement.



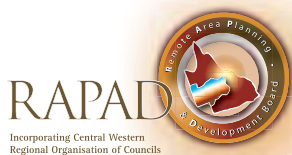
## Outback Trailblazer

RAPAD has taken over the management and operations of the Outback Trailblazer 2015. The Outback Trailblazer raises awareness and funds for Angel Flight.

Planning is well underway with Lance Smith as event organiser and Kris Arnold taking on administration duties in RAPAD's office. Set to take place in April 2015 the event will commence in Quilpie then travel through the Barcoo, Diamantina, Boulia and Winton council areas, finishing in Longreach.



# Outback Regional Water Group



COUNCILS IN THE RAPAD REGION HAVE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER ON WATER AND SEWERAGE ISSUES SINCE 2010, FORMING THE OUTBACK REGIONAL WATER GROUP (ORWG) AND OUTBACK REGIONAL WATER TECHNICAL GROUP (ORWTG) TO OVERSEE THESE ACTIVITIES. OVER THE PAST YEAR, THE WORK OF THESE GROUPS HAS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY WITH THE DECISION TO ESTABLISH THE VIABILITY OF AN OUTBACK REGIONAL WATER ALLIANCE.

The Alliance will comprise the five local government areas: Barcaldine Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Boulia Shire Council, Diamantina Shire Council and Longreach Regional Council. Its activities are being designed to take advantage of the potential benefits established as part of the Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP), which identified a number of opportunities, and savings that could be achieved through cooperative action on water issues.

To determine the best structure for the Alliance, and building on the investigations and joint projects undertaken in previous years, the ORWG selected and prioritised a range of joint activities and developed a coordinated work plan, concurrently seeking funding from the Improving Financial Management and Sustainability Scheme (IFMSS) from the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience.

The RAPAD group was one of only ten successful applicants in 2013 and received IFMSS funding of \$66,000.

**The RAPAD group was one of only ten successful applicants in 2013 and received IFMSS funding of \$66,000.**

As well as developing a proposed structure for the Alliance, projects were undertaken on joint training, independent operational investigations of water and sewerage schemes, updating regulatory reporting arrangements, a review of the region's Drinking Water Quality Management Plans, and joint approaches for asset management. Benefits and financial savings generated through undertaking each of these projects were also investigated.

'Material savings' (i.e. measurable reduction in costs compared with forecast expenditure) were calculated to exceed \$130,000 across all councils. 'Potential savings' (i.e. the estimated future savings as a result of the projects) were calculated to be in the range of \$10,000-\$40,000 for six of the projects undertaken. Other benefits including improvements in service, or reduced risks were also evident but were not quantified financially. Future projects have been planned and are projected to deliver a similar range of benefits on an ongoing basis and all projects have demonstrable benefits for customer service, risk management and compliance.

In June 2014 the Minister for Energy and Water Supply, Minister Mark McArdle, selected the region

**...the Minister remarked on the progress and strategic foresight of the RAPAD group.**

to promote the release of the new state water plan *WaterQ* at a showcase event in Longreach, reinforcing regional alliances as a key element of the State's 30-year strategy. Ongoing seed funding through QWRAP has

been instrumental in maintaining the activities of the water groups and the Minister remarked on the progress and strategic foresight of the RAPAD group. QWRAP is an LGAQ program that receives funding from DEWS and is managed by qldwater.



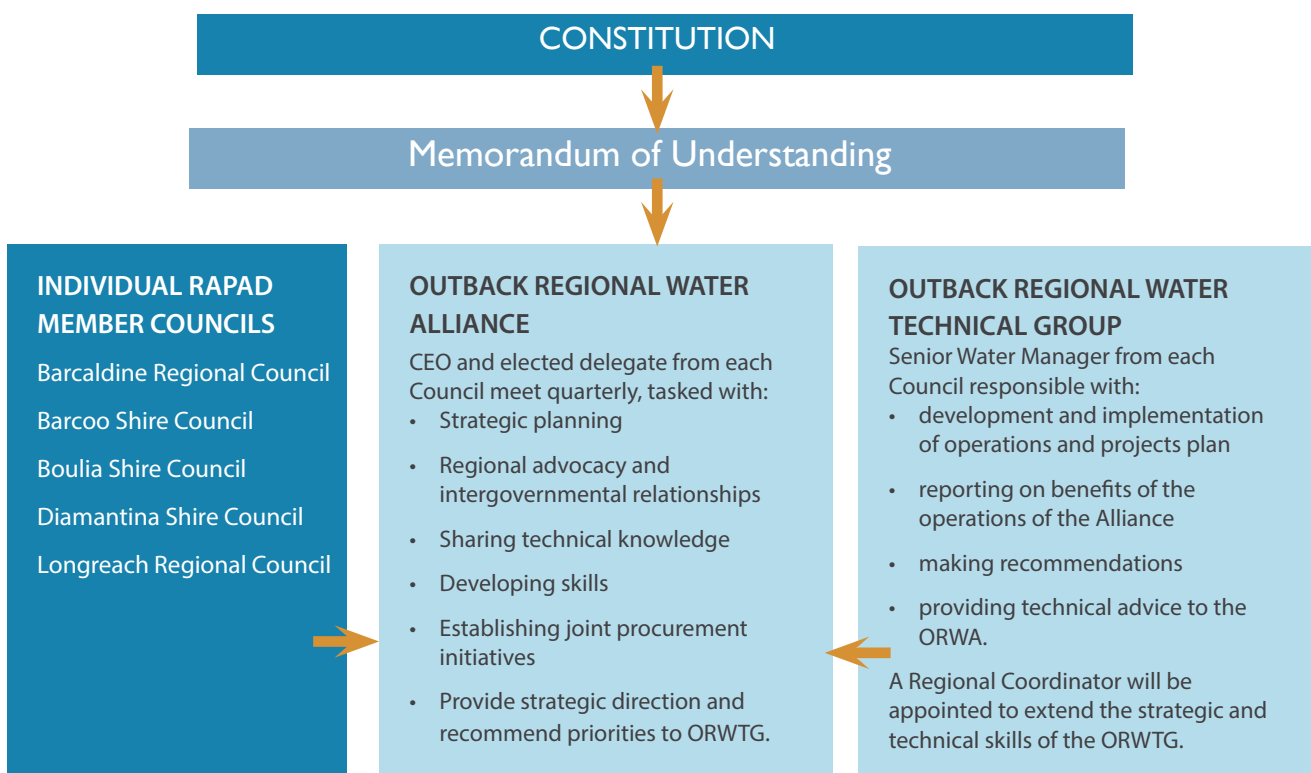


RAPAD would like to acknowledge the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience, Department of Energy and Water Supply along with the LGAQ and qldwater.

As can be expected from an area so vast and with so many differing sources and treatment processes, there is no 'one size fits all' strategy for safe, secure and sustainable urban water services. Where larger utilities can rely on economies of scale, greater income and growing population, many small providers including those in the Outback region must provide safe and reliable services with fewer revenue sources and the added costs of remoteness.

The initial work of the water groups has demonstrated that in this region, some of these costs can be mitigated through joint activities, bringing together the strengths of the diverse RAPAD councils. The new financial year will see this work continue with the formal establishment of the Outback Water Regional Alliance. Along with the government departments acknowledged, RAPAD would like to acknowledge the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience, DEWS along with the LGAQ and qldwater.

### Structure and Governance of the Outback Regional Water Alliance



## Outback Regional Water Group overview of the region





# Central West Regional Pest Management Group

RAPAD has continued to facilitate the development of the CWRPMG and act as secretariat and support base for the group. A RAPAD initiative, currently chaired by Cr Rick Britton; the CWRPMG vision states:

The CWRPMG will take a leadership and advocacy role in the effective regional planning controls and management of animal and plant pests in the RAPAD group of councils.

As has been stated earlier in this report the CWRPMG was successful in attracting funds from the Australian and Queensland governments for additional control of wild dogs. \$600,000 was obtained, and this, by negotiation between councils was split on a needs basis with the Longreach, Baraldine and Blackall-Tambo councils receiving the higher amounts due to the wild dog burden experienced in those areas.

Collectively Central West local governments spend approximately \$4.4M per year on pest animal and weed control and the collaboration amongst councils will continue to enhance outcomes.

# RAPAD Skilling



THIS LAST TWELVE MONTHS HAS SEEN GROWTH AND CHANGE FOR RAPAD RTO RAPAD SKILLING WITH FOCUS ON TWO MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC MARKETS.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Our continued concentration for training has been the outside workforce of the RAPAD area local governments which are the owners of this RTO.

Civil construction units of competency, especially in the traffic control and traffic management area have been the main area of delivery, with machinery plant training another major area.

With RAPAD and Employment Skills Queensland successful in their bid for the Remote Jobs Community Partnership and forming the joint venture RESQ, the second demographic focus was with job seekers across the Central West.

RAPAD Skilling works closely with RESQ staff to provide tailored delivery of pre-employment training for job seekers as well as appropriate accredited training for this demographic.

Local delivery for industry requirements in hospitality have included Responsible Service of Alcohol. This is likely to continue into 2015 with a change in requirements meaning in the hospitality industry need the Office of Liquor Gambling and Racing Statement of Attainment to a nationally accredited Statement of Attainment for the Provide Responsible Service of Alcohol course.

## EXPANSION

Following industry consultation with the local government representatives, the ORRTG, local contractors and the RESQ staff, RAPAD Skilling set a strategic path to amend scope of registration under the national regulatory body Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) putting further accredited training units and qualifications on the scope as per the consultation and with meeting all compliance requirements.

RAPAD Skilling was successful in amending scope of registration to include qualifications in business, business administration as well as civil construction (previously only units of competency in this area).

Staff are currently working on qualifications for retail and hospitality. Other local industries have discussed further areas of expansion, which will be considered as part of the strategic plan review and added where possible.

This process for amendment to scope required employment of dedicated personnel and a product compliance officer has joined the RAPAD Skilling team to ensure our training material is suited to our target market as well as meets all compliance requirements.

2015 will see RAPAD Skilling undertake our five-year ASQA audit. While an audit can be arduous process, RAPAD Skilling's gradual growth has enabled the team to embed a thorough process driven system.

To meet the needs of RESQ clients, RAPAD Skilling developed pre-employment programs for the region's job seekers, enabling them to develop skills suited to gaining employment or to undertake further accredited training. Several have enrolled in our Certificate II Hospitality course and the newly added Certificate II Business or Certificate III in Business Administration.

RAPAD Skilling is currently undertaking the process to be a preferred supplier under the Department of Education and Training in Queensland. If successful this would enable eligible clients to access training at reduced cost.

RAPAD Skilling's current training delivery includes:

## QUALIFICATIONS

BSB20112	Certificate II in Business
BSB30412	Certificate III in Business Administration
RII20109	Certificate II in Resources and Infrastructure Work Preparation
RII20713	Certificate II in Civil Construction
RII30813	Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations
SIT10213	Certificate I in Hospitality
SIT20213	Certificate II in Hospitality

## INDIVIDUAL UNITS OF COMPETENCY

CPCCOHS1001A	Work safely in the construction industry
RIIMPO317D	Conduct roller operations
RIIMPO318D	Conduct civil construction skid steer loader operations
RIIMPO319D	Conduct backhoe/loader operations
RIIMPO321D	Conduct civil construction wheeled front end loader operations
RIIMPO324D	Conduct civil construction grader operations
RIIWH5205D	Control traffic with stop-slow bat
TLILIC2001A	Licence to operate a forklift truck

The Department of Transport's Traffic Management courses including 30864QLD are under review and a new system is being implemented for this industry.

RAPAD Skilling has undertaken a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with several individual trainers outside the RAPAD area to deliver training on RAPAD Skilling scope for a service fee. Diamantina Shire Council has also undertaken a MoA with a RAPAD Skilling for an approved staff member to deliver training under our RTO. All of these MoAs have been working well and allows RAPAD Skilling to deliver outside the RAPAD area.

We look forward to 2015 being another great year for empowering our Central West Queenslanders through training and upskilling and for the continued support from our owners – the local governments of Central West Queensland.

# RAPAD Employment Services Queensland



IN 2013 RAPAD, IN A JOINT VENTURE WITH ESQ, SUCCESSFULLY TENDERED FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS REMOTE JOBS AND COMMUNITIES PROGRAM FOR THE CENTRAL WEST REGION.

Taking effect on 1 July 2013, RESQ has now completed its first full year, under the careful management of Tony Rayner.

RESQ experienced a very busy 12 months in establishing the service delivery aspect of the Remote Jobs and Communities Program contract on behalf of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Job seeker numbers across the Central West region grew steadily to 200 mid-year and then grew again towards the end of the financial year to 265 with a total caseload of 380 job seekers.

Despite the severe ongoing drought and declining business throughout all sectors, RESQ were able to achieve a moderate level of placement of job seekers in the retail, hospitality, civil construction, aged care, child care and agricultural sectors. These placements resulted from developing appropriate career pathways and providing skilling and training aligned to Individual job seeker requirements as well as providing ongoing mentoring and post placement support for job seekers.

RESQ has forged a very strong partnership with RAPAD Skilling to ensure that job seekers throughout the Central West region have ready access to training and skilling delivered at local community level.

RESQ established a diverse range of community projects throughout the Central West. These included the very successful Drought and Weed Project where job seekers completed training and skilling at the Longreach Pastoral College and then undertook weed control on regional council land parcels as well as private properties. These activities are supervised by very experienced operators who ensure that the various functions are carried out in a technically correct manner. This project has resulted in ongoing paid work for job seekers on a number of properties in the Barcaldine and Alpha areas.

Other community projects include the Birdsville Gazebo and Leather Workshops, Longreach Catholic Church Innagai Garden, Barcaldine Clydsdale Farm and Blackall Heartland Festival support. RESQ also sponsored the Stonehenge Wellness Forum as part of its Community Development program.

RESQ's annual report can be found at page 129.

Job seeker numbers across the Central West region grew steadily to 200 mid-year and then grew again towards the end of the financial year to 265 with a total caseload of 380 job seekers.

# Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region



Through the registered business Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR), RAPAD continues to manage and administer the Rural Financial Counselling Service program across the Central West, South West, North West regions as well the Gulf of Carpentaria, Balonne, North and Central Burnett, Goondiwindi, Mackay and Western Maranoa areas.

The RFC program is funded by the Australian and Queensland governments and RAPAD has delivered the program in its present form since 2007.

The Central West had until December 2013 been capably serviced by experienced RFC, Mr John Swain. After 18 wonderful years of service John retired, but has ben capably replaced by Ms Rachel Bock.

RFCSQCSR serviced over 500 clients in the 2013-14 year. The RFCSQCSR 2013-14 annual report is available on the RFCSQCSR website: [www.rfcsqcsr.com.au](http://www.rfcsqcsr.com.au) and is also attached at page 34.

RFCSQCSR serviced over 500 clients in the 2013-14 year.



---

RAPAD's Executive Manager Strategy and Innovation, Ray Heffernan, is part of a small team charged with selecting an infrastructure builder and securing project funds.

## Barcoo-Diamantina Connecting Remote Communities Project

RAPAD has continued to support the Barcoo and Diamantina Shires quest to connect the five shire towns to the national telecommunications grid via optic fibre.

RAPAD's Executive Manager Strategy and Innovation, Ray Heffernan, is part of a small team charged with selecting an infrastructure builder and securing project funds.

The project is a Council priority because poor broadband and absence of mobile coverage places the region at an economic disadvantage and limits community development.

In October 2013 the Queensland Government announced the project has been successful in its application for \$5.25 M Royalty for Regions funding.

Activities Ray has undertaken include: acting as delegation member to raise the understanding and awareness of the project (and engage champions) with Federal Ministers, Senators and MPs, liaise with the national and Queensland public servant executives, negotiation with the short listed tenderers, project management, provide industry expertise and stakeholder relationship management.

## Mobile Coverage

In response to the Government's \$100M Blackspot program, RAPAD submitted a Central West regional response. It outlined the struggle of rural and remote Australian communities to improve telecommunications infrastructure. Market failure by telecommunications companies to invest necessitates government involvement.

Several program design improvements were suggested as well as listing specific black spot areas identified by councils that should be considered a priority for Mobile Coverage Programme funding.

The Central West region has no scientific data to support the performance and coverage of the mobile network. With support from the Queensland Government's Remote Area Board funding program, RAPAD contracted the Digital Economy Group to conduct a survey of the major roads in the region testing the strength of mobile signals and the speed at which data is transmitted.

The testing was completed in October 2014 with analysis and completion of a report expected in December 2014. This analysis will form valuable information to support ongoing RAPAD discussion with mobile carriers.

With support from the Queensland Government's Remote Area Board funding program.



Ray Heffernan is on the ASCA executive committee and seeks to highlight issues specific to remote Australian communities and inform the ASCA on initiatives and activities undertaken by RAPAD.

## Broadband for the Bush Alliance

The Broadband for the Bush Alliance (B4BA) is a group of organisations that are committed to the digital inclusion of remote and rural Australia. The Alliance brings together a range of stakeholders with expertise in communications, remote service delivery, and community engagement. It comprises 13 organisations committed to the digital inclusion of remote and rural Australia. In June 2013 Ray Heffernan became the Chair of B4BA.

Ray's involvement ensures Central West issues are placed on the national agenda.

Ray is driving the Alliance to increase its membership coverage, advocacy role and relevance for remote end users. The June 2015 B4BA Forum *Unlocking the (Digital) Potential of the Bush* will place emphasis on concepts and ideas that encompass

collaboration and innovation, and with the mind-set that communications is the enabler for everything. Ray's involvement ensures Central West issues are placed on the national agenda.

## Australian Smart Communities Association

Australian Smart Communities Association (ASCA) -formerly the Broadband Today Alliance - is a national advocacy and awareness group of local government and economic development organisation that raise, inform and discuss broadband and digital economy issues. Ray Heffernan is on the ASCA executive and seeks to highlight issues specific to remote Australian communities and inform the ASCA on initiatives and activities undertaken by RAPAD. The exposure at this type of forum helps to inform and educate wider audiences on the infrastructure and digital economy challenges facing rural and remote regions.

## Queensland Digital Economy Strategy and Action Plan

Ray Heffernan, has also been asked join the Queensland Government **GoDigitalQld** Business Collaboration Group, an important action under the **GoDigitalQld** – Queensland Digital Economy Strategy and Action Plan. **GoDigitalQld**

Ray will raise issues of priority to remote Queensland and inform RAPAD on digital initiatives.

is the Queensland Government's roadmap to using digital technologies, content and innovative services to boost productivity, connectivity and economic well-being in Queensland.

The **GoDigitalQld** Business Collaboration Group will play an important role in developing digital capability in Queensland businesses, specifically by setting strategic priorities, coordinating actions and sharing content/resources to benefit Queensland businesses. Ray will raise issues of priority to remote Queensland and inform RAPAD on digital initiatives.

# Glossary

Below are acronyms used throughout the report.

ASCA	Australian Smart Communities Association
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
B4BA	Broadband for the Bush Alliance
CWHHS	Central West Hospital and Health Service
CWOQTA	Central West Outback Queensland Tourism Authority
CWRPMG	Central West Regional Pest Management Group
DEWS	Department of Energy and Water Supply
ESQ	Employment Services Queensland
IFMSS	Improving Financial Management and Sustainability Scheme
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
ORRTG	Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group
ORWG	Outback Regional Water Group
ORWTG	Outback Regional Water Technical Group
QAS	Queensland Ambulance Service
QWRAP	Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program
RAB	Remote Area Board
RAPAD	Remote Area Planning and Development Board
REDAG	Regional Economic Development Action Group
RESQ	RAPAD Employment Services Queensland
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
RFCSQCSR	Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctors Service
qldwater	Queensland Water Directorate
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Rural Financial Counselling Service Qld  
Central Southern Region

# ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014





**Published by the Central West Remote Area Planning & Development Board 2014**

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CWQ RAPAD asserts the right to be recognised as author of the original material in the following manner.

Edited and designed by Ascribe Communication

## **Contact us**

Mail PO Box 592  
Longreach Qld 4730

Email [rapad@rapad.com.au](mailto:rapad@rapad.com.au) [gm@rapad.com.au](mailto:gm@rapad.com.au)

Website [www.rfcsqcsr.com.au](http://www.rfcsqcsr.com.au) or [www.rapad.com.au](http://www.rapad.com.au)

## **More information about the report**

Enquiries regarding this report may be directed to:

General Manager, RAPAD

Email [gm@rapad.com.au](mailto:gm@rapad.com.au)

## **Acknowledgments**

Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) would like to thank the Australian Government and the Queensland Government for their continued support of the Rural Financial Counselling Service program.

In-kind support is provided by the RAPAD Board of Directors to RFCSQCSR.

RFCSQ - CSR also thanks numerous stakeholders who provide our RFCs with ongoing support in their everyday roles.

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# Service Area

Rural Financial Counsellors  
Central Southern Region



The Rural Financial Counselling Service - Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) has experienced Rural Financial Counsellors (RFCs) based in St George, Goondiwindi, Miles, Emerald, Longreach, Mundubbera, Innisfail (servicing the Gulf region), Gayndah, Mackay, Gympie and Coalstoun Lakes. This team of specialists service the regions surrounding these locations.

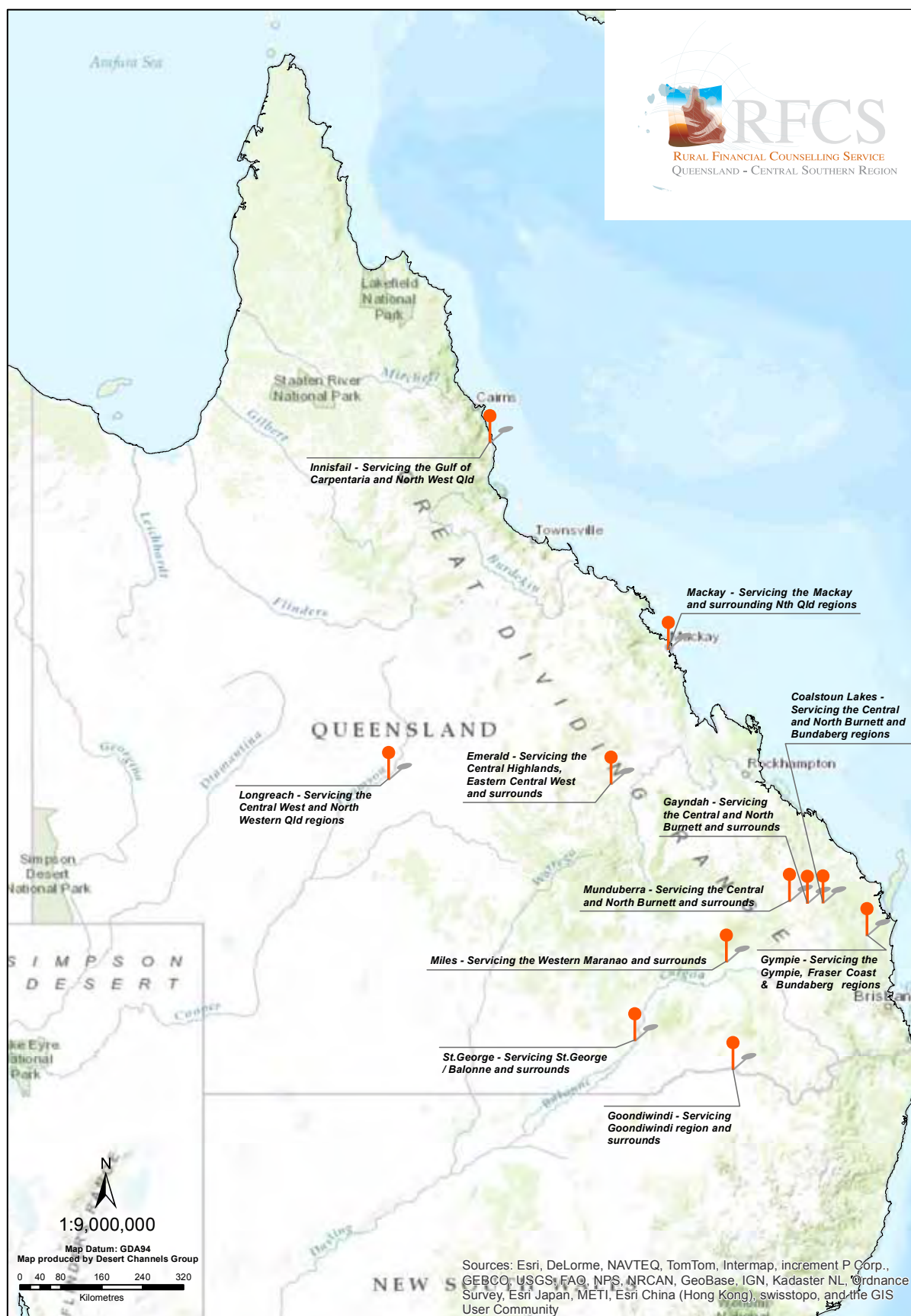
RFCs cannot provide financial advice, succession planning or family, emotional or social counselling, but they can provide referrals to appropriate professionals and information on how to prepare for discussions with succession planning experts.

RFCs are qualified and experienced in working with rural clients to achieve positive outcomes.

## Rural financial counsellors aim to:

- help clients understand their financial and business position
- help clients understand their financial and business options
- improve clients' abilities to plan operations, achieve realistic goals and identify risks
- help clients complete action plans to address industry adjustment and climate change pressures
- connect clients to information about government and industry assistance
- refer clients to accountants, agricultural advisers and other relevant professionals, as required
- refer clients to professionals for succession planning, family support and personal (social and emotional) counselling, as required
- assist clients to identify their advice and training needs
- apply a case management approach to provide clients with an holistic outcome.





# Chair's report



**Cr Rob Chandler**  
Chair, RFCSQCSR

**It is now my third term as Chairman of Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) and its parent entity, the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD). Like the past two years, this year has had its challenges and rewards for our business, the clients we service, and agribusiness in general.**

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my fellow Directors who are all committed to the effective delivery of the RFCSQCSR service; Cr Julie Groves, Cr Rick Britton, Cr Butch Lenton, Cr Joe Owens, Cr Barry Muir and Cr Geoff Morton.

Several of our Directors are actively engaged in the agribusiness sector while others come with a strong background in small business. All Directors understand the importance of sound governance and public accountability given our roles as elected representatives. Groups like RAPAD offer excellent service delivery opportunities for the Australian and Queensland governments and we have proved this year-in, year-out through our delivery of RFCSQCSR. We are close to those we serve, and we have wide state and national networks which allow us to hear and understand the views of many.

I'd also like to acknowledge the rural financial counsellors (RFCs), management and administration, who provide the day-to-day operations of the service. We have continued to provide our region's agribusinesses with an excellent service focused on change and adjustment, which in an ever-changing fiscal and natural environment, pushes agricultural business to its limits.

Last year I touched on the flooding at the end of the 2011-12 period that rapidly turned into drought across much of our service region in 2012-13. During the 2013-14 period, much of our service area has remained in drought. Our Board of Directors involved in agribusiness know all too well the effects of the drought conditions themselves. It was welcome news that the Australian and Queensland governments offered various drought support packages. While industry must always stand on its own two feet and deal with the challenges, governments cannot lose sight of the distinctive challenges agriculture faces.

With drought comes hardship, and coupled with the increasing rural debt problem, our RFCs work a lot in debt mediation services. I've been reporting on this now every year and unfortunately it doesn't look like going away.

This year saw our service lose, through retirement, one of our longest serving RFCs, Mr John Swain. John was also one of the nation's longest serving RFC's and we wish him well in his retirement. With the retirement of John, and with additional funding, we also recruited new staff. This year we welcomed Rachel Bock, Sarah Barron, Ian Jackson and Ben Slack. All four come to the service with excellent tertiary and practical skills in finance and agribusiness.

This coming 2014-15 period also brings to an end the current contract period. I trust the governments will take into account the wealth of knowledge its current RFCS program service providers, like RAPAD and RFCSQCSR, have accumulated and that this is given due consideration in the upcoming open tender process.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge both the Australian and Queensland governments who make funding available for the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

---

**Groups like RAPAD offer excellent service delivery opportunities ... We are close to those we serve, and we have wide state and national networks which allow us to hear and understand the views of many.**

---



**Cr Rick Britton**  
Boulia Shire Council



**Cr Rob Chandler**  
Barcaldine Regional  
Council



**Cr Julie Groves**  
Barcoo Shire Council

## Board of Directors



**Cr Butch Lenton**  
Winton Shire Council



**Cr Joe Owens**  
Longreach Regional  
Council



**Cr Barry Muir**  
Blackall-Tambo Regional  
Council



**Cr Geoff Morton**  
Diamantina Shire  
Council



**RFCSQCSR is a business owned by the Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD). This structure makes RFCSQCSR different to most, if not all, other RFC services which operate for the sole purpose of delivering the RFC program, whereas RAPAD exists as an entity regardless.**

For background purposes, the RAPAD Board is the contract holder with the Australian and Queensland governments for delivery of the RFC program. Again, the RFC service is then delivered through the business: RFCSQCSR. Governance of RAPAD (and RFCSQCSR) is via a Board of Directors chosen by member local governments. At present the Board of Directors are currently the Mayors of the member local governments.

All Directors boast impressive resumes and backgrounds which ensures RFCSQCSR is a professionally governed organisation.

To further validate the board's credentials, each director is supported in the conduct of all their duties, including RAPAD/RFCSQCSR meetings by their respective local government CEOs, who in most cases act as proxies. CEOs bring to the organisation a different perspective and are a valued contributor to governance and operational aspects.

### Register of Board Meetings

(Board members listed only)

#### July 5 2013

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

#### August 9 2013

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

#### September 6 2013

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens

#### October 2 2013 (Strategic Planning Review)

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton, Cr Morton

#### November 1 2013

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

#### November 1 2013 AGM

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

#### December 16 2013

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens

#### February 7 2014

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton, Cr Morton

#### February 21 2014

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

#### March 6 2014

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

#### March 14 2014

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

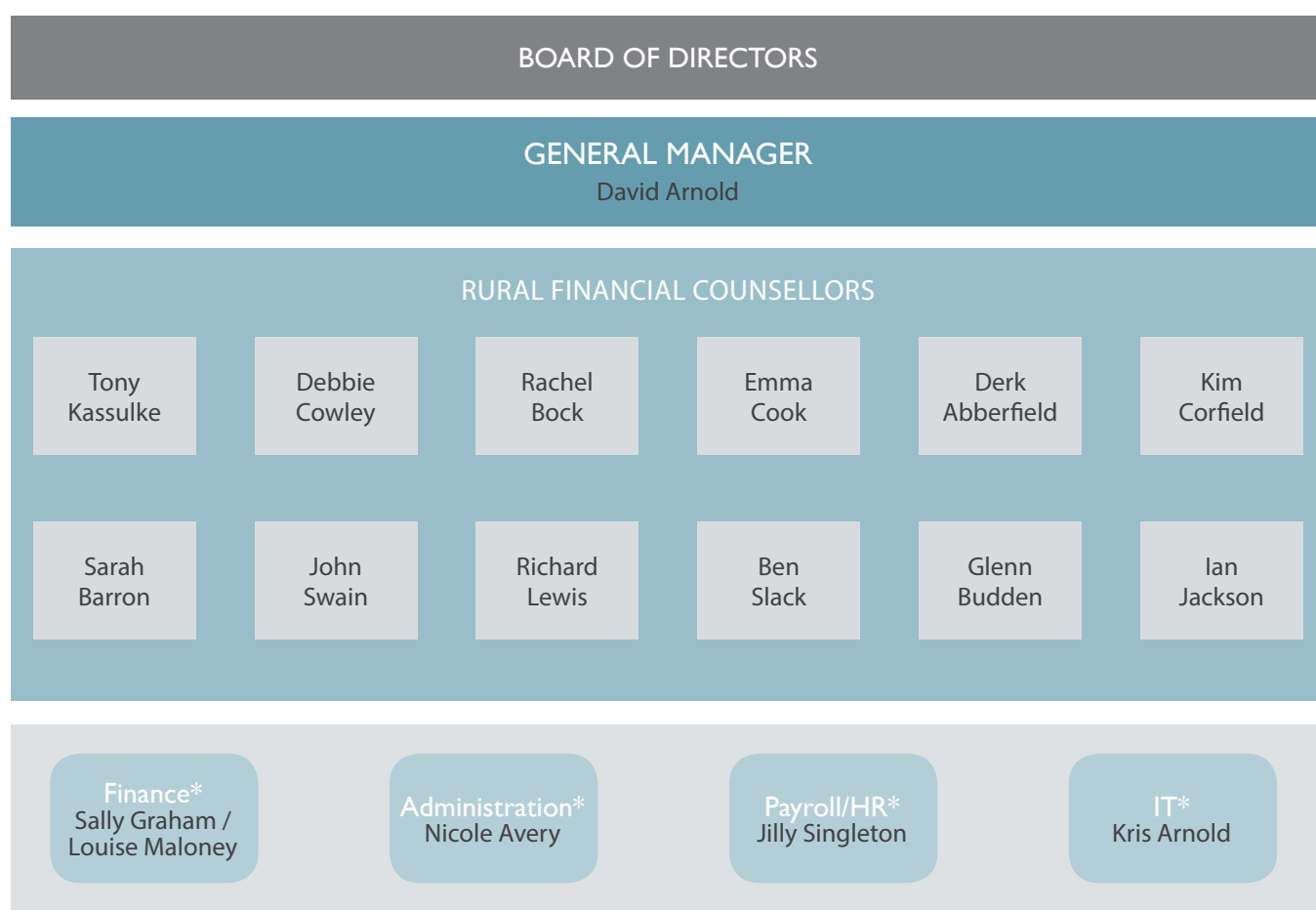
#### May 30 2014

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens, Cr Britton

# Organisation Chart

The Board employs General Manager David Arnold who has responsibility for the management of RAPAD and subsequently RFCSQCSR, ensuring the effective conduct of all operational activities.

RFCSQCSR employed 12 RFCs during this period although with retirements and maternity leave the full time equivalent was lower than this.



\* Staff work in RAPAD entity and perform functions for RFCSQCSR as required

*This organisation chart only references RFCSQCSR employees and RAPAD staff directly related to RFCSQCSR and does not refer to other RAPAD business units.*

# Rural Financial Counsellors



**RACHEL BOCK**  
Longreach



**BEN SLACK**  
Longreach



**DEBBIE COWLEY**  
Goondiwindi



**KIM CORFIELD**  
Coalstoun Lakes



**IAN JACKSON**  
Gulf Region



**TONY KASSULKE**  
Mundubbera



**GLENN BUDDEN**  
Miles



**SARAH BARRON**  
St George



**DERK ABBERFIELD**  
Gympie



**EMMA COOK**  
Emerald



**RICHARD LEWIS**  
Mackay  
*Richard Lewis provided RFC services to Emma Cook's region while she was away during 2013-14 on maternity leave.*



**JOHN SWAIN**  
Longreach  
*Retired December 2013.*

## RFCSQCSR Strategic Plan

### Vision

That RFCSQCSR contributes proactively to the sustainability of Australia's agribusiness sector.

### We will achieve this by

- being future focused
- consulting and engaging regularly with funders and stakeholders
- engaging with the service region's advisory members
- valuing the Rural Financial Counsellor
- adding value to the funder's resources in a manner consistent with their guidelines
- coordinating and facilitating the provision of information and awareness on all of the funder's policies and initiatives, and contemporary issues affecting the financial sustainability of the target market.

### Mission

That RFCSQCSR delivers the program funders policy initiatives and services in a responsive and strategic manner, which benefits the agribusiness sector in our designated service region.



# General Manager's Report

## And Year in Review



**David Arnold**  
GM RFCSQCSR

**This year, like all years, has been rewarding as manager of RFCSQCSR. Our RFCs have always been highly motivated and dedicated to supporting the services clients. 'RFCs are RFCSQCSR' and their reports provide a more in-depth overview of their regions' service issues.**

RFCSQCSR covers an area from the Gulf of Carpentaria down to the Queensland-NSW border areas. Our RFC team has the required mix of expertise and skills to service all clients across all agricultural sectors throughout our diverse region.

Before going further I would like to note the retirement of John Swain. John serviced the Longreach region for over 15 years and retired in late 2013 as one of the longest serving RFCs in Australia. He was highly respected among his clients, his RFC team, and RFCs across Australia. With John's retirement the need for a replacement was necessary, and I'm pleased to say Rachel Bock has taken over where John left off. Along with Rachel, Ben Slack, Sarah Barron and Ian Jackson joined us this year as a result of internal staff movements and additional funding from the Australian Government. We have a diverse mix of expertise, and practical and tertiary skills, making RFCSQCSR an adaptable and highly qualified service team.

Up-skilling has been a pedestal on which RFCSQCSR stands, and this year two RFCs are completing their Diploma in Financial Counselling. This is in addition to their existing undergraduate tertiary qualifications.

Our team also meets face-to-face at least twice a year to undertake team capacity building activities and performance reviews.

Staff retention remains high, as it has always been in RFCSQCSR. Since the service commenced in 2006, aside from retirement or maternity/family leave, only one RFC has left the service, and this was only due to personal reasons. In addition, we have been fortunate to bring a mix of RFCs together from across genders and ages, and above all else, bring significant experience.

RFCSQCSR, with an additional service region and extra RFCs this reporting period, serviced 553 clients, up from 357 for the 2012-13 period. One thing that always stands out, and as noted in our operating statistics, is the constant addition of new clients. Through these tough times, RFCSQCSR has managed its workload and service levels through effective case management and careful management of RFC time.

Overall, the operating statistics together with RFC reports, paint a fairly straightforward picture of the issues facing agriculture in our service region. Climatic variation and debt levels, along with declining land values and in some cases enterprise size, figure predominantly as the major causes of difficulty. This climatic variation has been noticeable across most of our region.

The central and northwest areas experienced good seasons and flooding pre-2012 to now find themselves in the grip of drought again with no end in sight. The Central and North Burnett areas likewise moved from flood to drought in the space of a year. Debt mediation is far more prominent this year, in particular in the North Burnett, Goondiwindi and Mackay service regions. With 138 clients in asset management, it continues to play a significant role in our RFC's work schedules.

RFCSQCSR continues to maintain its reporting and compliance requirements to the Australian and Queensland governments, satisfying all requirements as required under contract. As reported last year, RFCSQCSR had three Directors complete the AICD program. Further to the ongoing capacity building they undertake regularly as publicly elected officials they, via the RAPAD Board, adhere to high levels of governance and accountability.

Communications, through these hard times, and with the appointment of new staff, required additional advertising and this was prioritised where staff were new and or service regions were new (pictured right).



# Advertising collateral

## FACING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP? YOU'RE NOT ALONE

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL  
RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR



Rural Financial Counselling Service Qld  
Central Southern Region

### What is it?

The primary role of the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Programme is to support primary producers and small rural businesses who are suffering financial hardship, and who have no alternative sources of impartial support, to manage the challenges of industry change and adjustment.

### How can it assist me?

Rural financial counselling is a free service and is independent of financial institutions, welfare agencies and government.

### How do I access the RFCS programme?

By contacting either Tony in Munduberra or Kim in Coalstoun Lakes or Ben.

[www.rfcsqcsr.com.au](http://www.rfcsqcsr.com.au)

### NORTH BURNETT



**Tony Kassulke**  
Phone: 07 4165 4544  
Mobile: 0428 654 544



**Kim Corfield**  
Phone: 07 4127 5051  
Mobile: 0427 296 848



**Ben Slack**  
Mobile: 0439 324 949

The Rural Financial Counselling Service Programme is supported by the Australian Government and Queensland Government.

## FACING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP? YOU'RE NOT ALONE...

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL  
RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR



Rural Financial Counselling Service Qld  
Central Southern Region

### ST GEORGE

**Sarah Barron**

Phone: 07 4625 5490

Mobile: 0439 247 258

Email: [sarahbarron@rfcsqcsr.com.au](mailto:sarahbarron@rfcsqcsr.com.au)

[www.rfcsqcsr.com.au](http://www.rfcsqcsr.com.au)

### What is it?

The primary role of the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Programme is to support primary producers and small rural businesses who are suffering financial hardship, and who have no alternative sources of impartial support, to manage the challenges of industry change and adjustment.

### How can it assist me?

Rural financial counselling is a free service and is independent of financial institutions, welfare agencies and government.

### How do I access the RFCS programme?

By contacting Sarah or visit our website.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service Programme is supported by the Australian Government and Queensland Government.

## FACING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP? YOU'RE NOT ALONE

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL  
RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR



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Central Southern Region

### What is it?

The primary role of the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Programme is to support primary producers and small rural businesses who are suffering financial hardship, and who have no alternative sources of impartial support, to manage the challenges of industry change and adjustment.

### How can it assist me?

Rural financial counselling is a free service and is independent of financial institutions, welfare agencies and government.

### How do I access the RFCS programme?

By contacting your local RFC Rachel Bock or visit our website.

### LONGREACH

**Rachel Bock**

Phone: 07 4652 5602

Mobile: 0427 583 096

Email: [rachelbock@rfcsqcsr.com.au](mailto:rachelbock@rfcsqcsr.com.au)

[www.rfcsqcsr.com.au](http://www.rfcsqcsr.com.au)



The Rural Financial Counselling Service Programme is supported by the Australian Government and Queensland Government.

## FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, PROFESSIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE for rural businesses in the Gulf

Rural Financial Counselling Service Qld  
Central Southern Region

The purpose of Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Program is to provide FREE support to primary producers, fishers and small rural businesses who are suffering financial hardship, and who have no alternative sources of impartial assistance, to manage the challenges of change and adjustment.

Rural Financial Counsellors are qualified and experienced in working with rural clients to achieve positive outcomes.

### Contact your local RFC

#### GULF REGION

**Ian Jackson**

Mobile: 0427 374 371

[ianjackson@rfcsqcsr.com.au](mailto:ianjackson@rfcsqcsr.com.au)

[www.rfcsqcsr.com.au](http://www.rfcsqcsr.com.au)

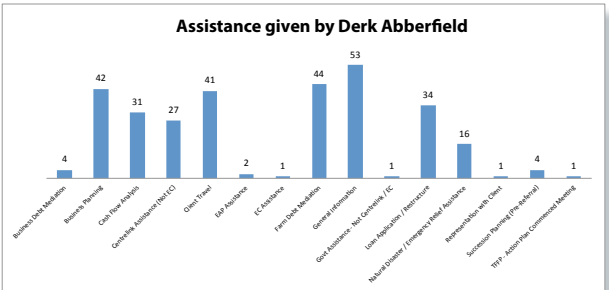
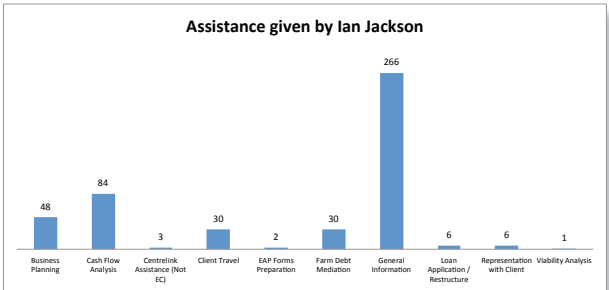
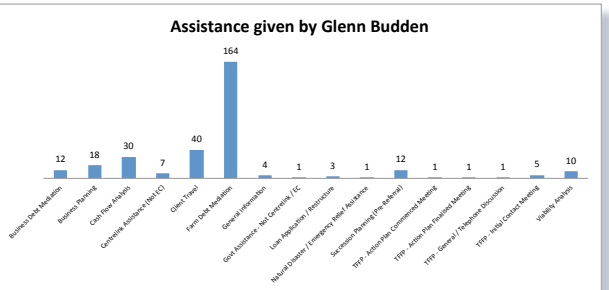
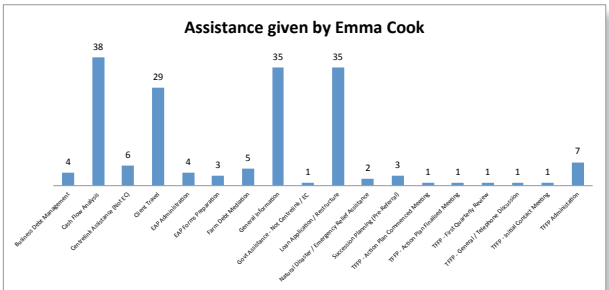
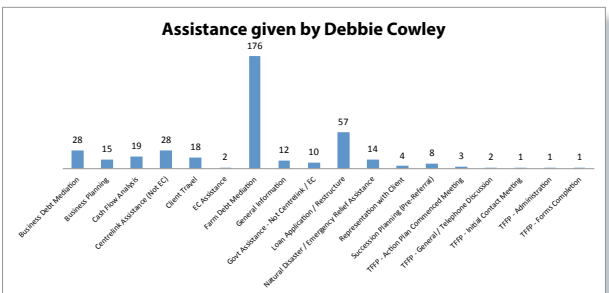
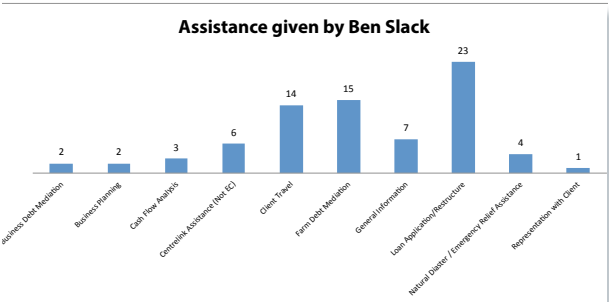
The Rural Financial Counselling Service Program is supported by the Australian Government and Queensland Government.



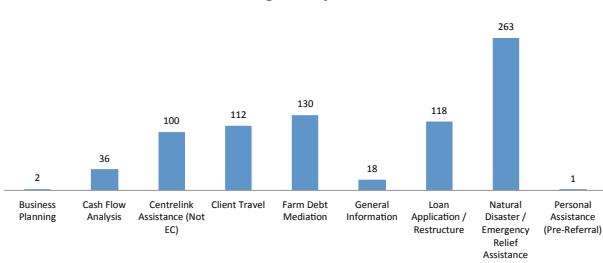
# Operating Statistics

Figure I

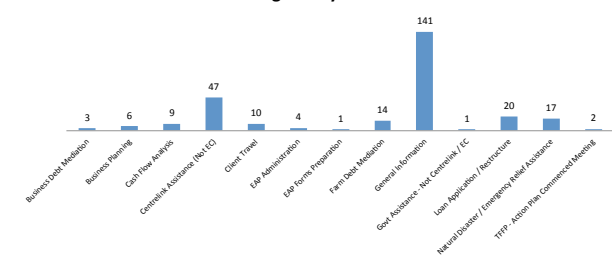
## ASSISTANCE GIVEN PER COUNSELLOR



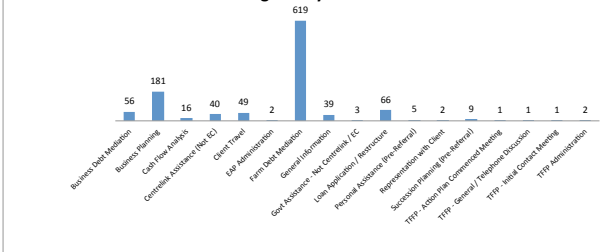
Assistance given by Kim Corfield



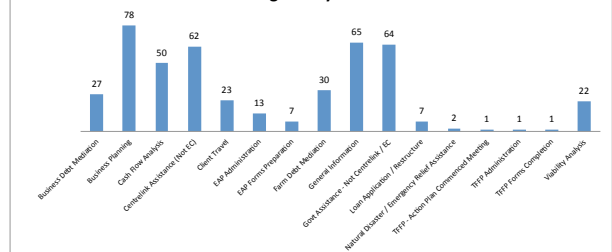
Assistance given by Rachel Bock



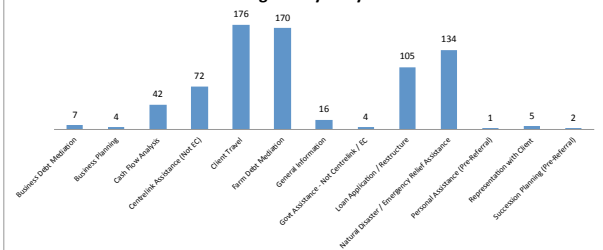
Assistance given by Richard Lewis



Assistance given by Sarah Barron



Assistance given by Tony Kassulke



Assistance given by John Swain

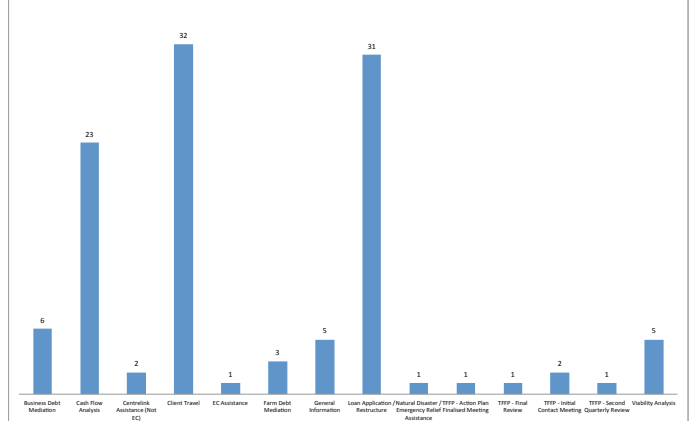
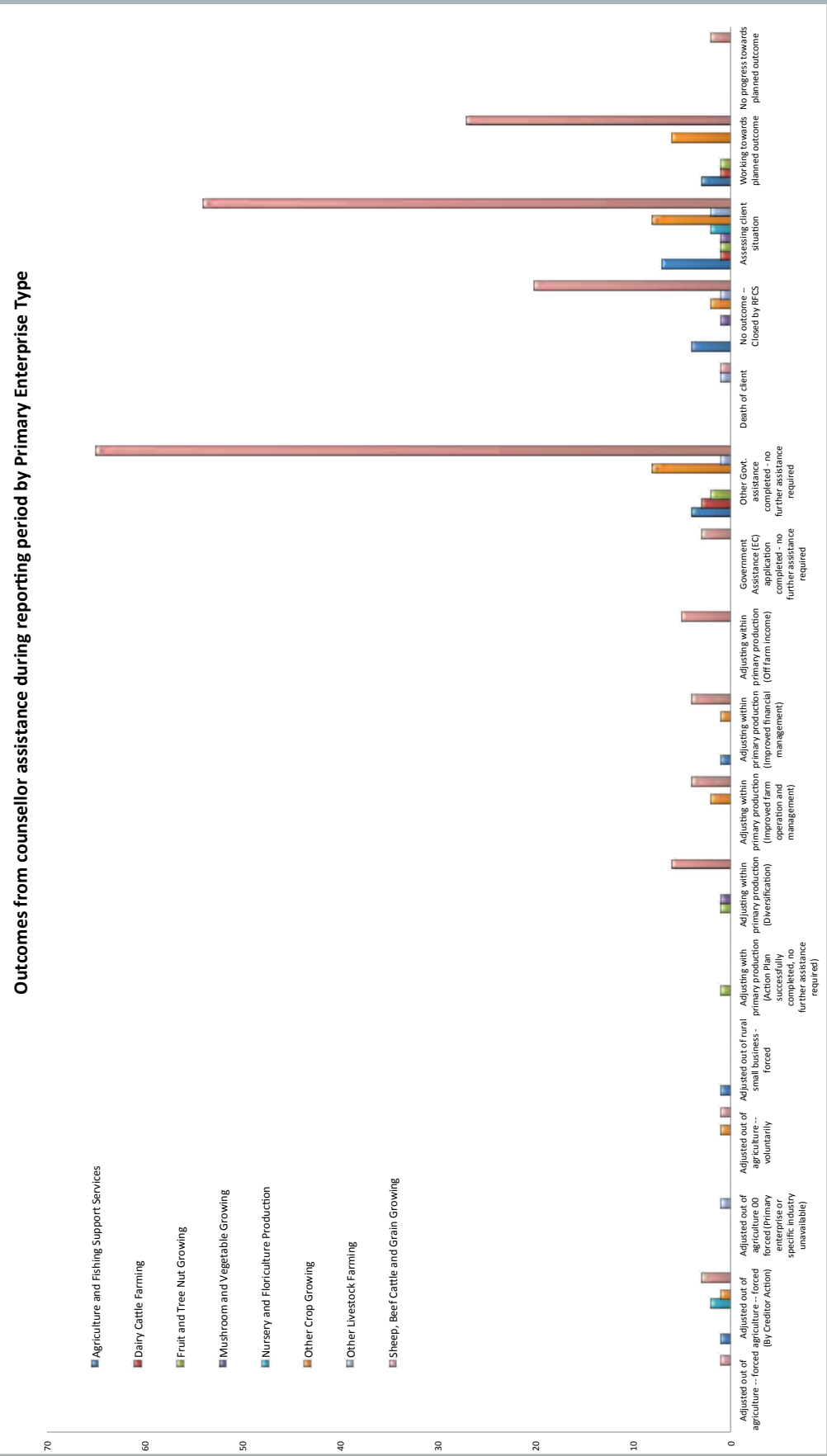


Figure 2

OUTCOMES PER ENTERPRISE TYPE



## MAJOR CAUSE OF DIFFICULTY

Figure 3

Major Cause of Client Difficulty assigned by counsellor - by Primary Enterprise Type

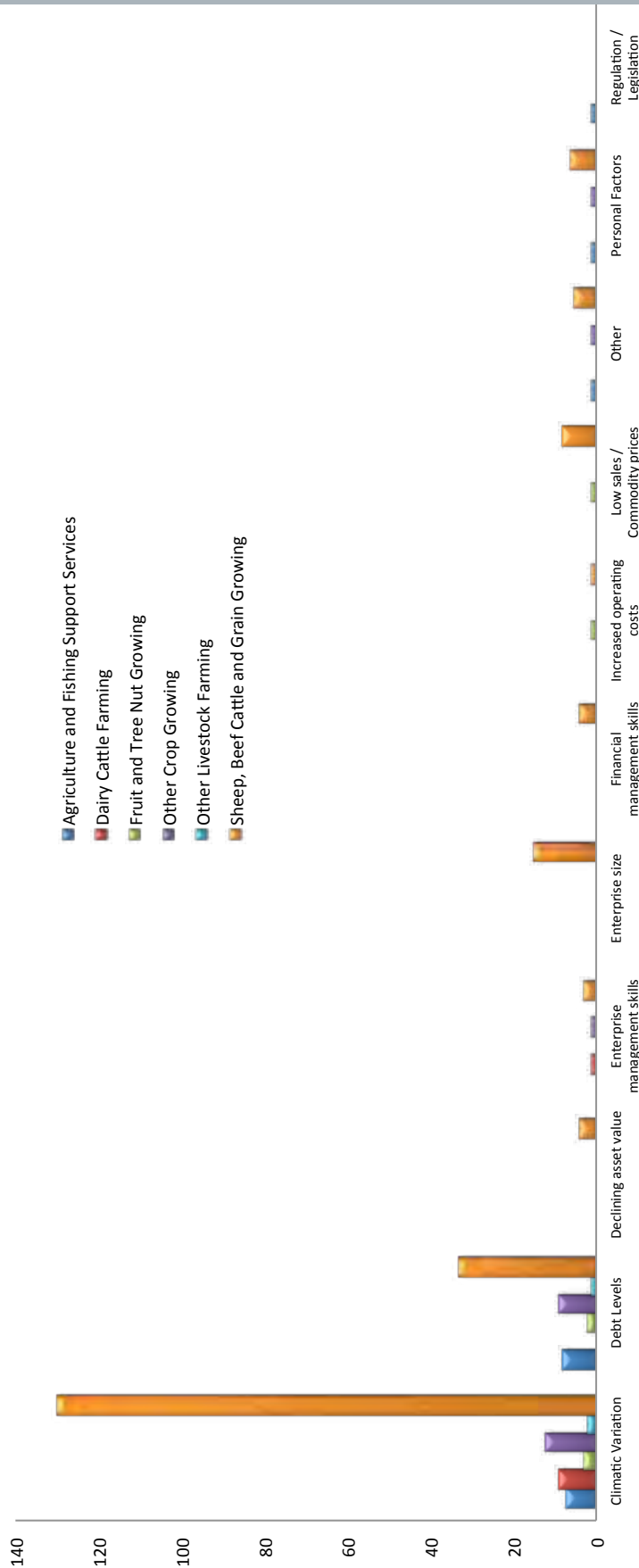


Figure 4

CLIENTS IN ASSET MANAGEMENT





REFERRALS BY CATEGORY

Figure 5

## Total Referrals By Category

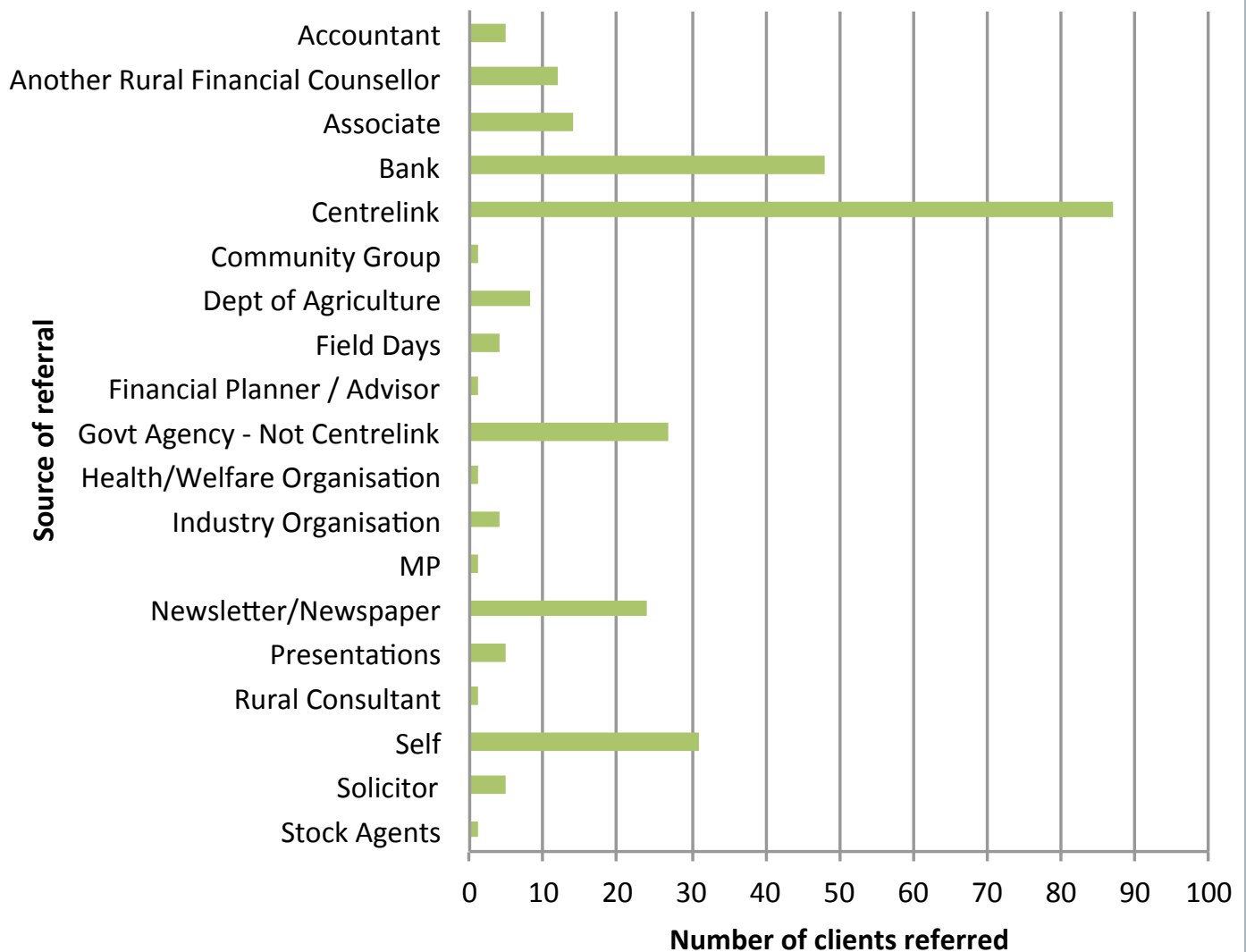


Figure 6

## FINANCIAL STATISTICS OF CLIENTS

## Financial Statistics of Clients receiving Counsellor Assistance

	Debts	Bank debts	Average debts	Average bank debts	Average income position
<b>RFC 1</b>	\$11,208,128	\$10,439,402	\$862,164	\$803,031	-\$34,677
<b>RFC 2</b>	\$45,706,841	\$42,149,809	\$1,523,561	\$1,404,994	-\$140,896
<b>RFC 3</b>	\$6,812,204	\$6,130,192	\$567,684	\$510,849	-\$30,483
<b>RFC 4</b>	\$15,906,365	\$14,883,164	\$1,136,169	\$1,063,083	\$51,824
<b>RFC 5</b>	\$85,486,292	\$80,835,303	\$3,287,934	\$3,109,050	-\$224,327
<b>RFC 6</b>	\$27,357,543	\$26,845,838	\$2,104,426	\$2,065,064	\$1,990
<b>RFC 7</b>	\$40,399,058	\$39,364,035	\$1,496,261	\$1,457,927	\$85,735
<b>RFC 8</b>	\$19,241,844	\$17,817,234	\$506,364	\$468,875	-\$24,948
<b>RFC 9</b>	\$50,642,295	\$49,573,380	\$1,100,919	\$1,077,682	\$25,851
<b>RFC 10</b>	\$37,857,072	\$37,419,968	\$3,441,552	\$3,401,815	-\$174,375
<b>RFC 11</b>	\$52,456,831	\$47,731,250	\$1,639,276	\$1,491,602	-\$355,473
<b>RFC 12</b>	\$32,737,238	\$30,953,719	\$584,594	\$552,745	-\$21,684

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS SERVICED

Figure 7

### 2012 - 13 & 2013 - 14 Local Government Areas serviced

Figure 8

## CLIENT LOAD SEGMENTATION

Ben Slack	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	1	0
Dairy Cattle Farming	0	1
Data Migration	1	0
Fruit and Tree Nut Growing	3	0
Other Crop Growing	0	1
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	6	5
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>

Debbie Cowley	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	1	2
Other Crop Growing	1	6
Other Livestock Farming	1	0
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	10	18
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>

Derk Abberfield	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	2	1
Aquaculture	0	1
Fruit and Tree Nut Growing	2	1
Mushroom and Vegetable Growing	1	0
Nursery and Floriculture Production	1	0
Other Crop Growing	7	0
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	14	7
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>

Emma Cook	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	1	0
Other Crop Growing	0	3
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	8	11
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>

Glenn Budden	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	2	3
Fruit and Nut Tree Growing	1	0
Mushroom and Vegetable Growing	0	1
Other Crop Growing	1	5
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	7	9
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>

Tony Kassulke	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Service	0	1
Dairy Cattle Farming	1	6
Fruit and Nut Tree Growing	1	4
Mushroom and Vegetable Growing	0	1
Other Crop Growing	2	7
Other Livestock Farming	0	1
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	8	37
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>57</b>

John Swain	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	0	1
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	3	23
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>

Rachel Bock	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	2	3
Other Livestock Farming	0	1
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	8	35
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>39</b>

Sarah Barron	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	1	3
Other Crop Growing	0	3
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	10	23
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>29</b>

Ian Jackson	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Other Crop Growing	1	0
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	17	4
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>

Kim Corfield	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Dairy Cattle Farming	1	4
Fruit and Nut Tree Growing	0	1
Mushroom and Vegetable Growing	0	1
Nursery and Floriculture Production	1	1
Other Crop Growing	0	5
Other Livestock Farming	1	1
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	12	38
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>51</b>

Richard Lewis	New Clients	Existing Clients
<i>Client Activity by Primary Enterprise</i>		
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services	3	2
Dairy Cattle Farming	1	0
Fruit and Tree Nut Growing	2	2
Nursery and Floriculture Production	1	0
Other Crop Growing	14	10
Other Livestock Farming	1	0
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Growing	14	14
<b>Total Client Activity</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>28</b>

KIM CORFIELD

## Coalstoun Lakes

Based in Coalstoun Lakes servicing the North Burnett region with Biggenden, Mt Perry, Gayndah, Mundubbera, Eidsvold and Monto in association with Tony Kassulke (RFC Mundubbera) and Ben Slack (RFC Gayndah).

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

This past year has been a year of heartbreak. To go from devastating floods in January 2013 straight into a devastating drought has been a major blow to North Burnett farmers and graziers. Our area was drought declared in March 2014, with some graziers reporting only 200 mm of rain for 18 months. This has resulted in much of our district being in 1-in-20 year drought records.

The level of destruction and amount of repairs that was necessary after the floods has taken a massive toll on the rural industries of the North Burnett. Paddocks have been left barren where flood waters took all top soil and planted pastures with it. This was followed by an unprecedented dry period that left massive expenses to feed livestock. For dryland cultivation no summer or winter crop was able to be planted due to lack of good rainfall needed to provide subsoil moisture for planting.

The significant numbers of cattle needing to be sold has seen a collapse in the price of young cattle. The inability to hold cattle due to lack of feed or stock water has seen an inability to book cattle into meatworks and a collapse in the market prices this financial year.

Many graziers continue to feed cattle hoping for a turnaround in the season.

The other main area where farmers are requiring assistance is in the mediation process. The ongoing climate challenges have forced many people into difficulty with their financial institutions.

Many clients have required assistance with their annual reviews and negotiations with their financial institutions to restructure their debt in a more affordable way. Many farming enterprises do not have appropriate debt structure to account for the variability of their income. These restructures and reviews require cashflow preparation and planning for their forthcoming 12 months production.

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

The forthcoming year shall be driven by the future weather events. Many graziers and farmers are hoping for a normal wet season without any other surprising events.

Many elderly graziers felt the past 18 months have been unprecedented in their lifetimes of grazing and some feel they may not have the stamina to start again once the weather and prices improve. Some graziers may not be able to afford to restock when conditions and prices improve so there may be significant country becoming available for agistment or lease opportunities.

Dryland farmers will need a good wet season to plant a summer crop. They have missed the last summer and winter crops which took many hours and a great expense to their enterprises to have paddocks ready to plant.

A lot of work continues to be done with clients in their negotiations with their lenders and the ongoing management of these relations after a mediation has been held. Mediations shall continue to be our main focus and helping farmers to improve their profitability and viability through active cashflow management and review of their enterprise and operations.

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**This past year has been a year of heartbreak. To go from devastating floods in January 2013 straight into a devastating drought has been a major blow to North Burnett farmers and graziers.**

---



### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

As RFC I have attended many drought funding meetings with a wide variety of service providers to ensure all residents were aware of the different packages available.

I attended the Centrelink mobile offices when distributing information regarding the Drought Package and in particular the Farm Household Allowance and was actively involved in assisting clients to complete and submit applications.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

The majority of clients in the North Burnett area are adjusting within agriculture. Most of our work relates to assistance with Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA) Grant and Loan applications, bank negotiations, cashflow preparation and assistance with the Department of Human Services (DHS)/Centrelink Farm Household Allowance and reviewing options under the current Drought Package.

The very difficult environment in which to do business is taking its toll on many enterprises; both agriculture and small business in the regional areas of Queensland.



BEN SLACK

# Gayndah

Servicing North Burnett Region from Monto to Gayndah.

## MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

I was initially employed in August 2013 to help with the effects of the record flooding associated with Ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald. This left such devastation along the Burnett River and its tributaries, from Monto right through to Bundaberg. The land adjacent to the Burnett River is highly intensive with irrigated crops including citrus, lucerne, hay production, grapes, horticulture, and cereal crops among other industries. Many of the towns are located on this river system and all were affected.

This was only two years after the smaller but still quite devastating flood in December 2010. The community had been close to fully recovering after this flood, so the next one just compounded the problem. Most properties are now back in working order. However these floods will have a lasting economic impact on the producers of the Burnett region. The losses will never be recovered.

---

**These floods will have a lasting economic impact on the producers of the Burnett region. The losses will never be recovered.**

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## NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Further to this disaster, the North Burnett Region through to the Wide Bay has been drought declared since 1 March 2014, officially a 1 in 20 year drought. Long-held records by unofficial recorders have shown the year to either been the driest on record, or at best within the top 5 for 100 years.

Most beef producers are coming into the spring with very little grass reserves and it is essential the region gets above average rainfall coming into spring. Towards the end of this reporting period the region recently saw falls of about 50mm, which has sparked a little grass growth.

Fodder growers that produce hay have been doing quite well over the past 12 months, with high demand due to the drought. Irrigation costs have been high, however demand has been plentiful and growers have been making good margins.

The citrus industry has reported a light fruit season, however quality and prices have been slightly above average. The second grade fruit prices have reportedly been well up on previous years.

Dairy producers continue to exit the industry in the North Burnett Region, with only a small number left. There is no profitability left in the industry in this region and, with the drought exacerbating the problem, there doesn't seem to be any hope of a significant price rise in the foreseeable future.

The dryland cereal croppers in the region have also suffered with a lack of rainfall for summer planting and a lack of winter rain to finishing winter crops. Many growers planted wheat or oats on the March 2014 rain however the crops are light due to lack of subsoil moisture and incrop rainfalls.

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Going forward, the hardest part of this drought will be the recovery. The country will need to be lightly stocked for the next season to allow the grass to recover. However, the biggest hurdle will be the financial burden from building stock numbers to normal levels. My observation is that herds around the region have probably halved in the past 18 months. Everyone is giving their remaining cattle some sort of feed ranging from lick to hay if there's no feed at all.

Most lines of cattle, especially cows and smaller cattle, suffered large price drops during the year as producers rapidly offloaded cattle for whatever price they could get in the saleyards. Supply has been far greater than demand. It does appear that with the recent rain, prices may have bottomed out and with some re-stockers active in the market, along with a reduced supply, we are seeing higher prices.

The drought, coupled with low prices, means that producers won't have the reserves from selling down their herd to cope with the cost of rebuilding through natural increase, or buying back in. I would say most producers will have to borrow money in the next two years.

It is essential that we get an above average spring to build some grass reserves and halt the supply of cattle on the market. At the moment, we are on the knife's edge.

It will take a long time for the region to recover from the drought. Some producers along the local rivers suffered huge production, rebuilding and equipment costs. For some, the financial burden from the past three years may have been too much, and has damaged the business beyond repair.

Water is not an issue for those on the Burnett River with full allocations along the system.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I went to many drought and disaster recovery meetings with many different government and other service providers, working with the social counsellors and other relevant organisations to rebuild the North Burnett region after the devastating floods and equally devastating drought.

I work closely with QRAA especially, to help producers access the Disaster Loans. We were heavily involved in the early parts of DHS/Centrelink Farm Household Allowance rollout.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

It has been very rewarding working with the clients and achieving desired outcomes, and it's a pleasure to help these clients financially.

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It is essential that we get an above average spring to build some grass reserves and halt the supply of cattle on the market. At the moment, we are on the knife's edge.

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DEBBIE COWLEY

# Goondiwindi

Goondiwindi east to Yelarbon, Inglewood, Texas and Milmerran, west to Toobeah and Talwood, north to Moonie, and many areas in between. Some clients received assistance in neighbouring shires when appropriate.

## MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The majority of work during the past 12 months has been focused on assisting farmers with loan applications, cash flow work, as well as negotiations/mediations with lenders.

There has been a continuation of work involved around farm debt mediation. In most of these cases, the lenders have wanted some form of debt reduction. This has been difficult when the rural property market has been so illiquid. Often a farming family's farm is the only asset to sell. It is usually where they work and live. The emotional stress of having to deal with such a sale has been difficult. There has been a continuation of mortgagee and receiver/manager sales across Queensland in the rural sector during the past 12 months and this region has not been spared.

The market for credit continues to remain tight in our district. It is very difficult to obtain a refinance.

Our area was drought declared in March 2014, although many farmers were feeling the effects of the dry during 2013. The service assisted farmers with applying for rebates on water infrastructure projects. Farmers were very grateful for the assistance in my experience. Carting water to stock seemed like a never-ending process prior to the water improvements.

The service assisted a number of farmers with drought concessional loan applications with QRAA. Unfortunately to date, there has been little uptake via Centrelink with the Farm Household Allowance. For whatever reason, farmers have not applied for this assistance. It could be due to a lack of time or lack of understanding.

Many farmers did not plant a summer crop during 2013/14 due to insufficient sub-soil moisture. Most farmers experienced a decent fall in March 2014, allowing a winter crop to be planted. Some farmers planted in May with deep planting of seed into moisture; however the majority planted later in June after a rain event. Since planting, rain has been very patchy with some crops holding on well, while other crops have been fed off to cattle.

Many graziers were forced to sell their weaners into the early 2014 depressed market due to dry conditions. This is now having a negative impact on cash flow. Thankfully, the market has improved so that future sales should be improved.

The service has been well used by farmers and small business operators alike during the past 12 months.

Referrals to the service are mainly from accountants, banks, QRAA, Goondiwindi Regional Council, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), friends, word-of-mouth and self-promotion.

## NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The depressed cattle prices during early 2014 have had a major negative effect on the cash flow of many graziers in our district. It will likely take 1-2 years for them to recover from this. Grain growers were hoping that 2014 would be the recovery/catch up year. So far, this has not happened.



### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

I expect that time spent on negotiations/mediations with lenders will continue.

It is estimated that winter crop yields will be below average across the district. Unfortunately, farmers have not been able to strengthen their balance sheet via cash flow.

It is expected that local businesses in town will continue to experience tough trading conditions.

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The service has been well used by farmers and small business operators alike during the past 12 months.

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### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

Attended a training course on Personal Property Securities Register.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Some clients have adjusted outside agriculture or sold down all or part of their assets.

Some farmers have received assistance from QRAA for concessional loans and Centrelink with the Farm Household Allowance.

It is a pleasure to be involved in the Rural Financial Counselling Service.



DERK ABBERFIELD

# Gympie

Gympie Shire, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg Shire. Some towns include: Gympie, Kilkivan, Goomeri, Kandanga, Imbil, Tin Can Bay, Maryborough, Tiaro, Childers, Bundaberg, Gin Gin and Rosedale.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

This service began in September 2013 and its major focus has been based on drought related issues. There was a large take up of the Interim Farm Household Allowance, cash flow shortages, and an increase in bank debt related issues. This has kept the service very busy.

The major focus since this service started has been varied, but has mostly stemmed from an extended dry period straight after devastating floods. With the cattle market crash people have not had the time to recover. This combined with a market correction especially in Gympie and Traveston areas where there was the release of many blocks that were resumed under the Traveston dam project. There was an increased need for producers (who still have equity) to obtain working capital, and access cheap loans such as the QRRA sustainability loans with low interest rates. Those with little-to-no-equity left on current valuations, are looking for ways to continue and to hold their lender at bay.

There has been an increase in people looking for additional working capital and wanting help in working with the bank to get them through to some better times.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The uptake of the Federal Government's new scheme, the Interim Farm Household Allowance, has been significant and has created a lot of new clients for the service. It has opened the door for the service to help primary producers that are suffering due to the floods, drought and market crashes.

There has been an increase in people looking for additional working capital and wanting help in working with the bank to get them through to some better times.

There has also been an increase in lenders wanting to move non-performing clients into mediation. One activity has been to try to negotiate under the farm finance strategy and to try to keep away from mediation, or work together with legal aid to assist the client in the mediation process.



### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

The next 12 months are difficult to predict. A lot will depend on whether we get a normal winter and a wet spring as opposed to a dry winter and very dry spring which was the case this year.

The cattle prices over the past 12 months have cut people's yearly income by more than half. This has put their operation under immense pressure to meet commitments.

Regardless of the weather, I feel that lenders will continue to lose patience with primary producers and opt for exiting clients (as evidenced this year). This will result in a steady increase in negotiations and farm debt mediation. The weather and conditions will only determine the numbers. If we have a good year, the numbers will be lower but I feel some producers will not recover.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Clients over this last period have been through a massive change in conditions. Markets have crashed and weather conditions have not been conducive to good productivity results which have caused a lot of clients to go through a severe adjustment period. The outcome for these producers is still looking very bleak, with debt levels high and property prices lowering. Putting properties on the market is not achieving the desired results and has only driven prices down.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I attended drought information sessions in Goomeri, Kilkivan and Gympie. I also attended the DHS/Centrelink 'drought buses' in Tiara and Imbil, and relieved at drought tour information sessions in Texas and Inglewood.

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Clients over this last period have been through a massive change in conditions. Markets have crashed and weather conditions have not been conducive to good productivity results which have caused a lot of clients to go through a severe adjustment period.

The outcome for these producers is still looking very bleak...

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## GLENN BUDDEN

## Miles

Servicing the areas around Chinchilla, Miles and Tara districts.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The main focus for this service continues with assisting farm businesses in making a decision on rebuilding, downsizing or exiting agriculture. As a result, I am encountering clients in need of assistance through the bank mediation and negotiation process. This service continues to be involved in the identification of the need for succession planning and facilitating the initial planning process.

The 2013-14 year saw a dry finish to the 2013 winter crops, which affected yields. This has placed more pressure on growers who were expecting to allocate crop proceeds to some debt reduction. Cattle prices have dropped to record lows over the past year, which has also contributed to a loss of income for graziers.

Dry weather returned again in this period gradually spreading from the west and south into the Western, Northern, Central and Southern Downs. In March 2014, the region was again given drought status by the Queensland Government. Storm rain in spring was scattered and failed to materialise into wide-spread rain in summer. A general rain fell at the end of March gave confidence to plant winter crops. The early planted winter crops are under pressure as the warm weather to June has promoted a fast growth leaving it susceptible to frosts. Roma Saleyards had daily record cattle numbers topping just below 14,000 head. While this supply pressured the cattle market, prices failed to lift.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Farm businesses are having difficulty in attracting buyers to the marketplace for those whose financial situation has left them with exiting agriculture as the only option. Because of this, bank negotiations and mediations are a worrying trend. There is considerable evidence that cattle prices will lift in the near future. The event will be hastened with widespread rain that in turn will reverse the current trend in which demand for cattle will become the main driver.

The resources industries in the Surat Basin, especially coal seam gas, has polarised primary producers. While some welcome the income from gas wells; others only see damage and destruction to the environment.

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

With high debt loads, there will be continued pressure from lenders for primary producers to reduce debt levels. Over the past 12 months, income in budgets has been below target for cropping and cattle. Many primary producers are struggling with low income and ongoing high costs, which I believe will only increase the number of mediation and negotiations with lenders.

Lower incomes, cost of production and increased debt servicing for primary producers is affecting the business' ability to produce a profit.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I have attended a number of training and community events to promote the service including community training events on suicide awareness and networking meetings, both locally and in Toowoomba.

I have promoted the service through the local community newsletters and by maintaining referral sources. I also attended several information days, together with QDAFF, which allowed me to promote the service.

Primary producers were informed of available industry drought recovery measures that have been introduced by DAFF, QDAFF and DHS/Centrelink. These information days sought to promote an understanding of the requirements for the different assistance measures available.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Two clients have sold an additional property to reduce debt, thereby relieving emotional and financial stress on them. However, most of the outcomes for clients that enter into mediation are for them to exit agriculture as the sale of land assets in the current market can be below the liability to their lenders.

Older primary producers have taken up the aged pension, but are having difficulties in accepting and dealing with their changed circumstances. Younger producers have tended to move away from agriculture to other areas or to the resources sector. With assistance from the Legal Aid Farm Finance and Legal Service solicitor, the aim is avoid bankruptcy and court appointed judgments against the primary producer as an outcome of mediation.

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Lower incomes, cost of production and increased debt servicing for primary producers is affecting the business' ability to produce a profit.

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IAN JACKSON

# Gulf Region

Servicing the Gulf region; generally west of the Mount Garnet – Charters Towers Road and north of the Flinders Highway.

## MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The Gulf position was established by the Federal Government under its Farm Finance Program. I commenced in this position on 22 July 2013, and initially most activity was directed towards establishing the service in the area. I became familiar with the area and industries while working as a counsellor with the then Queensland Department of Primary Industries based at Richmond, Mareeba and South Johnstone and renewed contacts and old networks.

I have been in contact with QRAA and all major lenders locally and at regional level. Producer groups and QDAFF officers have provided another source for referrals.

Most Gulf grazing businesses are equipped to handle one downturn at a time such as seasonal. In fact, they are probably surprised if there isn't at least one thing not performing. Most places are geared towards live export and the ban in June 2011 placed great pressure on cash flow. This was exacerbated by drought (in some areas worsened by fire) and low cattle prices. With falling land prices, banks responded by reviewing their loan security. Increased funding was difficult to access.

Early enquiry was directed towards accessing the Concessional Loans Scheme administered by QRAA and Transitional Farm Family Payments (DHS/Centrelink). Later, as lenders applied more pressure, mediations and refinance applications began to dominate. I have found that clients (and lenders) demand a great deal of my time after mediation as we work towards a satisfactory outcome. Other traditional roles such as assisting with QDAFF drought aid, bank reviews, feasibility studies and succession planning have also formed part of this year's workload.

## NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN REPORTING PERIOD

Clients hoped that the introduction of the Concessional Loans (and later the Drought Concessional Loans) Schemes were going to be of real assistance. To date, although I have prepared a number of business analyses for application, all were discarded as unlikely to succeed. It is notable that some lenders expressed an unwillingness to be involved.

Compared with the workload of counsellors situated in more southern/coastal districts, there was very little demand for me to complete Centrelink action plans which were a requirement of the Interim Farm Household Allowance. Most producers were deemed ineligible by the assets test even when revised upwards to \$2.55M.

It has been obvious in all instances where producers are in default that finance was sought and obtained without any real "what if" scenarios run. Counsellors would expect to test major new borrowings for sensitivity to seasonal and commodity price downturns.

## RFC'S VIEWS ON WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER NEXT 12 MONTHS

Lenders will continue to monitor loan security and business performance. If a good wet season improves cattle industry confidence and the property market responds, will lenders move to divest themselves of those clients they see as high risk? Should the current drought conditions and low prices persist, viability of even the most established producers will be questioned. There must be a carryover from reduced calvings, higher mortalities and forced sales that will impact on the ability to recover.

It is of great concern that lenders are not as open to refinance proposals as they have been in previous years.

As counsellors, we all rely heavily on the Queensland Farm and Rural Legal Service for advice and assistance. The one solicitor employed, Denis McMahon, has responsibility for the entire state and finds it very difficult to provide the time each client warrants. It would be of advantage to clients as well as counsellors if another was employed.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

Presentations at meetings convened by:

- Northern Gulf Resource Management (Chillagoe)
- Northern Gulf Grazing Group/Gulf Cattlemen's Association (Georgetown)
- Camp Cobbold (Georgetown and Etheridge Shire women) (Cobbold Gorge)

Accompanied the DHS mobile office to:

- Mount Garnet
- Georgetown
- Croydon
- Richmond
- Cloncurry

As part of QDAFF Drought Forums, attended meetings at:

- Greenvale
- Pentland

I have had the opportunity to emphasise the problems besetting Gulf producers and communities and especially the unsecured debt small business carries to:

- Hon John McVeigh MP – Minister for the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Sen Hon Arthur Sinodinos – (then) Assistant Federal Treasurer
- Hon Bob Katter MP – Federal Member for Kennedy

I have been a contact point for state ministers and the QDAFF Brisbane office for referrals and updates on Gulf conditions.

## CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

During mediation, lenders for the most part, before appointing receivers, have been amenable to:

- allowing time for possible refinance
- allowing time for the client to sell assets without the stigma of 'mortgagee in possession'
- allowed the client to exit with some equity towards establishing a new life.

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It is of great concern that lenders are not as open to refinance proposals as they have been in previous years.

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RACHEL BOCK

# Longreach

Servicing the Central West council areas of Barcaldine, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Winton, Longreach, Diamantina, and Barcoo and the North West council areas including Richmond, Flinders, McKinlay, Hughenden, Cloncurry and Mt Isa.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Since commencing this position in February 2014, the majority of my time has been spent assisting clients access the drought assistance released by the respective governments. This has covered Farm Household Assistance applications, Water Infrastructure Rebates and more recently QRAA Drought Concessional Loans.

Debt serviceability has been a problem. The combined impact of the continuing drought and depressed cattle prices has made serviceability of existing debt difficult. A number of clients have accessed short-term carry-on finance with their lenders and are finding repayment of the extra lending in addition to their normal interest payments difficult. I believe this has contributed to the heightened interest in the drought concessional loans and in more severe cases debt mediation with their lenders.

Succession planning has been another focus with a number of clients embarking on succession plans with their children while others have opted to plan for an industry exit entirely.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

There has been an increased occurrence of debt mediation initiated by lenders in the region with a number resulting in receivers taking over management of the properties.

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Should we experience another failed 'wet season', we can expect further pressure from lenders and an increase in the take up of QRAA Drought Concessional loans. We could also expect to see an escalation in debt mediations and ensuing forced property sales on the horizon.

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There has been an increased occurrence of debt mediation initiated by lenders in the region with a number resulting in receivers taking over management of the properties.

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### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I have attended a number of community events to promote the service with DAFF, Royal Flying Doctor Service and AgForce.

I have worked with Suncare to produce the publication *The Bush Bible - a guide to drought assistance schemes* for Western Queensland.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Finance restructures have been negotiated on more favourable terms at reduced rates with both commercial lenders and QRAA. This has enabled clients to continue on trading. Some clients anticipate an exit out of primary production once property values increase, however, this will not occur while properties are in drought. One client has exited primary production under pressure from his lender.


 RICHARD LEWIS

# Mackay

Servicing coastal Central Queensland from Rockhampton to Townsville, and the hinterland to the west between the Capricorn and Flinders Highways, including the Central Highlands Regional Council area as required.

## MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY FOR THIS REPORTING PERIOD

The major activity for this reporting period has been farm debt mediation, involving one third of my clients. QRAA administered State and Federal funded schemes account for approximately 20% of clients while a further 15% have been assisted to access DHS/Centrelink Programs. The other 30% of clients have sought assistance with financial analysis and business planning for a variety of reasons including loans, bank reviews, enterprise and viability analysis, preparation for succession planning and change of enterprise direction.

Debt mediation, while involving over 30% of clients, accounts for more than 60% of my workload. Approximately 20% of these are customers of a non-signatory to the Queensland Farm Finance Strategy and formalised farm debt mediation. While preparation for debt mediation is time consuming, post-mediation assistance to clients endeavouring to meet their agreed strategies can be equally so, and essential in these difficult economic times. Due to the nature of their position many of these clients are in a highly emotive state placing further demands on the counsellor.

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The contribution by Denis McMahon of Farm Legal Aid to the FDM process is invaluable and is pivotal in achieving the very best possible outcome for clients during what is a very traumatic experience.

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## NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The focus by the lenders on farmers' equity levels which have fallen dramatically continues to grow as property values adjust from the heights of 2002-2008.

Another year of drought and poor cattle prices is placing severe pressure on farm cash flows and I believe it will continue to do so for some time after a seasonal break. This poses a medium to long term problem in a tight lending environment. Lenders' expectations of structured achievable business plans, good equity and demonstrated capacity to service loans, in the longer term on a principle and interest basis, continue. As a consequence, requests for additional funds are closely examined and often contain stringent reporting and repayment conditions.

## RFC'S VIEW OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

I believe the next 12 months may see increasing numbers of farmers undergoing farm debt mediation. This follows falling equity levels, another year of depressed cattle prices, adverse seasons and tighter access to carry on funds in the face of falling profits. Many of these trends are equally apparent in the region's diverse cropping industries including grain, sugar and irrigated cotton.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

The service is widely promoted through ongoing personal contact with the banking community at all levels, QRAA Client Liaison Officers, accountants and other professional service providers such as Centrelink and government departments.

Contacts within producer organisations at all levels are maintained with promotion of the RFCS across the diversity of industry groups. This includes attending field days in Mackay and Emerald and industry meetings and forums across the region.

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**A disinclination by the current generation with a young family to forego secure off-farm positions and return to a high-risk occupation on a property, that may no longer be viable with any degree of debt, is resulting in multi-generation farming families exiting agriculture altogether.**

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### CLIENT OUTCOMES INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Client outcomes have varied widely from successful access to carry on funds and new loans as part of normal business to loan restructures in conjunction with partial sale of assets to improve equity and serviceability.

Off-farm work assists some to turn cash flows positive and return loans to the local branch, some prior to, others following farm debt mediation. A number of clients have exited agriculture. The contribution by Denis McMahon of Farm Legal Aid to the FDM process is invaluable and is pivotal in achieving the very best possible outcome for clients during what is a very traumatic experience.

Adjustment in agriculture during this period has been difficult in this region as property prices decline while client expectations and needs remain high. Diversification via off-farm income, predominantly from mining and associated services, is a major player in maintaining property values and viability and the confidence of the banking sector. This is particularly evident in the smaller sugar, dry land cropping and cattle properties.

Farm succession continues to be an issue complicated by the lack of financial capacity of many aging farmers to pass the property to the next generation. A disinclination by the current generation with a young family to forego secure off-farm positions and return to a high-risk occupation on a property, that may no longer be viable with any degree of debt, is resulting in multi-generation farming families exiting agriculture altogether.

SARAH BARRON

# St George

Servicing the Balonne Shire and surrounds. This includes St. George, Bollon, Dirranbandi, Hebel, Thallon, Nindigully, Weengallon along with Mungindi and the Mitchell and Moonie Roads.

## MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The southern part of the Balonne Shire was drought declared in August 2013, with the northern part being drought declared in November 2013. The severe drought carried through summer, caused the majority of graziers to either de-stock with extremely low cattle, sheep or goat prices. Unfortunately, in many cases, the stock were too weak to transport. Relief rain of 75-150 mm didn't fall until mid-April, which caused a flow in the Balonne and Moonie rivers, sparked the buffell grass and gave some broadacre farmers a hope of winter plantings.

The majority of work during the past 12 months has been focused on assisting farmers with drought assistance, loan applications, and budgeting. A number of agribusiness proposals were presented to banks for clients wanting to pursue different enterprise ventures. There was also increased number of negotiations and mediations with lenders.

Furthermore, a lot of primary producers took up the State Government's Emergency Water Infrastructure as their major stock water had dried up.

The QRAA concessional loans with the low interest rate were also popular. However a number of primary producers were unsuccessful in their application. Feedback provided by some clients was that the lenders did not want to give QRAA first priority, or the primary producer's 'long term' viability was questioned on QRAA's viability guidelines.

Lastly, the Interim Farm Household allowance was a sought out assistance, ending with a lot of primary producers in this shire being approved for the frequent payment.

## NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Lending institutions have continued to help the majority of clients through this tough drought with increases to overdrafts and instructions to see this service to work through a budget and future strategies. There are a small handful of clients that were more closely managed and are now receiving correspondence to consider mediation. Clients who have attended mediation this year have had a consistent trend of 4-6 months of additional time to sell the property on their own terms. The mediation process seems to be ineffective in terms of the Farm Finance Strategy defining its purpose to be entering into negotiating pre-mediation and further negotiating in mediation to come to a mutual agreement.

## RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTH

If no rain occurs through to this coming summer, the district will see another year of failed or well-below average winter crops. A number of graziers have stated they will de-stock further if they receive no spring rain. If this is the case, an increase will again occur with any drought assistance and I would presume the new QRAA drought concessional loans.

If there is spring rain, some graziers have stated they will look to purchase stock, due to poor lambing/calving percentages as a result of the 2013 dry spring. However, they may face an increase in prices. Hopefully, for the primary producers the interest rate will stay at a low rate through the next 12 months and the weather provides relief.

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If no rain occurs through to this coming summer, the district will see another year of failed or well-below average winter crops.

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### CLIENT OUTCOMES INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Client outcomes over the previous 12 months included a limited numbers of clients successful for the QRAA concessional loans. Numerous numbers of clients were approved for the Interim Farm Household Allowance and also large numbers of clients were successfully approved for the QDAFF water infrastructure rebate and fodder rebate.

The clients who have had mediations in this area have also been able to gain a better result with the help of this service in conjunction with the legal aid solicitor Dennis McMahon.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I have attended a number of events in the district over the past 12 months. The highlights included involvement with the QDAFF drought information days throughout the Balonne shire.

I attended the 'Angry Cockies' drought meeting in St George where Senator Baranby Joyce MP came to hear what changes could be made to the current drought assistance package. I also had involvement with the local Rotary drought relief appeal.

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The majority of work during the past 12 months has been focused on assisting farmers with drought assistance, loan applications, and budgeting...

There was also increased number of negotiations and mediations with lenders.

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 TONY KASSULKE

# Mundubbera

Servicing areas around the Central and North Burnett districts.

## MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

The 2013-14 financial year was one of extremes with the focus during the latter part of 2013 being flood recovery assistance. This focus merged into drought assistance work as the district received very little rain following the 2013 floods. The district was officially drought declared (much with a 1 in 20 year drought) in March 2014.

In many instances I was working with families to access flood loans for infrastructure repairs and at the same time looking at options for drought mitigation strategies.

The swings and roundabouts in seasonal conditions, particularly over such a short period, caused major upheavals in productivity, livestock prices, farm incomes and property valuations which, in many cases, affected my clients' ability to access necessary working capital.

There have been very few property sales which has placed an apprehensive uncertainty in the property market making valuations difficult and lenders cautious.

I have assisted in a number of mediations over the period but have had many more situations where we have come to arrangements either outside the formal mediation process or identified and addressed issues prior to clients tipping into that situation.

I spent a considerable amount of time promoting and supporting families through the process of Interim Farm Household Assistance with mixed results.

## RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

It is difficult to identify any new or unusual activities during the reporting period.

It is my view that the district more or less remains in a holding pattern, on edge waiting for an improvement in seasonal and market conditions or, given another difficult year, a deterioration in farm incomes, decreased ability to service debts and further downward pressure on property

values. This will make it difficult for producers to access capital.

Either scenario will probably result in a very difficult period for many producers as to date the financiers appear to be holding off on recovery action for fear of over supplying an already flat property market.

An improvement in seasonal and market conditions could see some investor interest resulting in a firmer property market and improved prospects for financiers to recover some funds. Alternatively a difficult year will see many producers being basically unpaid caretakers with no prospect of financial recovery.

The district has experienced another very difficult year and as at June 2014 the prospects are not great. The cattle market (of which 80% of our producer are reliant on) has crashed and is, in my opinion, worse than or at least on par with the 1970s crash – given current costs of production. It is very difficult to get a market for store cattle. If anyone has fat cattle there is a 2-3 month wait to get them booked in by which time most are forward stores at best. Fodder is very difficult to source and in many cases prohibitively expensive.

Most of the fodder producers will only get back into full production in the spring of 2014. It has been a long road to recovery for those who have had the ability to rebuild following the floods of January 2013. Infrastructure has been a major focus but many have also experienced difficulties with soil fertility with the loss of top soil and soil nutrients.

The crops planted immediately following the flood were in most cases very disappointing. The citrus industry appears to have had a reasonable year with a lighter than normal crop (late frost September 2013) resulting in better prices for second grade fruit, which can sometimes be difficult to move. The early imperial varieties caused some concerns with the fruit deterioration post packing and transport but thankfully these issues were resolved as the season progressed.

Access to working capital is proving to be an issue as these businesses are, in the main, very highly geared and equity



(property values along the river) has taken a hit in recent times. It is very difficult to produce a good product without sufficient working capital.

There does appear to be some reasonable marketing prospects for the 2014-15 crop with increased levels of interest from the Asian market. Grape producers had an ordinary year in 2013-14 with a late September frost causing major problems and halving yields. Producers are in need of a good year for 2014-15 to recover their losses over recent years.

Once again access to working capital is a major issue with the vineyards being highly geared and having to undertake major flood repairs.

I continue to have serious concerns in relation to the future of many of our farming families in this district and the towns which service their requirements. Farm families are struggling and the small businesses in the towns are having difficulty maintaining staff and stock with reduced turnover.

It has been another very difficult year and we are heavily reliant upon a break in the season in spring 2014.

#### **CLIENT OUTCOMES INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE**

As previously mentioned I have been involved in a number of mediations which have resulted in clients exiting primary production (as is usually the case with mediations) but have also been involved in number of pre-mediation matters which were resolved without the formal process.

There have been many instances of debt restructure or assisting in opening the lines of communication between clients and their financiers which has resulted in positive outcomes for clients.

We have many clients (and financiers) who are considering their options – once again the property market is causing concern and indecision. I am not sure where these people would go or what would happen if we were not on hand to assist.

#### **COMMUNITY EVENTS/PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC**

Myself and the other two counsellors based in Central and North Burnett have made presentations at numerous community meetings held in the district. Every town in the North Burnett Regional Council area was affected by the flooding and there have been numerous meetings/forums to ensure that information and available assistance is disseminated throughout the community. Ironically we have also been involved in presentations at drought assistance forums/meetings held throughout the Central and North Burnett.

I have been involved in the North Burnett Regional Council's Economic and Social Flood Recovery Committee and more recently drought awareness projects.

I have worked closely with DHS/Centrelink and QRAA to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients.

In October 2013 we (the Central and North Burnett RFCs) hosted a luncheon function for the QRAA board at a client's packing shed. The luncheon was attended by the QRAA board, the leader of the Queensland Flood Recovery Taskforce and staff, the North Burnett Council Mayor, four of the five counsellors and a number of producers.

It was a good opportunity to bring the various stakeholders together and highlight to everyone the damage that was typical along the rivers and streams, the recovery work carried out to date (with the assistance of the various agencies) and the work that needs to be done.

---

**In many instances I was working with families to access flood loans for infrastructure repairs and at the same time looking at options for drought mitigation strategies.**

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# Audited Statements

Audited statements available upon request from RAPAD by contacting [info@rapad.com.au](mailto:info@rapad.com.au)

## Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Directors of Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region:

We have audited the accompanying special purpose financial report of Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2014, the statement of financial performance, and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

### Directors' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Directors of Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the company's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of the *Corporations Act 2001* and professional accounting bodies.

**Opinion**

In our opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland – Central Southern Region as at 30 June 2014, and of its financial performance and its cashflows for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards as described in Note 1.

**Basis of accounting**

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the Board of Director's reporting responsibilities. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

  
Lionel Walsh

23 September 2014

Walsh Accounting  
68 Ash Street  
Barcaldine Qld 4725

## Compliance Statement

I, Rob Chandler, Chairman of RAPAD, certify that the funding for the RFCS program has been acquitted in accordance with the deed of grant for the 2013-14 year.

Signed



CR ROB CHANDLER



# Implementation of CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan 2013 – 2014

Final Report – May 2014



This project was proudly funded  
by the Queensland Government



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## NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Tourism is a vital contributor to the Central Western and Outback Queensland economy. Behind the all-important agricultural sector, which is still the economic mainstay of our region, tourism's contribution continues to grow.

When Alan Smith, Chairman of the Central West Outback Qld Tourism Authority, approached RAPAD to support the implementation of the CWOQTA's tourism development plan, the Board and I identified the need, and went about finding ways in which we could help. Through the support of the Qld State Governments Remote Area Boards funding program, we were able to offer this support, which ensured the plan was put into action.

I would like to thank the Qld State Government, and the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, for their assistance in this regard and for their continuation of the RAB funding program. It is an important program that allows groups such as RAPAD to implement important economic development initiatives.

I also recognise Anita Clark who has undertaken the task of implementing the plans many actions.

The outcomes achieved from this project have and will continue to enhance the development of the regions tourism sector.

Yours Sincerely



### **Cr Rob Chandler**

Chairman

Central Western Qld Remote Area Planning and Development Board



This project was proudly funded  
by the Queensland Government





## PROJECT OVERVIEW

In late 2012, the Central West Outback Queensland Tourism Association was successful in receiving funding under the Queensland Government's Building Rural Communities Fund through Blueprint for the Bush. Funds were used to conduct a planning workshop with 29 tourism stakeholders resulting in the development of the CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan. The plan supports the recently developed Tourism Opportunities Plan for Queensland's Outback, Gulf and Western Downs (TOP) and Drive Tourism Strategy. The plan was released in November 2012.

RAPAD recognized the need to support the implementation of this plan and obtained funding to contract Anita Clark Tourism Services as Project Manager, responsible for the successful completion of the Key Actions for stage one.

In the completion of these actions, consultation and cooperation was sought from a range of industry contacts to include: local tourism operators, Indigenous representatives, Local and regional council tourism officers, CWOQTA, Tourism and Events Queensland, Tourism Australia, Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, tourism distribution partners and industry specialists.



## CWOQTA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES

### Goal 1

**Ensure repeat visitation, attract new markets and extend length of stay through continual development and promotion of the drive experience**

#### Strategies

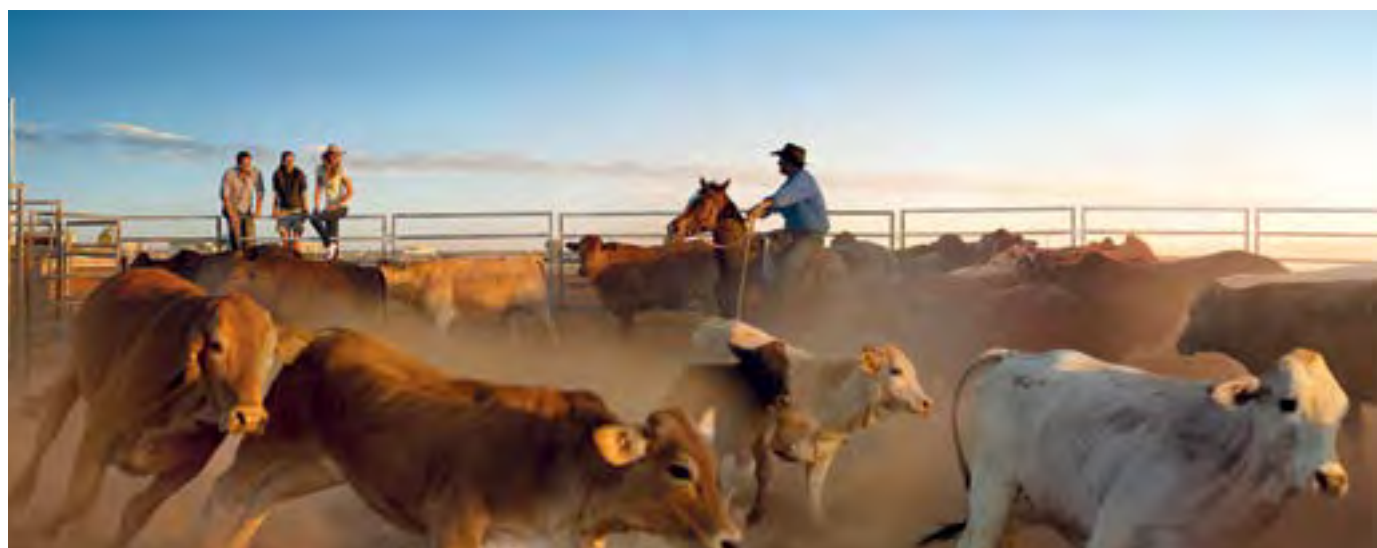
- 1.1 Align touring route development and promotion with the overall Drive Strategy for Queensland
- 1.2 Expand distribution of themed routes and related products
- 1.3 Expand profile of regional accommodation, attractions, activities and events for the drive market
- 1.4 Expand profile of regional attractions for the fly/drive market
- 1.5 Ensure marketing and promotion of Central West events, experiences and regions is undertaken in a coordinated manner to maximize visitor expenditure on drive routes and short breaks
- 1.6 Identify gaps and opportunities for future accommodation development to support growth in drive, event and niche markets
- 1.7 Reinvigorate existing themes and develop new themes that promote unique town attributes
- 1.8 Reinvigorate local tourism products by leveraging the distinctive characters, stories and heroes synonymous with the region

### Goal 2

**Attract new tourism investment and product development opportunities through the targeted growth and promotion of niche experiences**

#### Strategies

- 2.1 Develop an Events Strategy to enable further growth of 'hero events' and leverage local events
- 2.2 Develop a 'Paddocks to Plate' strategy, which will deliver visitor experiences around local product farms and facilities
- 2.3 Leverage a growing international market and a changing domestic market interested in Indigenous tourism activities currently not developed in Central West
- 2.4 Leverage a growing market for nature-based and ecotourism activities





## IMPLEMENTATION OF STAGE ONE ACTIONS

An agreed number of specific, achievable actions were drawn up for Stage One completion within the project timeframe. A coordinated approach was undertaken for completion of these activities. Individual results were reliant on the level of participation by industry and regional stakeholders. See below list

- 1.1a Prepare summary of existing RACQ drive itineraries
- 1.1b Research and prepare new Central West drive itineraries in RACQ friendly format
- 1.2 Distribute new drive itineraries via trade and online channels
- 1.3a Conduct an audit and complete a checklist to ensure all regional attractions/activities/events are listed on RACQ 'Must Do's' and RACQ Discount Tickets & Events (ticketed product only)
- 1.3b Distribute more Central West tourism product via online channels
- 1.4 Increase Central West tourism product being distributed via Trade Wholesalers e.g. Flight Centre Global Product
- 1.5 Align with and support Central West marketing and promotional activities to OQTA Cooperative Domestic Opportunities Plan
- 1.6 Complete a desktop audit on existing Central West accommodation
- 1.7 Identify town themes (incorporate themes into Strategy 1.8)
- 1.8 Develop and arrange facilitation of Storytelling workshops in Central West region.
- 2.1a Compile and distribute a regional events calendar with procedures set in place for continual updates
- 2.1b Coordinate package development of events with tourism product and event drive trails
- 2.1c Cooperatively market and distribute event packages and drive itineraries
- 2.2 Complete a desktop audit of existing food tourism sector capacity for the Central West region.
- 2.3 Identify guidelines for developing the Indigenous experience in Central West. Incorporate new Indigenous stories into strategy 1.8
- 2.4a Prepare a toolkit for commercial operators for National Park activities that includes a register of Indigenous and natural heritage sites in the Central West region.



## STAGE 1 ACTION PLAN RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Action Task 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.2

These three tasks were all structured around increasing the exposure for self-drive itineraries in the Central West. Initial research focused on identifying what self-drive information was available for tourists from individual Visitor Information Centres, finding out how they are currently distributed and looking into affordable options for increasing exposure through new distribution channels.

Work was undertaken with Visitor Information Centres from Blackall, Tambo, Barcaldine, Winton and Longreach. Each of these Centres has some self-drive itineraries which are primarily distributed direct via their Visitor Information Centre. Some have links to their drives on their own websites.

Prior to this project, none were distributing their regional self-drive itineraries through RACQ Virtual Tourism Information Centres. The project target of 10 regional drive itineraries plus some bonus regional brochures have been converted to the RACQ online template and are being promoted via the RACQ website. The newly uploaded itineraries (shown below) may be viewed online at <http://tourism.racq.com.au/qld/outback>.



RACQ has a total membership reach of 1,207,882, including 28,000+ Queenslanders who have been members for 50 or more years. Their substantial membership base plus the range of online, print and direct marketing activities undertaken by RACQ throughout the year emphasizes the importance for Central West Tourism operators to maximize distribution opportunities through them.

The Action Plan strategies align with and support the promotional activities undertaken by OQTA, in particular, the RACQ/VTIC (Virtual Tourism Information Centre) partnership. The VTICs are hosted on the RACQ website, promoted on RACQ's Trip planner and promoted when members request maps, guides and tourism information. Organic growth is also anticipated via Google SEA activity and RACQ communications.




### Action Tasks 1.3a, 1.3b, 1.5

Actions to expand the profile of regional accommodation, attractions, activities and events for the drive market centred around RACQ for attractions/activities/events and online booking/online travel agents for accommodation. OQTA and TEQ existing marketing strategies for growing online distribution were leveraged in the completion of these actions.

An audit was completed of the RACQ ticketed product distribution channel for Central West Product. Specifically this included RACQ's 'Must Do's' and RACQ Discount Tickets & Events.

#### RACQ 'Must Do's'

In celebration of Queensland's 150th birthday in 2009, RACQ launched 150 Must-Do's in Queensland to showcase 150 fabulous things to see and do around Queensland and provide visitors with an opportunity to share their opinion on what they thought was best. Several Central West operators have been included on this list and benefit from free RACQ promotion. Operators include Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, Qantas Founders Museum, Waltzing Matilda Centre, Dinosaur Trackways at Lark Quarry, Artesian Country Tours, Tree of Knowledge and Australian Workers Heritage Centre. Unfortunately no new product can be added to this list.

 <p>HERITAGE / HISTORY</p>	<p>VOTED NUMBER <b>9</b></p> <p><b>Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame &amp; Qantas Founders Museum</b></p> <p>Out here around the billabongs and under star-studded night skies, bush history slides up close to you, telling tales of bushrangers, shearers, stockmen and drovers. Be inspired by the Australian outback and the stories of the people who shaped our nation.</p> <p><a href="#">Read more...</a></p>
 <p>ART / CULTURE</p>	<p>VOTED NUMBER <b>17</b></p> <p><b>Waltzing Matilda Centre</b></p> <p>The soft sounds of the outback echo around the quiet billabong as a fine mist rises from the water. A ghostly apparition appears. It's the swagman from Waltzing Matilda fame, telling his story of the song that was sung about him, the song that has become Australia's unofficial national anthem. The Billabong Courtyard transforms into a wonderful sound and light show as the fascinating story is told.</p> <p><a href="#">Read more...</a></p>
 <p>HIDDEN TREASURES</p>	<p>VOTED NUMBER <b>18</b></p> <p><b>Walk in the Footsteps of Dinosaurs</b></p> <p>You are now about to embark on a prehistoric journey at Lark Quarry Dinosaur Trackways, following in the footsteps of those who roamed this Earth some 95 million years ago.</p> <p><a href="#">Read more...</a></p>



## RACQ Discount Tickets & Events

RACQ offer distribution opportunities to ticketed product under Discount Tickets & Events. RACQ members are offered savings if they purchase tickets via the RACQ online booking or through an RACQ Retail office.

Given that the RACQ membership is currently over 1 million, there are clear benefits in Central West operators distributing through this channel. As part of the implementation of this action, Central West operators were encouraged to participate in the Tourism and Events Queensland Product Managers day in June 2013 where appointments were made with suitable distributors (including RACQ).

Additionally, individual products were followed up by the Project Manager to encourage and assist them in contracting their product with RACQ with the goal to increase exposure for Central West products.

For the year 2013/14 a total of 9 individual products were promoted on RACQ Discount Tickets and Events. These included the Winton Gold Attraction Pass – featuring Waltzing Matilda Centre, Australian Age of Dinosaurs and Dinosaur Stampede at Lark Quarry; Outback Aussie Tours – Seven (7) Longreach and Winton Day tour products; Outback Festival 2013 Event Packages.

RACQ is currently loading 2014/15 rates for Outback Aussie Tours and Winton Gold Attraction Pass contracting is underway. Negotiations are continuing to contract additional Central West product and it is hoped to exceed the 2013/14 product displays. Outback Festival will list their 2015 event packages.

Products included in RACQ's discount tickets and events online distribution are also promoted via RACQ member E-Newsletters specifically Drive Travel, Road Ahead and Events & Entertainment – each with monthly distribution to their membership database.

Below is a list of the RACQ/VTIC partnership promotions which featured Central West product in 2013.

**Drive Travel E-News:** Apr 2013 Heartland Festival; June 2013 Visit Matilda Country

**The Road Ahead:** Apr/May 2013 Tree of Knowledge Festival; Jun/July 2013 Go West featuring Longreach, Barcaldine and Winton; Aug/Sep 2013 Outback Festival Winton

**Events & Entertainment:** Jan 2013 Outback Aussie Tours; May 2013 Tambo's 150 Celebrations; June 2013 Horse & Heritage Expo Longreach; July 2013 Outback Festival Winton; Aug 2013 Outback Festival Winton

These promotional activities resulted in 15,033 Page Views. Additionally members requested brochures via online and postal means. Of these brochures, 44 were posted, 3639 were downloaded and 886 had the pdf link emailed to them.

It would be hopeful that more Central West operators will sign up for 2014/15 and take advantage of the enormous distribution benefits available through RACQ to attract and grow the Drive Market.

### Events & Entertainment

#### Winton Gold Attraction Pass

RACQ MEMBER OFFER: Members save 10 percent on the Winton Gold Attractions Pass, when pre-purchased from RACQ.\*



### Events & Entertainment

#### The Outback Festival, Winton

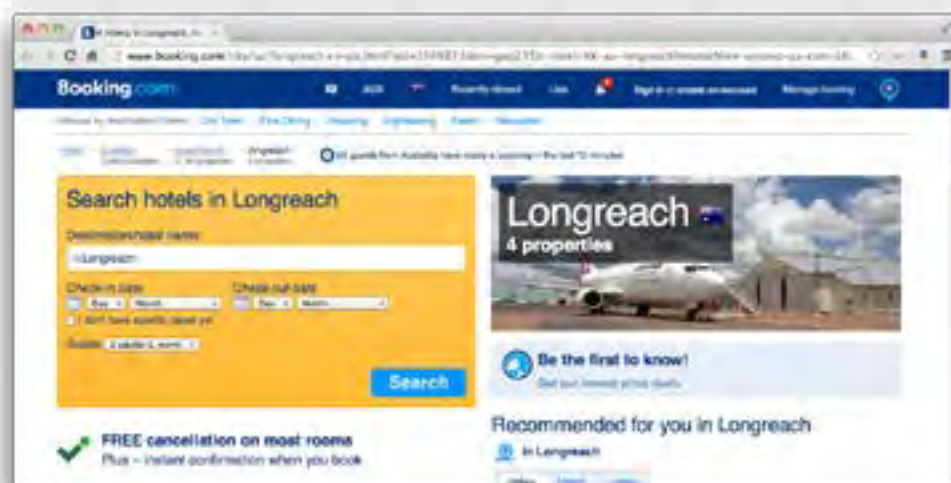
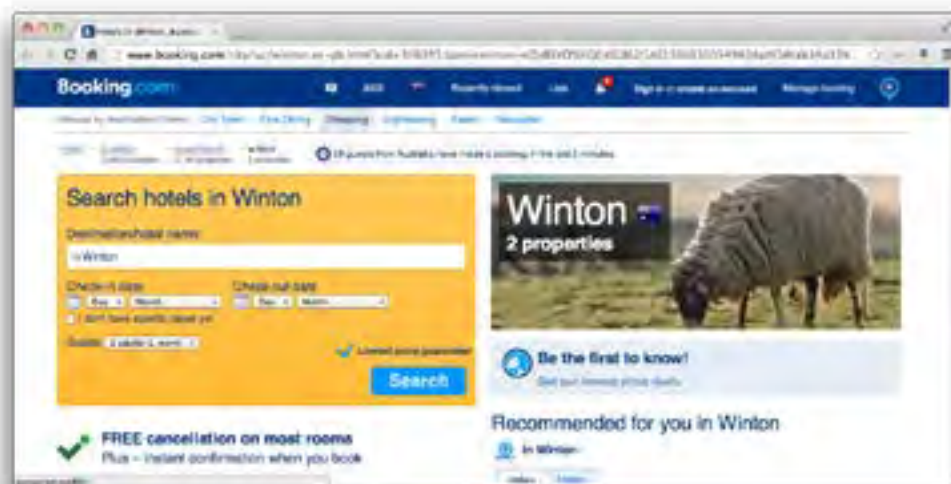
RACQ MEMBER OFFER: Members save 10 percent on tickets to the Outback Festival, Winton when pre-purchased from RACQ.\*



Central West accommodation operators (particularly Longreach and Winton) have increased their online profile to include the following distribution channels:

- Adding a Book Now button to their own website
- Distributing through individual Online Travel Agents
- Working with a Channel Manager enabling them to distribute through a huge selection of online travel agents, corporate agents, and website distributors.

The strategy to grow online distribution for accommodation operators remains a major focus for OQTA and TEQ, with many operators benefiting from the free Digital Coaching services.





### Action Task 1.4, 1.5

A total of nine (9) Central West operators are now contracted with Flight Centre Global Product for wholesale distribution via the Infinity Holidays program. TEQ agreed to provide marketing support for three pages in the 2014/15 Infinity Holidays brochure. Outback Aussie Tours purchased another full page, bringing the total number of pages to four for Outback Queensland tourism product distributed nationally. The Infinity Holidays brochure will retain premium shelf space for 12 months across the global Flight Centre Retail network to include Flight Centre Agencies, Escape Travel, Student Flights and Travel Associates.

View brochure featuring Outback Queensland here

<http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/053e2be7#/053e2be7/1>



This is a major achievement of the CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan. The strategy for a coordinated approach to contracting with wholesaler Infinity Holidays enabled the region to be represented at the TEQ/Infinity Holidays Queensland on Tour Trade show in New Zealand (February 2014) – a fantastic outcome.

Copy of the double page Expo flyer distributed at the Flight Centre Travel Expo in Auckland – February 2014.



**TRAVEL  
EXPO**

NEW ZEALAND'S LARGEST TRAVEL SHOW



# OUTBACK QUEENSLAND

### Longreach

**Albert Park Motor Inn** ✓✓✓✓ from **\$425\*** pp

**INCLUDES** 5 nights accommodation.  
**BONUS** 10% discount voucher for Oasis Restaurant.  
*Airfares are additional*

Queen Room	Twin	Extra Night	Single	Extra Night
01 Apr-30 Nov 14	<b>\$425*</b>	<b>\$85*</b>	<b>\$743*</b>	<b>\$149*</b>

### Winton

**North Gregory Hotel** ✓✓✓ from **\$319\*** pp

**INCLUDES** 5 nights accommodation & airport transfers.  
*Airfares are additional*

Standard Room	Twin	Extra Night	Single	Extra Night
01 Apr-30 Nov 14	<b>\$319*</b>	<b>\$64*</b>	<b>\$637*</b>	<b>\$127*</b>

### Kinnon & Co. Experience



## from \$185\*

pp

\*airfares are additional

**Gallop along an outback dirt track in a fully-laden Cobb & Co Stage Coach on the multi award winning Kinnon & Co. Experience. Retrace the steps of Cobb & co by travelling the original mail route between Longreach & Windorah. More than just a river cruise, watch the sunset while cruising the historic Thomson Belle Paddlewheeler or Thomson Princess Riverboat.**

**INCLUDES** Gallop thru the Scrub tour includes - 45 minute stagecoach ride with commentary, Australian Classic Movie & Harry Redford Old Time Tent Show & Thomson River Cruise includes - Paddlewheeler & Riverboat Sunset Cruise & NEW Sound & Light Show plus dinner.

Kinnon & Co. Experience	Adult	Child
01 Apr-31 Oct 14	<b>\$185*</b>	<b>\$115*</b>

### The Great Aussie Outback Air Tour

**4 nights**



## from \$2015\*

pp

\*international airfares are additional

**The ultimate Australian Outback Bush Adventure in air-conditioned comfort, with leather seats & full meal service at 20,000ft. Follow the milk run route of central Queensland from Brisbane to Cairns stopping off at typically country towns, where you can immerse yourself in the warm Outback hospitality.**

**INCLUDES** Return airfares from Brisbane to Cairns, 4 nights accommodation, 4 day tours plus 1 breakfast, 1 lunch & 1 dinner.

**ITINERARY** Brisbane – Birdsville (1 night) – Charleville (2 nights) – Mt Isa (1 night) – Cairns.

5 days/4 nights	Adult
07 Apr-07 Aug, 11 Aug-30 Nov 14	<b>\$2015*</b>



\*airfares are additional

**\$1129\***

\*airfares are additional

**\$1879\***

**Terms & Conditions:** Prices are correct as at 10 Feb 14 & are subject to change without notice. All prices are based on payment by cash or EFTPOS only. Sales Period 15-28 Feb 14 only, unless otherwise stated or sold out earlier. Packages are land only & airfares will be at an additional cost. Blackout dates & seasonal surcharges may apply depending on date of travel. North Gregory Hotel: Airport transfers are to/from Winton Airport. Kinnear & Co Tours: Child policy is 5-14 years. Tours are flexible & can do over multiple days. Skytours: International Airfares will be at an additional cost. Tour departs Brisbane on Monday at 9am. If no accommodation is required will be at an additional cost. Outback & Thrinax: Yes! But no airfares if required will be at an additional cost. Accommodation: All accommodation is based on twin share unless otherwise stated. Accommodation star rating is based on Infinity Holidays ratings & is a guide only to the overall quality of the property. For full terms & conditions please refer to your Infinity Holidays Brochure.

## Action Task 1.6

A desktop audit for existing accommodation capacity has been completed for Central West accommodation to include the regions of Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Longreach and Winton. Specialist group accommodation e.g. dormitories, non-commercial camping grounds and non-powered camping sites have not been included on this list.

Accommodation included in the audit was divided into commercial accommodation properties (hotels, motels and self-contained) and commercial caravan parks (cabins/powerd sites).

Capacity results identified a total of 220 hotel rooms (ensuite and shared) , 433 motel rooms and 90 self-contained cabins/units/houses from a total of 53 commercial accommodation properties. Of the properties that had official AAA ratings, the majority are 3 – 3.5 star with two 4 star properties.

The research also identified a total capacity of 114 cabins and 758 powered sites from a total of 20 commercial caravan parks.

A break-up of the individual town accommodation and capacity is shown below:

Region	Town	Hotel (H) Motel (M) Self-Contained (S/C)				Caravan Parks		
		No. of properties	No. of rooms or SC cabins/units/houses			No. of properties	No. of cabins/powerd sites	
			H	M	SC		C	P
Barcaldine	Alpha	1		10		1	17	30
	Aramac	2	10			1		32
	Barcaldine	12	40	76	26	3	20	113
	Jericho	1	8					
	Muttaburra	1		4		1		12
Blackall-Tambo	Blackall	6	7	54	6	2	7	12
	Tambo	3	21	23		2	3	34
Barcoo	Jundah	1	8			1		14
	Stonehenge	1	8			1		8
	Windorah	2	10		9	1		36
Longreach	Longreach	11	20	200	40	2	47	258
	Isisford	2	20					
	Ilfracombe	1	6			1	6	60
	Yaraka	1	4			1		3
Winton	Winton	8	58	66	9	3	14	146
<b>Total</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>758</b>

**Legend:** Hotel (H); Motel (M); Self-Contained (SC); Cabin (C); Powered site (P)

According to the Tourism Australia Research Central West Visitor Profile (2010) the majority of existing visitors to the central west are over 54 years, retired older retired (in the older non-working life stage), and are self-drive.

A growing market is the tour and packaged market, particularly in Longreach and Winton. Anecdotal evidence from discussions with existing tour operators, wholesalers and tourism bodies, suggests that in order to attract a new higher spend market, consideration needs to be made for the development of higher standard accommodation, Bed and Breakfast hosted accommodation and authentic station stays. Additionally, there is an identified need for more accommodation options to support regional events

A full accommodation study future needs analysis is recommended for the Central West to be able to identify the investment opportunities for new accommodation in the Central West, which will appeal to a higher spend market.



## Action Tasks 1.7, 1.8

A Storytelling Workshop was held in Longreach on Thursday 06 March, 2014. Initial rsvp's totalled 22 with representatives from Barcoo Regional Council (2); Barcaldine Regional Council (3); Longreach Regional Council (2); Winton Regional Council (1); Stockman's Hall of Fame (2); Qantas Founders Museum (2); Australian Age of Dinosaurs (1); Outback Aussie Tours (2); Kinnon & Co (2); Indigenous creative operator (1); Longreach Motor Inn (1); Albert Park Motor Inn, Longreach (1); North Gregory Hotel, Winton (2); Blackall/Tambo Regional Council (1). Overall a good cross section of interested Central West participants. Of the original 22 rsmps there was an actual attendance of 13 on the day.

As part of the preparation for the workshop, the facilitator toured a selection of Central West hero attractions in the two days prior to the workshop. These included Stockman's Hall of Fame, Qantas Founders Museum, Australian Age of Dinosaurs and Waltzing Matilda Centre. These visits ensured relevancy and context in the delivery content that was appreciated by course participants. Also in the weeks preceding the workshop, various participants provided access to content which could be incorporated into the workshop delivery.

A workbook was developed specifically for this workshop, titled 'What's Your Story'. There was a good mix of activities, discussions and media used to deliver course material. Specific activities for identifying town themes were included in the workshop. There was very good group interaction and interest demonstrated throughout the day.

Suzanne Thompson participated in the workshop contributing with Indigenous stories and also updating participants on her current Indigenous experience projects for the Central West region and beyond including some planned workshops which are themed around the traditional art styles used in the Central West area.

A total of 13 course evaluation forms were completed and summarised. All 13 participants rated both the course content and presenter skills between 8 and 10 (Rating scale 10 = Excellent; 0 = Very poor). Below are some additional comments listed by participants as the most helpful part of the workshop.

- Realising the importance of the Take Home Message when presenting your story
- Theme construction
- Structure in presenting written media
- Interpretive writing info
- The material was relevant to what I am doing. Really enjoyed – gained a lot from workshop – hope I can implement
- Information structure/wording. Even though we do not have an attraction, it was very useful and fun
- Explaining how to write and layout of text on websites. If there could be a course that could help us with creative writing in print format that would be good
- Interpretive writing



### Action Tasks 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.1c

All 2014 Outback Queensland events for the Central West have now been loaded to the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse. These events, once listed with ATDW, are then distributed to multiple online channels to include Queensland Holidays and Tourism Australia.

It is a condition of OQTA membership and Regional Event funding that events have current information listed on ATDW, so this remains the best method of ensuring continual updates occur. Events currently listed with ATDW below:

Event Name	Region	Date/s 2014/15	Itinerary on <a href="http://adventureoutback.com.au">adventureoutback.com.au</a>
Tree of Knowledge Festival	Barcaldine	2 to 4 May 2014	6 Day/5 Night ex BNE
Harry Redford Cattle Drive	Barcaldine	2 to 24 May 2014	6 Day/5 Night ex BNE
Blackall Heartland Festival	Blackall Tambo	23 May to 1 Jun 2014	3 Day/2 Night ex BNE
Isisford Wool & Sheep Show	Longreach	24 May 2014	
Tambo Racing 150 year Celebrations Carnival	Blackall Tambo	29 May to 1 Jun 2014	
Ilfracombe Speed Shears	Longreach	31 May 2014	
Winton Auto Spectacular 1/8 Mile Drag	Winton	14 Jun 2014	
Alpha Races	Barcaldine	21 Jun 2014	
The Vision Splendid Outback Film Festival	Winton	27 Jun to 6 Jul 2014	
Outback Horse and Heritage Expo	Longreach	24 to 26 Jul 2014	4 Day/3 Night ex BNE
Shockwave	Blackall-Tambo	2 to 3 Aug 2014	
Corfield Races and Quickshears	Winton	2 to 3 Aug 2014	
National Bronco Branding Championships	Barcoo	16 to 17 Aug 2014	
Longreach Yellowbelly Fishing Classic	Longreach	29 to 31 Aug 2014	
Windorah Yabby Races	Barcoo	4 Sep 2014	4 Day/3 Night ex BNE
Outback October Fest	Barcoo	3 to 5 Oct 2014	
Outback Festival (Bi Annual)	Winton	22 to 26 Sep 2015	7 Day/6 Night ex BNE
Outback Trailblazer	Various	19 to 26 Apr 2015	

Tourism and Events Queensland and OQTA have developed suggested event itineraries for a selection of these events in conjunction with their Outback Eventures campaign. It is recommended that events each develop their own suggested itineraries for their target market drive groups and distribute them via their own website, [adventureoutback.com.au](http://adventureoutback.com.au) and via RACQ VTIC.



## New tool for event promotion

ATDW have just finalised work on a new Widget, which will effectively allow individual regions to easily and cost effectively draw specific ATDW product. E.g. Winton Shire Council could set up this Widget on their site to draw only events in the Central West region. There is potential for all online Central West tourism businesses to add the Widget to their websites – ensuring wider distribution of Central West events and event itineraries (if listed on Journeys). The widget is due to be released this month and several Central West operators will be targeted to trial it.

The onus for updating the ATDW listing is still with the individual operators. OQTA undertake the big job of ensuring all events update their listing on an annual basis. Given that a good amount of chasing is still required by OQTA to achieve this update, there is evidence that many events still do not fully understand the benefits of ATDW distribution and the potential promotional opportunities.

## Event Packaging

Event Packages were developed for Winton's Outback Festival for 2013 with some very positive results including achieving just over \$50,000 in pre-sold tickets and packages. Tent City and Festival Campsite packages were developed and distributed via the event's new online booking system, RACQ Travel, Qld Rail Travel and Infinity Holidays. Additionally, a range of new regional RACQ drive itineraries developed as part of the CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan were drawn onto the Event website and marketed to Event visitors.

As a result of the successful packaging of Outback Festival, other events are now actively looking into packaging their event. Specifically, the Harry Redford Cattle Drive in Barcaldine is currently working on building a new event website with online ticketing. They have also engaged a tourism consultant to assist them in developing a range of packages which can be marketed with their 2015 event.

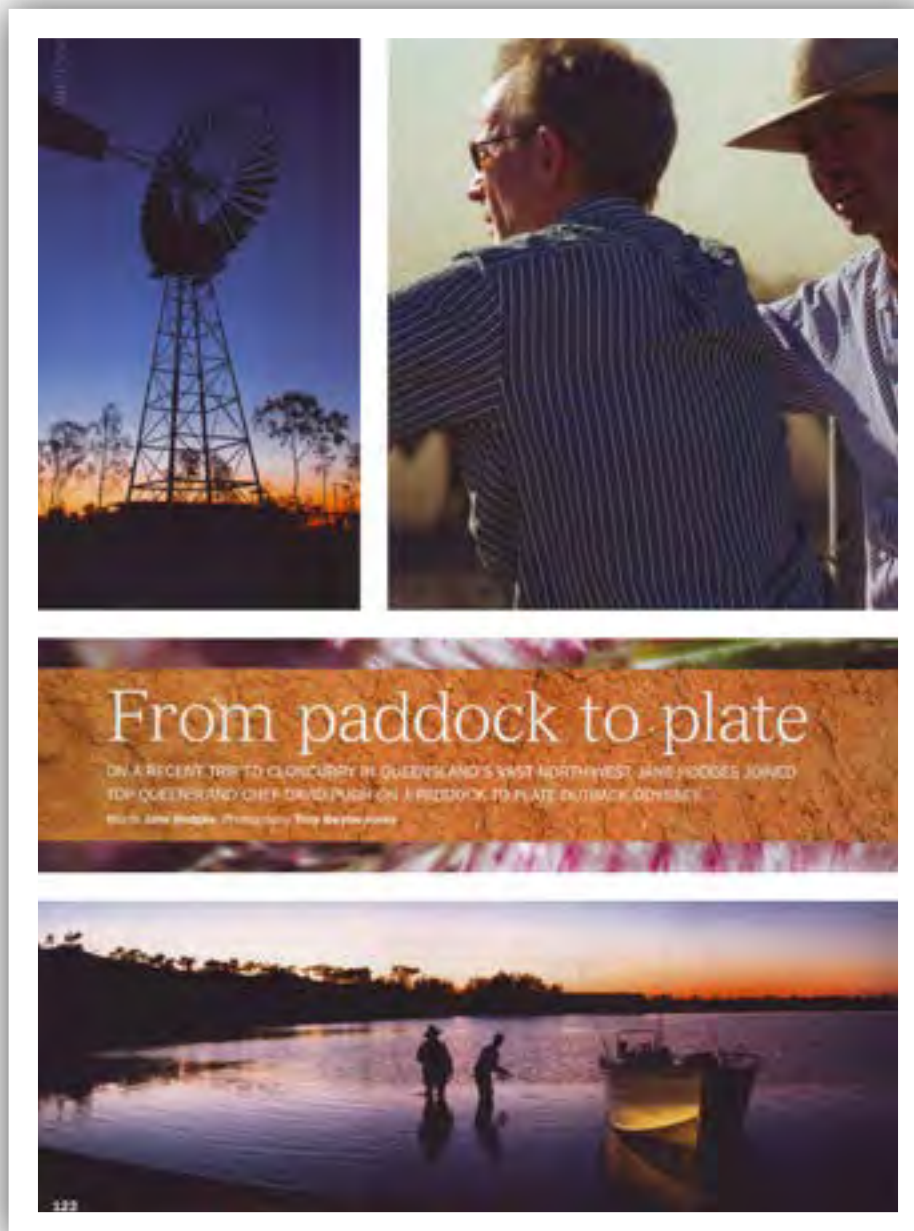




## Action Task 2.2

A desktop audit to determine the existing capacity/potential for food tourism activities in the Central West has been completed. The audit has resulted in a list of 93 operators from the food sector to include retail outlets, restaurants, producers and processors. Owing to the small number of producers within the Central and Far West regions, assistance was sought from Morgan Gronold, Trade & Investment Queensland. Morgan was able to supply a list of potential producers from other outback regions to supplement the database (included in the total 93 operators).

He also provided a copy of an article from Selector magazine titled 'From Paddock to Plate' – David Pugh's Outback Odyssey – a useful resource for Phase 2 of this Action.



Given the growing demand for food and wine as part of the travel experience, Tourism Australia has recently launched its new Food and Wine positioning 'Restaurant Australia.' There are a number of social media initiatives open to food and wine experience operators which should be explored by Central West members interested in leveraging promotion from this campaign. <http://restaurant.australia.com/>

### Action Task 2.3

A set of guidelines for developing Indigenous experiences in the Central West has been researched and compiled for tourism operators (Aboriginal and non Aboriginal). These guidelines include the following steps:

- Research existing Indigenous Tourism Concepts and Case Studies
- Review relevant Aboriginal Protocols
- Obtain assistance from Trade & Government Organisations
- Consult and engage with the local Aboriginal Community
- Obtain Agreements in writing
- Learn potential product goals

Whilst researching these Guidelines, the following Organisations/Contacts were consulted:

- Outback Queensland Tourism Association (OQTA)
- Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ)
- Tourism Australia (TA)
- NT Tourism
- Destination NSW
- IBA (Indigenous Business Australia)
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA)
- Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC)
- Australian Council for the Arts
- Australian Copyright Council
- Queensland South Native Title Services
- Suzanne Thompson, Aboriginal business owner and Community representative

In the development of these Guidelines, consultations were held with Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) to enquire about the Queensland Indigenous Strategy, which they are in the process of re-writing. Priorities for these Guidelines have focused on incorporating Indigenous experiences into mainstream tourism. These priorities are in line with current TEQ and TA Indigenous strategies.

A draft version of the Guidelines document has been completed and is pending feedback from the Central West stakeholders.





## Action Task 2.4a

Tour operators play an important role both in the promotion of our national parks and in encouraging visitors to value and enjoy them. Most tour operators have access to a considerable client base. Tour operators refresh their product on a yearly basis and are always on the lookout for new itinerary ideas. The downside of new itinerary planning is the time involved in researching new locations, attractions and activities.

The new commercial operator toolkit has been devised with the goal of simplifying the planning process, saving the operator time and growing tourism activities in the Central West Queensland Parks. Specifically, the toolkit aims to encourage group activities in the Central West Queensland Parks to include:

- School Excursions – day & overnight camping visits including Ranger talks, bush walks and educational activities
- Group Tours – general group tour visits including Ranger talks, bush walks and self-catered meal (e.g. morning/afternoon tea or lunch)
- Events – day and evening special events which will involve bringing in entertainment, music, lighting, staging equipment, hospitality equipment, seating, portable toilets etc.

The Central West Queensland Parks toolkit includes:

- Access guidelines and permit information for day and overnight activities (including camping permits)
- Location map for Central West Parks
- Snapshot of experiences in Central West Parks
- Fact sheets for nine of the 13 Central West Parks which are accessible by road to include: Bladensburg National Park; Lark Quarry Conservation Park; Combo Waterhole Conservation Park; Diamantina National Park; Munga-Thirri National Park; Idalia National Park; Welford National Park; Lochern National Park; Forest Den National Park
- Helpful links to relevant tourism and park management authorities

An online version of the toolkit will be emailed to a database of group tour planners and coach operators before 30 June 2014.



## SUMMARY

Stage one completion of the CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan has benefited from a collaborated approach to grow exposure for the region and to develop strategies for new visitor experiences by Central West members.

By aligning actions with OQTA cooperative marketing activities, the Central West operators benefited from increased promotion of their products and regional itineraries through the RACQ/VTIC (Virtual Tourism Information Centre) partnership. The challenge for Central West operators now is to maintain the momentum and continue to expand product distribution, specifically themed drive itineraries.

The strategy of taking a regional approach to contracting nine Central West tourism products with wholesaler Infinity Holidays exceeded expectations. TEQ recognised the potential benefits in finally having depth of Outback Qld product in a global distributor program. Their brochure support with Infinity Holidays and subsequent TEQ/Infinity Holidays Queensland on Tour Trade show in New Zealand has opened up new opportunities for the Central West region for attracting more International visitors. Additionally, this program has increased opportunity for Fly/Drive packaging of the region.

Maximising the visitor expenditure and increasing length of stay continues to be an important strategy for TEQ and OQTA's Eventure's campaign. Actions to coordinate packaging and distribution of Winton's Outback Festival proved a positive case study for other events to follow.

Central West operators recognize the new market opportunities in developing new visitor experiences. Underpinning the product development has been the need to improve how their stories are told. The first Storytelling workshop was well received by all attendees keen to identify stories and refine themes to target new markets including the Education market.

The development of new Indigenous tourism experiences in partnership with mainstream tourism operators is a strategy supported by TA and TEQ and which underpins the new Guidelines for Indigenous experiences in the Central West. Opportunities exist to build in new Indigenous experiences e.g. bush tucker walks and workshops into mainstream tours and events. There are operators already working on these activities for 2015. These smaller experience developments may provide support for future developments around the many significant sites where current issues related to access and protection have stalled progress.

Indigenous experiences and National Park activities partner well in attracting new visitor markets. Initial target markets of school groups, traditional group travel and events are expected to grow following the distribution of the new Central West Queensland Parks Toolkit for commercial operators. There is potential for greater support from TEQ/OQTA in targeting this market due to the current push for the Outback Queensland Education Subsidy curriculum links. A new itinerary, which features Bladensburg National Park has been included in the new Outback Education Handbook. Leveraging any new event activities in Central West Queensland Parks from the current Outback Eventures campaign would be a good strategy.

Some excellent results have been achieved through the implementation of Stage One of the CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan. There is a real momentum happening amongst operators, local government associations and key industry bodies with a clear focus on growing distribution and improving the visitor experience.





# The health of the west

A single health plan for central west Queensland  
2014–2024



A plan developed through the alliance of:



in partnership with the communities of the region

**The health of the west: A single health plan for central west Queensland 2014–2024**

Published by Central West Hospital and Health Service, October 2014



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For more information contact:

Office of the Chief Executive  
Central West Hospital and Health Service  
PO Box 510 Longreach QLD 4730

Phone (07) 4652 8000

An electronic version of this document is available at [www.health.qld.gov.au/services/centralwest](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/services/centralwest)

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Image courtesy of Tourism Queensland





380,000 square kilometres.

12,000 residents.

One coordinated health service.

## Foreword and summary

The residents of central west Queensland report their health to be generally very good, which we should all be proud of. However, there are several health issues of significance that require a determined effort to address:

- Our life expectancy and years spent living in good health is lower than some other regions of Queensland.
- Many residents are suffering from chronic disease—some of which are lifestyle-related—including heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes.
- Many are also experiencing poor mental health, injury and the health effects that come with growing older.
- Often, residents are admitted to hospital for illnesses that could have been prevented or treated in the community.
- Many deaths and injuries in the region are avoidable—for example, residents are dying from illnesses that could have been avoided through lifestyle changes or improved access to healthcare.

These are all areas we can improve. There is more we can be doing—as individuals and as health service providers—to look after our health and to support others to be as healthy as they can.

### A single health plan for the region

We—the five signatories to this plan—have worked closely together and closely with communities to develop the first-ever unified health service plan for central west Queensland.

This is our plan and way forward to address the major health issues identified through months of research and consultation with community members.

In this plan, we tackle the most significant health issues in the region. We also aim to improve services and systems to better deliver the healthcare that communities need.

Three broad service directions in this plan provide the vision for future healthcare in the region:

**Service direction 1:** All healthcare agencies are part of a unified, integrated system that supports service delivery across central west to better meet the needs of the community.

**Service direction 2:** Services address the priority health needs of residents across the health continuum, improving life expectancy and reducing years spent in poor health.

**Service direction 3:** Services are organised and delivered across the health service continuum (and locally where possible) in a way that best meets the health needs of residents.

These broad directions are supported in the plan by a number of objectives and strategies that will put into action the necessary improvements to make these directions a reality.

#### How will we implement this?

This is a 'big picture' plan. It sets the directions for health services across the region and over the next 10 years. As such, with the release of the plan only one small part of the process has been completed.

We—the five signatories to this plan—have made the commitment to fully implement these directions over this time period. We will oversee and closely monitor implementation to ensure the plan is meeting its aims of improving health services and improving health outcomes in the region.

We will also need the help of communities to implement the plan. From this one document, each community can develop their own local health action plan that speaks to the priority local health issues needing action.

#### Our expectations for use of this plan

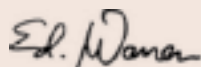
We commend this plan to everyone living and working in the region.

The executive and the boards of management of each of the five alliance agencies involved in developing this plan request that all health agencies and individual providers of healthcare in the region use this plan to direct their healthcare efforts over the 10 year period 2014–2024.

It is our hope that all providers of healthcare and community services in the region—whether they reside in the region or are visitors to the region—use this plan to guide the delivery of services for the people of central west.

The executive and the boards of management also request that providers of healthcare adopt the spirit of cooperation the plan was created in, and provide care in line with the overarching theme of this plan: cooperation between health agencies, and cooperation with the communities they serve.

Signed,



**Ed Warren**  
Chair  
Central West Health Board



**Cr Rob Chandler**  
Chair  
Central Western Queensland Remote Area  
Planning and Development Board



**Nino Di Marco**  
Chief Executive Office  
Royal Flying Doctor Service  
(Queensland Section)



**Robbie Medlin**  
Superintendent-Manager  
Central Western Local Ambulance Service Network  
Queensland Ambulance Service



**Phil Barwick**  
Chair  
Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The Australian Government has proposed that, as of 1 July 2015, the 61 Medicare Locals across Australia be replaced with fewer, larger 'Primary Health Networks'. While the Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local fully endorses this plan and will be involved in its implementation, if the government proposal is passed then negotiations with the agency replacing Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local will be required.

## PART A: THE PLAN

### Introduction

Central west Queensland covers an area of 382,800 square kilometres—22 per cent of the land mass of Queensland.<sup>1</sup> The region stretches from the South Australian and Northern Territory borders in the west and borders with the north, north west, central and south west regions of Queensland.

The central west region is one of the more isolated areas of Australia. It comprises seven local government areas, all of which have a classification of ‘very remote’.<sup>2</sup> Distances that residents must sometimes travel to access health services can be extensive. These distances can also present issues for services that visit the smaller, more remote communities in the region.

Central west contains a small resident population—a little over 12,000 residents occupy this vast space.<sup>3</sup> However, the region attracts significant numbers of tourists and those visiting for business purposes.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the population can temporarily expand well beyond the resident population and this has the potential to place strain on local health services.

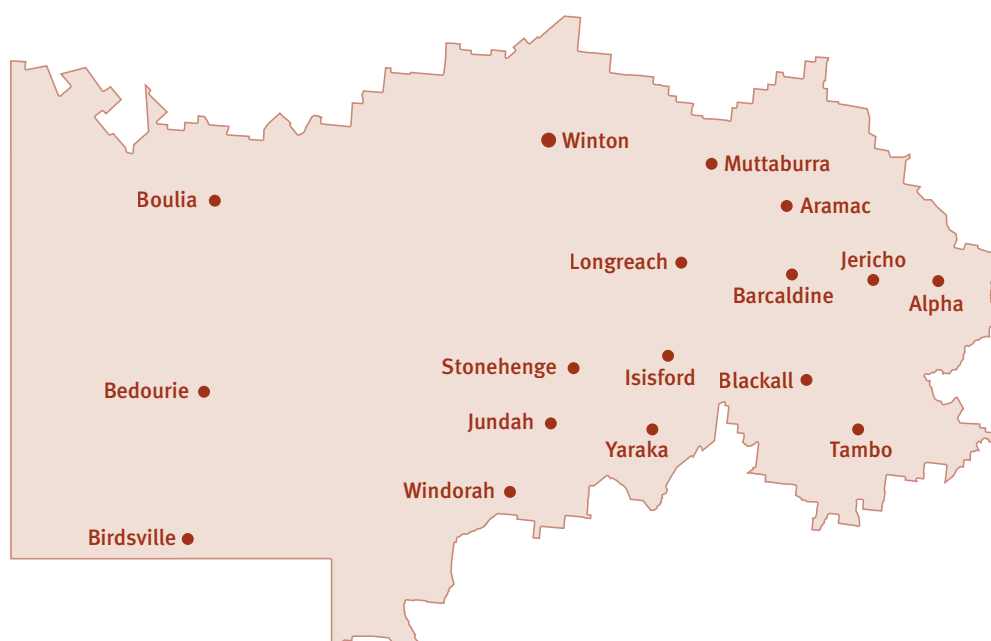
In 2013, Central West Hospital and Health Service engaged partner health agencies in the region to collaboratively develop a single plan that will guide future health service delivery in the region. The plan was developed through an alliance of the following five agencies:

- Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local
- Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD; representing the local governments in the region)
- Central West Hospital and Health Service
- Queensland Ambulance Service—Central West Local Ambulance Service Network (LASN)
- Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section).

‘Central west’ is used throughout the plan to denote the geographical region that is the focus of the plan. The geographical boundary of the central west region is defined as the boundary of the Central West Hospital and Health Service (see Figure 1 below).

All references to ‘central west’ in this plan are to the residents and health services that reside and operate within this region.

*Figure 1: Geographical boundary of the central west region*



## Why a single health service plan?

Creating a single, unified health service plan across healthcare agencies in central west Queensland has several advantages:

- A single plan makes sense for healthcare provision in a remote setting such as central west—by allowing the existing health expertise and resources in the region to be shared across healthcare settings, locations and providers.
- A single plan makes sense for healthcare provision in a fiscally tight environment such as that currently experienced in Australia—again by having agencies work towards a common set of directions and thus becoming more efficient and eliminating waste.
- A single plan provides a useful way to address several of the issues with health services identified in this plan—issues around how the elements of the health system work together and how agencies work with the community to provide care.

## Structure of the plan

The central west health service plan is divided in two parts. PART A provides the core elements of the plan, and as such is a stand-alone document. This section includes:

- the health service needs of the region
- the service directions, objectives and strategies to meet the health service needs
- guidance on the implementation phase of the plan.

PART B provides supporting information for this plan, such as background information on the planning project and some further detail on the research and consultation undertaken to inform the plan. Readers may wish to read this section to better understand the evidence used to inform the service directions, objectives and strategies detailed in PART A.



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## Identifying the health service needs of the region

Health service need refers to ‘the gap between what services are currently provided to a given population, and what will be required in the future to improve the health status of a community (and avoid a decline)’.<sup>5</sup>

Health service needs can include indicators of a region’s health needs (such as particular health conditions, illnesses or risk factors) as well as identified health service or health system issues.

Identifying these health service needs is an essential step in developing the future directions of health services to meet these needs. This section provides a summary of the key health service needs for the central west region, derived from a number of sources including:

- research into the current health profile of the residents, health services and health service use
- consultation with stakeholders, including community members and health service providers
- research conducted by other agencies, including the Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local comprehensive needs assessment.

## The health of residents

Residents of central west Queensland report very good health generally—in some areas surpassing the health of residents living in other regions of Queensland.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this, life expectancy and years spent living in good health is lower than the Queensland average.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the key health needs identified from research into the health of central west residents include the following:

- In one year, 1,900 years of ‘healthy life’ are lost due to disability or premature death—a rate much higher than the rate for all of Queensland.<sup>7</sup>
- Residents are being admitted to hospital for illnesses and injury that could have been prevented or treated in the community.<sup>8</sup>
- Each year there are over 500 potentially preventable hospitalisations—equating to 13 per cent of all hospitalisations.<sup>9</sup>
- Leading causes of hospitalisation include injury, diseases of the digestive system and diseases of the respiratory system.<sup>8</sup>
- On average, 94 residents die each year—with a death rate significantly higher than the rate for all of Queensland.<sup>10</sup>
- Leading causes of death include heart disease (e.g. heart attack), stroke, lung cancer, diabetes and lower respiratory disease (e.g. bronchitis).<sup>10</sup>
- Almost one-third of all deaths are considered to be avoidable—a rate considerably higher than the rate for all of Queensland.<sup>11</sup>
- While the incidence of invasive cancers is equal to the rest of Queensland, the cancer mortality rate is much higher.<sup>12</sup>
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, the years spent living in good health is much lower than for other residents in the region.<sup>7</sup>
- Across all available health indicators, the overall health of central west residents is similar to residents living in other remote parts of Queensland—once other differences in the population are taken into account.





Image courtesy of Tourism Queensland © Darren Jew

Yaraka

### Themes from stakeholder consultation

An extensive process of consultation with community members and health service providers was completed as part of developing the plan. The three main areas raised through consultation included:

- the service system itself, in particular:
  - ~ lack of adequate organisation and coordination of services
  - ~ lack of adequate community engagement in healthcare delivery, including communication regarding services
  - ~ issues with systems such as patient travel and referral/discharge mechanisms.
- health conditions of significance, in particular:
  - ~ prevention and management of several chronic diseases
  - ~ prevention and management of acute and chronic mental illness
  - ~ health matters related to ageing, including access to healthcare and supported accommodation
  - ~ prevention and management of medical emergencies and injuries
  - ~ prevention and management of poor oral health.
- specific elements of healthcare delivery, such as:
  - ~ continuity of health service provider
  - ~ frequency/regularity of visiting services
  - ~ programs/services for selected populations
  - ~ insufficient use of technology to enhance access to care in more remote parts of the region.

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## Service directions to meet health service needs

The service directions in this plan provide a vision for healthcare services across the central west region and broadly state what services and the service system will need to look like by the end of the planning horizon (2024) to meet health service needs.

The service directions are written as broad statements about the future state of services delivered by all the partnering agencies. Each of the service directions include:

- **Objectives**—statements of achievement or specific statements about what the service system needs to work towards to realise the future state as identified in the service directions. As such, the objectives use language such as *attain, improve and reduce*.
- **Strategies**—statements of action or how the service system may work toward meeting the statements of achievement set out in the objectives. As such, the strategies here use language such as *build, develop and implement*.
- **Criteria for success**—performance indicators to monitor the success of accomplishing the service directions or meet the intent of the planning. They provide a measure on which to assess the extent the objectives have been achieved.

There are three service directions in this plan, each direction focusing on a separate (but connected) part of service delivery and each directly aligned to one of the three areas of health service need identified through the background research and stakeholder consultation:

- **Service direction 1** focuses on *systems-level improvements* (how the partnering health agencies need to work together and work with communities to improve health and healthcare delivery)
- **Service direction 2** focuses on the *priority health needs of residents* (what critical health needs require responses to make significant in-roads into improving the health and wellbeing of residents)
- **Service direction 3** focuses on a selection of *service-specific improvements* (what improvements could be made to specific services/professions to support residents' health and the healthcare system).

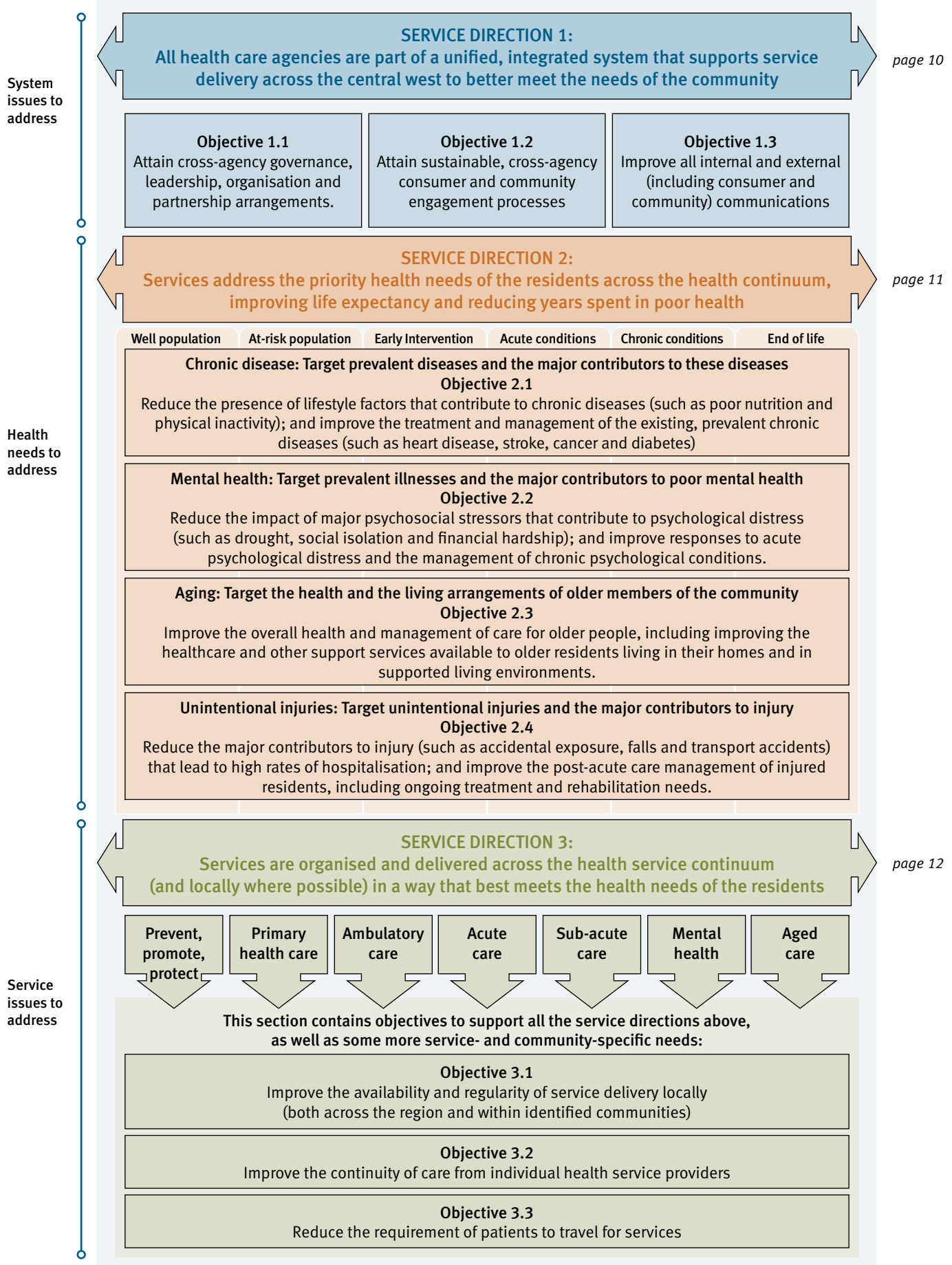
A visual representation of these service directions and the associated objectives appears in Figure 2 (opposite page). It provides a useful tool for understanding how these three critical areas will be targeted to improve services and health outcomes through this plan.



© Royal Flying Doctors Service

Caption

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for the service directions and objectives in the plan



Service direction 1

All healthcare agencies are part of a unified, integrated system that supports service delivery across central west to better meet the needs of the community.

Objectives	
1.1	Attain cross-agency governance, leadership, organisation and partnership arrangements.
1.2	Attain sustainable, cross-agency consumer and community engagement processes.
1.3	Improve all internal and external (including consumer and community) communications.

- Strategies
- **Build a new framework for shared governance, leadership, accountability and stewardship of services.**
    - Revise and update existing service level agreements between agencies (making them more stringent) to maximise likelihood of successful collaborations.
    - Build a culture of strong leadership across and within agencies, including exploring options for joint service leadership.
    - Explore other governance arrangements for successful collaborations in healthcare—including joint accountability, stewardship and pooling of resources.
  - **Establish collaborative organisation and delivery of services, particularly for priority areas in service directions 2 and 3.**
    - Foster joint leadership (across agencies) to drive service improvements, including coordination of services and a service quality agenda.
    - Focus on areas where there is a clear interface between agencies—such as effective referral pathways, patient flow and transfers etc.
    - Over the longer term, develop clinical information systems that will support sharing of service information and shared service delivery.
  - **Develop a shared communication and engagement framework that addresses internal, cross-agency and community engagement.**
    - Establish guidelines and practices for a new culture of communication within and across agencies, and between agencies and the public.
    - Foster joint leadership (across agencies) to drive cross-agency communication and community communication/media activities.
    - Develop systems for sharing service information with consumers and communities (such as a shared central west health portal).
  - **Build health literacy in the community.**
    - Build residents’ (of all ages) knowledge of factors that affect their health, and what is involved in the effective management of any existing health conditions.
    - Cultivate a shared knowledge and shared expectations regarding what is—and what is not—part of healthcare delivery in the region.



Longreach Hospital

© Adnic Photography

## Service direction 2

Services address the priority health needs of residents across the health continuum, improving life expectancy and reducing years spent in poor health.

### Objectives

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | Reduce the presence of lifestyle factors that contribute to chronic disease (such as poor nutrition and physical inactivity); and improve the treatment and management of existing, prevalent chronic diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes).    |
| 2.2 | Reduce the impact of major psychosocial stressors that contribute to psychological distress (such as drought, social isolation and financial hardship); and improve responses to acute psychological distress and the management of chronic psychological conditions.   |
| 2.3 | Improve the overall health and management of care for older people, including improving the healthcare and other support services available to older residents living in their homes and in supported living environments.  |
| 2.4 | Reduce the major contributors to injury (such as accidental exposure, falls and transport accidents) that lead to high rates of hospitalisation; and improve the post-acute care management of injured residents, including ongoing treatment and rehabilitation needs. |

### Strategies

- **Build on existing prevention initiatives that address the modifiable lifestyle factors lying at the core of chronic disease.**
  - Focus on target areas of nutrition, physical activity and cancer prevention—and include a focus on initiatives for children and young people.
  - Build individual and community capacity to manage their health and the lifestyle contributors to chronic disease.
  - Build health service providers' knowledge in promoting good health.
- **Establish a coordinated response to the care and management of all residents living with chronic disease.**
  - Focus on allied health and nursing involvement in care coordination and management.
  - Embed the principles of integrated care into individual care plans.
- **Implement prevention initiatives to limit the impacts of the psychosocial stressors in the region.**
  - Build community capacity to deal with psychosocial stressors—with a focus on the major stressors of drought, social isolation and financial hardship.
- **Establish coordinated responses to acute and chronic mental illnesses.**
  - Grow the chronic disease management approach to treating mental illness (via care coordination and self-management support as close to home as possible).
  - Increase support from local mental health providers (and providers outside the region) to help all health service providers improve responses to mental illness.
- **Extend the reach of existing community-based healthcare services for older people.**
  - Identify the high care needs (or potential for increasing need) in older residents, and develop plans for these needs ahead of time.
  - Investigate growing community-based nursing services to support existing home care services in the community.
- **Support aged care providers in the region to expand supported accommodation services for older people.**
  - Work with aged care providers to investigate growing supported care in unit-style accommodation.
  - Work with aged care providers to investigate growing the number of high care beds in the region.
- **Implement prevention initiatives to limit unintentional injuries, and establish coordinated responses to the post-acute care of injured residents.**
  - Focus on target areas of farming accidents, falls and transport accidents (with priority areas informed by the peak bodies for farm and workplace safety).
  - Extend the care provided by allied health and nursing services to include injury rehabilitation and transitional care to home.

### Service direction 3

Services are organised and delivered across the health service continuum (and locally where possible) in a way that best meets the health needs of residents.

#### Objectives

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 3.1 | Improve the availability and regularity of service delivery locally (both across the region, and within identified communities). |
| 3.2 | Improve the continuity of care from individual health service providers.   |
| 3.3 | Reduce the requirement for patients to travel for services.  |

#### Strategies

- **For services that visit smaller, outlying communities (and in some cases the larger centres too) explore the following service improvements:**
  - Where practicable, increase availability (presence) or regularity (frequency of visits) of services—priority services include allied health and dental.
  - Where practicable, increase continuity of services provided (so that the same health service provider makes the return visits for ongoing care).
  - Use technology (such as telehealth) to improve access to services available in the region but not readily/easily available to outlying communities.
- **Allied health service improvements**
  - Explore placing all allied health services under one ‘umbrella’ and establishing geographical teams to provide coordinated services to outlying communities.
  - Explore increasing availability of selected professions currently under-represented in the region (especially physiotherapy).
- **Dental service improvements**
  - Increase prevention and health promotion efforts for good dental health (such as increasing oral hygiene education in schools).
  - Commence use of dental technicians as part of the broader dental service.
- **Emergency service improvements**
  - For improved emergency responses in smaller or outlying communities, explore health service providers occupying a dual emergency/primary healthcare role to create a full-time role that includes paramedic functions.
- **Medical service improvements**
  - Implement a region-wide rural generalist model—with general practice surgeons providing advanced medical care as per professional guidelines.
  - Expand the selection of medical and surgical services available in Longreach and other facilities, subject to patient safety and sustainability requirements.
  - Explore a transitional care model for residents returning to the region, who require supported accommodation (but not hospitalisation) prior to returning home.
  - Streamline patient transfers (particularly outflows to other regions) for routine and emergency care, including improving pathways to care in Brisbane.
- **Nursing service improvements**
  - Increase capacity of nursing services to provide care in resident’s homes—such as community-based acute/non-acute care (e.g. hospital in the home).
  - Explore implementation of an integrated service model of nursing care for older residents, in close collaboration with existing aged care providers.
- **Other service (and support service) improvements**
  - Increase availability of services/programs for specific populations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, men’s and women’s health).
  - Increase availability of selected clinical support services where practicable, particularly supply of pharmacy and medical imaging services.



## Criteria for success

Criteria for success provide an indication of the achievement of service directions. There are five key criteria for success in this plan, each one selected for its usefulness in measuring a critical component of the plan and for its ease of collection.

Together these five criteria will provide an overarching picture of the success of implementation of the plan—in particular the efforts to improve health services in the region and health outcomes for its residents.

The efforts to evaluate the success of this plan, however, will not be limited to these five criteria. The alliance of agencies involved in developing the plan will also monitor a broader collection of indicators as part of their ongoing role in overseeing healthcare in the region.

Criterion	Component/s of the plan evaluated
1 Establishment and ongoing commitment to a cross-agency forum to drive the implementation, monitoring and review of the plan over the 10 year period.	Governance and leadership (service direction 1)
2 High levels of consumer satisfaction with service organisation and coordination, and with community engagement in health service planning and delivery.	Consumer and community engagement (service direction 1)
3 Stabilisation of—and subsequent improvements in—headline health indicators for residents. Headline indicators include life expectancy; years spent living in good health; and rates of disease/injury for the priority health needs identified in the plan.	Priority health needs (service direction 2) Local service delivery (service direction 3)
4 Reductions in overall hospital admission rates for residents, and in rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations for residents.	Priority health needs (service direction 2) Local service delivery (service direction 3)
5 Increases in use of telehealth as a treatment modality (used as a proxy measure for improved local service availability and reduced travel to receive healthcare).	Local service delivery (service direction 3)



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## Implementation, monitoring and review

### Implementation

This plan outlines service directions, objectives and strategies for health services in central west Queensland for the period 2014–2024. The alliance of agencies involved in developing the plan has agreed to a series of ‘first steps’ for successful implementation of the plan.

Critical among these next steps is arranging a consortium of the existing alliance members to oversee and manage the implementation of the plan; and engaging other health, community service and aged care providers as active partners in implementation.

As indicated in service direction 1, the alliance reached consensus to use the plan as a platform to move towards a single service model. Another important first step, therefore, is for the alliance to implement changes to service models to support the directions in the plan.

It will be the responsibility of the alliance to develop this concept further, to the point where it can be practically implemented. Examples presented to date include integrated services, joint service ventures, commissioning, and specific strategies involving the sharing of resources between agencies.

In addition to the ongoing work of the alliance, further local planning will be required to convert the directions in this plan into suitable actions for each community. The alliance will assist communities with this process.

Local health action plans will need to demonstrate alignment with service directions and objectives in this (overarching) plan. Local plans will also need to consider the suitability of the strategies found in this plan—this may include consideration of what the local priorities are and selection of those strategies of greatest benefit to the community.

### Monitoring and review

Monitoring, evaluating, reporting and reviewing the implementation of the plan—including reporting on and reviewing progress towards achieving the service directions—completes the cycle of health service planning.

These processes also enable changes in direction during implementation of the plan to ensure ongoing relevance and provide information upon which future health service planning may be based.

Monitoring and evaluating progress with implementation will be the responsibility of the alliance of agencies. It will involve collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on the criteria for success and at a number of points in time—before, during and after implementation.

Evaluation will consider both the impact of implementation (i.e. progress towards achieving each objective) and the process of implementation (i.e. progress towards implementing the strategies).

Reporting on progress with implementation will occur on an annual basis. The alliance of agencies will prepare annual progress reports and provide these reports to the executive and boards of management of each of the five alliance agencies for consideration.

In addition to annual progress reporting, there will be three review points for the plan. Reviews will be in the third year (2017), fifth year (2020) and tenth year (2024).

Reviews will take into consideration progress toward implementation of the plan, and any changes to the key elements that informed the original plan (such as health service need, services and the system itself).

Based on the outcomes of each review, revision of the plan may be considered to ensure the service directions remain current and continue to provide for the identified needs, and the strategies being implemented are achieving the objectives.

## PART B: SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### *Background to the planning project*

#### Purpose of planning

The purpose of the planning project was to support health service agencies across the central west region of Queensland to collaboratively develop a single health service plan that would guide future health service delivery.

As noted in PART A, the single health service plan was developed through an alliance of existing agencies that included the Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local, Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD), Central West Hospital and Health Service, Queensland Ambulance Service—Central West Local Ambulance Service Network (LASN) and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section).

The project sponsor for the planning project was the Central West Hospital and Health Service Chief Executive. Each agency in the alliance had representation on the project board—the governing body that oversaw development of the plan.

#### Scope of planning

The scope of the planning project included preparation of a health service plan for agencies providing healthcare in the geographic area of central west (using the Central West Hospital and Health Service boundaries as the geographical guide) with a 10 year horizon.

The scope of the plan included preparation of strategic directions and high level service objectives. More specifically, the scope included:

- review of previously completed planning documents
- identification, collation, analysis and presentation of a population and demographic profile; health status profile; health service profile; and current and projected health service activity
- prioritisation of identified health service needs in consultation with the alliance of agencies
- consultation with internal and external stakeholders to review current and identify future service delivery models
- consideration of integrated models of health service delivery across agencies and the health service continuum
- consideration of the impact of the national reform agenda on the delivery of health services including integration with other hospital, health services and health service providers.

#### Exclusions from the scope

Exclusions from the scope included:

- detailed planning for enabling services including workforce, finance, capital works and information and communication technology
- implementation planning
- evaluation of the plan.

## Trends in health services in Queensland

### Policy and legislative context

This section provides an overview of the policy, legislation and other frameworks and guidelines that help to define the responsibilities of healthcare providers delivering care in Queensland.

#### National strategic framework for rural and remote health

The *National strategic framework for rural and remote health* ‘promotes a national approach to policy, planning, design and delivery of health services in rural and remote communities’.<sup>13</sup>

This plan for central west Queensland broadly aligns with the five goals for rural and remote health stated in the framework: improved access to care; effective and sustainable service delivery; a skilled and well-supported health workforce; collaborative health service planning and partnerships; and strong leadership, governance, transparency and accountability.<sup>13</sup>

#### Blueprint for better healthcare in Queensland

The Blueprint for better healthcare in Queensland outlines structural and cultural improvements to establish Queensland as a leader in Australian healthcare.

The blueprint focuses on four principal themes: health services focused on patients and people; empowering the community and our health workforce; providing Queenslanders with value in health services; and investing, innovating and planning for the future.<sup>14</sup>

From a health service planning perspective, the blueprint states:

There will be new mechanisms for Hospital and Health Services, the community, the private sector and the health workforce to inform and gain access to the planning process.

Individual Hospital and Health Services are expected to work together in the interest of all Queenslanders. This is especially important when certain services are not available in the local community or where access to specialised services is limited to the larger urban centres.<sup>14</sup>

#### Better health for the bush

*Better health for the bush* is a policy statement building on the blueprint for health services in Queensland. It defines service capability standards for rural and remote communities; details investments being made in health facilities, workforce recruitment and retention and technology strategies; and explores how the concepts of service coordination and collaboration can enhance healthcare and health outcomes.<sup>15</sup>

*Better health for the bush* puts forward a strong case for collaborative effort across health agencies that operate in rural and remote communities; a theme that this current plan for central west services has adopted as a central vision for the future of the region.

#### Queensland rural and remote health service framework

The *Queensland rural and remote health service framework* has been prepared as a guide to assist Hospital and Health Services—in partnership with communities and other health service providers—to undertake rigorous health service planning in rural and remote communities.<sup>16</sup>

This framework aligns with the intent of the *Blueprint for better healthcare in Queensland* and *Better health for the bush* as it aims to improve access to sustainable health services for residents of small rural or remote communities.<sup>16</sup>

A key feature of the framework is the use of consistent criteria and terminology to classify rural and remote hospital and health facilities as a district hospital, rural hospital, community hospital, community clinic or multi-purpose health service.<sup>16</sup>

#### Clinical services capability framework

Health services must be capable of sustaining high quality clinical care that continues to meet (or exceed) required minimum standards over time. In Queensland, health services are planned and delivered in line with the *Clinical services capability framework for public and licensed private health facilities*.<sup>17</sup>

This framework provides minimum service requirements for health services, support services, staffing and safety standards in public and licensed private health facilities to ensure safe and appropriately supported clinical services.<sup>5, 17</sup>

The framework contains six levels of service capability, with lower levels indicating lower complexity of patient care and higher levels indicating higher complexity of patient care.<sup>17</sup>

### Practice context

The practice of healthcare can be conceptualised in terms of a continuum that comprises six stages of health need. The health continuum promotes integration of health service delivery and continuity of healthcare—across health service providers and across levels/types of individual health need.

Health services in Queensland are provided across the health continuum at the following stages (noting the continuum is not representative of a linear process—it is intended to represent stages of health need for people which may arise over time and at various stages of life and disability):

- **well population**—people who are generally healthy and able to live independent lives
- **at-risk population**—people with a probability of an adverse health outcome, or a factor that raises this probability
- **early identification and intervention**—people experiencing the early effects of ill health and who, without intervention, will progress to having acute or chronic consequences from their condition
- **acute consequences and conditions**—people that require treatment
- **chronic consequences and conditions**—people with conditions that are persistent and long lasting and/or leave residual disability
- **end of life**—people with fatal conditions and those who are dying.<sup>5</sup>

The various health agencies practicing healthcare in Queensland provide a broad range of services across this health continuum to meet health need. They include the following key service areas:

- **Prevention, promotion and protection** services aim to prevent illness and injury, actively promote and protect health and reduce the health gap between the most and the least advantaged in the community. Examples of these types of service include cancer screening services, immunisation clinics, prevention and control of communicable diseases and sexual health services.
- **Primary healthcare** services address health problems or established risk factors and provide curative, health promotion, preventative and rehabilitative services. Primary healthcare services may also include early detection and intervention services and risk factor management programs.
- **Ambulatory care** services including emergency medical services, oral health services, public outpatient services including pre-admission, post-acute and other specialist, allied health, nursing and ancillary services.
- **Acute care** services for people experiencing an exacerbation of an existing health condition or who may be experiencing the onset of a new illness or injury requiring hospitalisation or specialist services. Acute care services include medical, surgical, paediatrics and maternity/obstetric services.
- **Sub-acute care** services include rehabilitation, palliative care, and residential services for young people with physical and intellectual disabilities. They also include extended care services that focus on maintaining a person's health and current functional status.
- **Mental health** services span the health continuum through the provision of alcohol, tobacco and other drug services, mental health promotion and prevention activities (including suicide prevention), acute services and extended treatment services.
- **Aged care** services, including assessment and treatment/management of acute and chronic conditions and consequences.



## Understanding the health services of the region

There are several agencies engaged in direct health service provision in central west, many of which are part of the alliance involved in developing this plan. They include (but are not limited to) Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local, Central West Hospital and Health Service, general practices, Queensland Ambulance Service—Central West LASN and Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section).

There is one district hub in the region—Longreach Hospital—as well as four hospitals, 10 primary healthcare centres and community clinics, six general practices, 15 ambulance services and numerous mobile/visiting services throughout the region.

### Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local

The main function of Medicare Locals is to coordinate and deliver health services including after-hours general practice services, immunisation, mental health support, targeted and tailored services for those in need, and eHealth.<sup>18</sup>

Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local provides a number of direct services including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, allied health, visiting general and other medical practitioner services. These services are mainly provided in the key service areas of prevention, promotion and protection and primary healthcare. The agency also represents some of the privately practising general practice services in the region (see section below on general practice).

### Central West Hospital and Health Service

Public sector health services in Queensland are provided through Hospital and Health Services, which are statutory bodies governed by a Hospital and Health Board.<sup>19</sup>

The main function of Hospital and Health Services is to deliver hospital services, other health services, teaching and research functions.<sup>19</sup> This includes acute care services, sub-acute care services and ambulatory care services (such as emergency care).

Central West Hospital and Health Service delivers services in each of the key service areas above and in prevention, promotion and protection and primary healthcare. Services are delivered through four facilities providing higher levels of healthcare (in Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall and Winton) and a network of smaller primary healthcare centres and community clinics.

### General practice services

The general practices in the region consist of two practices in Longreach, and one practice in each of Alpha, Barcaldine, Blackall and Winton.

The general practitioners operating these practices provide a broad range of services including disease prevention, primary healthcare, minor injury treatment, chronic disease management and complex care. As such, the services are mainly provided in the key service areas of prevention, promotion and protection and primary healthcare.

Most practices operate Monday to Friday, with some operating a Saturday service too. There is a mix of billing practices across these services.



Senior Medical Officers and General Practice support staff, Longreach



Patient using the telehealth facility at Barcaldine Hospital.

Images © Rutherford

### Queensland Ambulance Service—Central West LASN

The main function of the Queensland Ambulance Service is:

to provide timely and quality ambulance services which meet the needs of the community by providing pre-hospital ambulance response services, emergency and routine pre-hospital patient care and transport services, co-ordination of aero medical services, inter-facility ambulance transport, planning and coordination of multi-casualty incidents and disasters, and casualty room services.<sup>20</sup>

The ambulance service in central west consists of 15 services: five are permanent Queensland Ambulance Service—Central West LASN stations and the remainder are ambulances based at hospitals or primary healthcare centres and staffed by health service providers and volunteers from Central West Hospital and Health Service and Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local. The services are provided mainly in the key service area of ambulatory care (emergency care).

### Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section)

The Royal Flying Doctor Service uses transport and communication technologies to provide health services to rural and remote residents in Australia, with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of those who live, work and travel in these parts of the country.<sup>21</sup>

The main function of Royal Flying Doctor Service is ‘to provide emergency and primary healthcare services, as well as health related support activities such as education, training, and directing health professionals and consumers of our services to good quality health information’.<sup>21</sup>

In central west, the agency provides ambulatory care including patient evacuation and retrieval, as well as a substantial number of other health services that cover the key service areas of prevention, promotion and protection; primary healthcare; and mental health.

These other services include visiting general and other medical practitioner services provided to communities with no on-site doctor or health staff, and clinics provided on regular basis at primary healthcare centres.

### Other services

Other agencies providing services in the region are mainly involved in the provision of aged care services. They include Barcoo Living—based in Blackall—and Pioneer Village (RSL Care) and Anglicare—both based in Longreach.

In addition to the services provided by those working and residing in the region, there are a number of visiting practitioners providing services on a regular basis in Longreach and in other centres in the region.

These practitioners—consisting mainly of medical specialists as well as nursing staff with particular expertise in a clinical area—are drawn from three main provider groups: the public sector (i.e. from another Hospital and Health Service); the private sector (i.e. privately practising specialists); and Medicare Local visiting specialists.



Images © Admic Photography

## Understanding the population of the region

This section provides further detail on the population, health status and health service use of residents of the central west region. Findings from this research were used to support stakeholder consultations and to inform development of the health service plan.

### Geographic profile

- The region covers an area of 382,800 square kilometres—22 per cent of the land mass of Queensland.<sup>1</sup>
- It comprises 7 local government areas and 12 statistical local areas, all of which have a remoteness area classification of ‘very remote’.<sup>2</sup>
- The distances and travel times between communities are significant and highlight the degree of remoteness of the region and the issues with delivering healthcare to residents in the region.
- Large areas within the region also have limited or no mobile phone and emergency services radio coverage. This can severely limit access to some health services.

### Population profile

#### Current population

- The estimated resident population of the region is 12,391 people, representing 0.3 per cent of the total population of Queensland.<sup>3</sup>
- The estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is 999 people—or 8 per cent of the total population (compared with the Queensland average of 3.7 per cent).<sup>3</sup>
- The region is classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, with 5 of the 12 statistical local areas in the region considered among the most disadvantaged areas in the nation.<sup>3</sup>
- The region attracts significant numbers of tourists in the period April–September (particularly ‘grey nomads’—retired older persons) as well as visitors conducting business. In 2013, visitors to the outback region of Queensland (which includes central west) numbered 378,000 people.<sup>4</sup>

#### Projected population

- From 2011–2026, population growth is projected to be in a negative direction—a 2 per cent decrease or 272 fewer people (compared with 34 per cent growth for all of Queensland). This equates to 18 fewer people per annum living in the region.<sup>22</sup>
- Projected population changes are not even across the region—some communities are likely to experience some small population growth, while many others will experience zero or negative growth.<sup>22</sup>

### Health profile

#### Life expectancy and quality of life

- Life expectancy at birth for residents is 79.2 years (two years lower than the Queensland average) and health adjusted life expectancy (which takes into account time living in ill-health and/or disability) is 70.3 years (three years lower than the Queensland average).<sup>7</sup>
- This means that residents typically live almost two years less than their Queensland counterparts and spend 10 years of their life in ill health and/or disability. Causes that contribute most to the deficit in expected years of life are injuries and heart disease.<sup>7</sup>
- Adult residents report similarly good levels of health to other Queenslanders. Residents report higher levels of overall satisfaction with health and higher levels of selected sun safety behaviours; as well as higher levels of daily smoking compared to figures for all of Queensland.<sup>6</sup>

### Burden of disease and injury

- Burden of disease and injury quantifies health loss due to disease and injury that remains after the efforts of the health system to address the disease/injury.<sup>23</sup>
- It varies significantly across Queensland, and is typically much higher in remote areas and areas of significant socioeconomic disadvantage (such as central west).<sup>23</sup>
- In one year, 1,900 years of healthy life are lost in central west due to disability or premature death—a rate 21 per cent higher than the rate for all of Queensland.<sup>7</sup>

### Hospitalisations

- There is an average of 4,745 hospitalisations per year of residents—which is a rate of 37,763 per 100,000 population (approximately equal to the rate for all of Queensland).<sup>8</sup>
- Leading causes of hospitalisation of residents include injury and poisoning, diseases of the digestive system (such as stomach and intestinal disease) and diseases of the respiratory system (such as influenza and pneumonia).<sup>8</sup>
- In one year, there are 591 potentially preventable hospitalisations of residents—equating to 13 per cent of all hospitalisations.<sup>9</sup>

### Deaths

- On average, 94 residents die each year—a death rate of 728 deaths per 100,000 population (significantly higher than the rate for all of Queensland).<sup>10</sup>
- Leading causes of death include heart diseases (e.g. heart attack), cerebrovascular diseases (e.g. stroke), lung cancer, diabetes and chronic lower respiratory diseases (e.g. bronchitis).<sup>10</sup>
- On average, 28 deaths per annum (30 per cent of all deaths) are considered avoidable—with an avoidable death rate of 226 per 100,000 population (considerably higher than the rate for all of Queensland).<sup>11</sup>

### Selected populations and conditions

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health: notable differences in health status include the following:
  - ~ Health adjusted life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is 55.2 years—16 years lower than non-Indigenous residents in the region.<sup>7</sup>
  - ~ Compared with non-Indigenous Queenslanders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in central west are much more likely to be admitted for a potentially preventable hospitalisation; be discharged against medical advice; have a baby of low birth weight; and smoke during pregnancy.<sup>24</sup>
- Infant and child health: most measures of health mirrored the trends for Queensland, with notable exceptions including the following:
  - ~ Recent child immunisation rates meet or surpass Queensland rates; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have one of the highest immunisation rates in Australia.<sup>25, 26</sup>
  - ~ The proportion of babies born requiring admission to a special care/neonatal intensive care nursery (6 per cent) is significantly lower than the proportion for all of Queensland (11 per cent).<sup>27</sup>
- Cancers: while the incidence of invasive cancers is almost identical for central west and all Queensland residents, cancer mortality for central west is significantly higher than the Queensland average. One reason for this may be the limited access to services in remote areas for timely screening, diagnosis and treatment.<sup>12</sup>

## Health service use

### Current use

- Ambulance use: of the 15 communities with an ambulance service, 5 communities had an increase in emergency call outs in recent years—these were Alpha, Blackall, Longreach, Muttaborra and Winton.<sup>28</sup>
- Evacuation and retrievals: there has been an average 478 retrievals per year in recent years; with a six per cent increase in the number of transfers. Back transfers to central west number approximately 50 per year—of which half are for orthopaedics or rehabilitation purposes.<sup>29</sup>
- Emergency department use: most care provided is for ‘general practice-type’ services (that is, non-critical and non-urgent care). Emergency department use has remained stable in recent years, with some increases noted for Barcaldine and Blackall only.<sup>30, 31</sup>
- Hospital use (general): overall service ‘demand’ (as an indicator of the community’s *expressed need* for hospital care) has decreased 10 per cent in recent years. Despite this overall trend, some increases in demand were noted for:
  - ~ residents of Barcaldine and surrounds (37 per cent)
  - ~ treatment of heart disease, nervous system disease, maternity/ obstetric services and immune system/infectious disease
  - ~ overnight care for maternity/obstetric services (27 per cent).<sup>30, 31</sup>
- Hospital use (outpatient): there has been a change in how care is delivered in recent years, with an overall increase of 52 per cent in this type of care across the region. The most substantial increases occurred in Alpha, Aramac, Boulia and Muttaborra.<sup>30, 31</sup>
- Aged care: the current number of aged care places in the region (158) exceeds the current Commonwealth Department of Health benchmark for aged care place requirements (130).<sup>32</sup> However, current distribution of places is uneven across the region (with a particular deficit in the Barcaldine area) and current places may not be sufficient to meet projected future need.

Data on the current use of other types of health services in the region is limited or not available, and therefore cannot be included in the plan.

Data on the current use of services by the visiting (non-resident) population is also limited. The only data available is for hospital inpatient use—where non-residents account for approximately 10 per cent of hospital admissions in the region.<sup>30</sup>

### Projected use

Part of this plan involves expanding the selection of medical and surgical services available in the region (see service direction 3).

To do this would require the ‘reverse flow’ of some surgical procedures so that (in future) they are performed in the region rather than outside it.

It would also require expanding the selection of medical and minor surgical procedures (currently performed at Longreach only) at the health facilities in Barcaldine, Blackall and Winton.

The Queensland Department of Health has an endorsed methodology—the acute inpatient modelling tool—to project hospital inpatient activity based on historical and current service use.

However, current volumes of the potential ‘reverse flow’ procedures are too small to be able to calculate future activity with reliability. Current volumes of the medical and minor surgical procedures that could be performed in the other centres cannot be projected using the tool as those procedures do not require admission to hospital.

## Stakeholder consultation

Consultation with stakeholders involved an extensive process of engaging community members, health service providers and elected officials of local government.

A total of 18 events were conducted over a three week period and held across 13 communities. Events were held in Alpha, Aramac, Barcaldine, Bedourie, Birdsville, Blackall, Jundah, Longreach, Muttaborra, Stonehenge, Tambo, Windorah and Winton.



In addition, 32 stakeholders completed a written survey (made available at the events and in some cases distributed to community members after events were held) and a further 47 stakeholders completed an online version of the same survey.

Table 1 provides a summary of the major themes that emerged from across these events and the survey feedback. Many of the themes from these events also align closely with the themes that emerged from other consultation events held in the region in recent years—notably the events that informed the Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local comprehensive needs assessment.

**Table 1: Stakeholder consultation summary**

System issues identified	Priority health needs identified	Service-specific issues identified
Collaboration of stakeholders to better deliver services to communities, including improving intra- and inter-agency communication.	Chronic disease issues of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, sleep apnoea and chronic disease related to ageing.	Service provision close to home to reduce travel and improve access— increase selected services in Longreach and via remote access.
Organisation, coordination and communication related to delivery of visiting services including medical, allied health and other services.	Mental health—management of acute episodes, including prevention through capacity building at community level (see below) starting in schools.	Increases in frequency of visits and continuity of health service providers—particularly for medical staff and allied health service providers.
Lack of an organised community engagement process and issues related to the management and running of existing local health groups.	Mental health capacity building to manage crises such as drought etc. Mental health events should not labelled as such (to avoid stigma).	Increase chronic disease role of nursing and allied health staff. Provide support and education for health service providers to undertake this.
Poor media information about visiting service provision, including screening services.	Ageing population including improving in-home care— community nursing, transition to higher care with increasing support as dependency increases.	Programs needed for specific groups/conditions such as men's health, healthy lifestyle programs and chronic disease management.
Lack of knowledge and information sharing about the patient travel subsidy scheme both by community and medical staff.	Responses to emergencies and injuries, including ways to make best use of all health staff and their skills for local emergency responses.	Women's health services—including maternity services—closer to home, coordinated from Longreach.
Reduce travel to access services both within and outside region. Access outside region needs to take account of transport availability.		Range of allied health services needed to provide care in smaller, outlying communities—particularly physiotherapy, audiology and optometry.
Improve referral and discharge mechanisms inter and intra region.		Need improved access to allied health through better organisation (such as teams of service providers), use of telehealth and allied health assistants.
Health literacy and education— understanding of health issues and what is / is not a health service.		Increase dental visits to communities—twice a year.
		Support services in the region such as better access to medical imaging equipment and pharmacy services— particularly regular filling of scripts.
		Need increased access to aged care assessment.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Avoidable deaths</b>	Comprises those causes of death that are potentially avoidable at the present time, given available knowledge about social and economic policy impacts and health behaviours.
<b>Burden of disease</b>	Used to assess and compare the relative impact of different diseases and injuries on populations. It quantifies health loss due to disease and injury that remains after treatment, rehabilitation or prevention efforts of the health system and society generally.
<b>Chronic disease</b>	Diseases of long duration and generally slow progression. In this plan, chronic disease refers to all non-communicable disease and excludes injuries.
<b>Communicable disease</b>	Includes vaccine preventable diseases, sexually transmissible diseases, diseases acquired from animals, vector borne diseases, foodborne and waterborne infections, and tuberculosis.
<b>Death rate</b>	The number of deaths per 100,000 estimated resident population on the year the death was registered. Also known as mortality rate (see below).
<b>Deaths</b>	Any death which occurs in or en route to Australia and is registered with a state or territory Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.
<b>Disability</b>	Temporary or long-term reduction of a person's capacity or function.
<b>Health adjusted life expectancy</b>	Estimate of the average years of equivalent 'healthy' life that a person can expect to live at various ages. Related to life expectancy (see below).
<b>Health literacy</b>	The ability to understand and interpret health-related information. People with higher levels of health literacy are better able to participate in and make decisions about their healthcare. People with lower levels of health literacy are more likely to not attend necessary medical tests, end up in emergency departments more often, and have a harder time managing conditions.
<b>Health continuum</b>	A conceptualisation of health need, using a continuum comprising six stages. The continuum is not a linear process—rather it is intended to represent stages of health need for people which may arise over time and at various stages of life and disability.
<b>Health service continuum</b>	Health agencies and health service providers can provide a broad range of services to meet health need. Key service areas on the health service continuum include prevention, promotion and protection; primary healthcare; ambulatory care; acute care; sub-acute care; mental health; and aged care services.
<b>Health service need</b>	The gap between what services are currently provided to a given population and what will be required in the future to improve the health status of a community (and avoid a decline).
<b>Health service planning</b>	Aims to improve health service delivery and/or system performance to better meet the health need of a population. It encompasses the process of aligning existing health service delivery arrangements with changing patterns of need.
<b>Hospitalisations</b>	Total numbers of separations in all hospitals that provide acute care services. A separation is an episode of care which can be a total hospital stay (from admission to discharge, transfer or death) or portion of a hospital stay ending in a change of status.
<b>Incidence</b>	The number of new cases/occurrences of a disease or condition in a given time period.
<b>Inpatient</b>	A patient who undergoes a formal admission process to receive treatment and/or care from a hospital. Care may occur in a hospital or in the home. Also referred to as an 'admitted patient'.
<b>Immunisation</b>	Immunisation coverage data are provided for children considered fully immunised at 12, 24 and 60 months of age. The term 'fully immunised' represents a subset of the full National Immunisation Program Schedule of vaccines.
<b>Life expectancy</b>	Average number of additional years a person of a given age and sex might expect to live if the age specific death rates of the given period continue throughout his/her life time.
<b>Local government area</b>	A spatial unit which represents the whole geographical area of responsibility of an incorporated local government council or an Aboriginal or Island council.

Term	Definition
<b>Modifiable lifestyle factors</b>	Factors that have been shown to influence the risk of various chronic diseases, and are related to a chosen lifestyle or set of health behaviours. Examples include poor diet, low physical activity levels, sedentary behaviour, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and many others.
<b>Mortality rate</b>	Another term for death rate.
<b>Outpatient</b>	A person who receives care at a hospital but does not undergo a formal admission process.
<b>Patient flow</b>	Describes where residents of a particular geographical area access health services. Outflow refers to residents who go to facilities outside the region to receive services. Inflow refers to people who live outside the region but who receive services at facilities within the region.
<b>Potentially preventable hospitalisations</b>	Conditions where hospitalisation is believed to be avoidable through provision of timely and adequate non-hospital care. These are classified into three broad categories: vaccine preventable, acute conditions and chronic conditions.
<b>Premature death</b>	A death that occurs before the age of 75 years.
<b>Psychosocial stressors</b>	Stressful life events that can impact on health and lead to the onset of symptoms of mental illness. Stressors include problems with family; the social environment; education; work; housing; finances; access to healthcare; the legal system; and other environmental problems (such as exposure to natural disasters or violence).
<b>Qualitative data</b>	Consists of the opinion, wisdom, or advice proffered by individuals or groups. Though advice may be biased, when enough people are consulted a comprehensive view usually emerges.
<b>Quantitative data</b>	Includes any information that can be measured or identified numerically.
<b>Rates</b>	The frequency of the occurrence of an event or phenomenon in a defined population in a specified period of time.
<b>Remoteness area classifications</b>	The Australian Statistical Geography Standard divides each state and territory into several regions on the basis of their relative access to services. The remoteness area categories are defined in terms of the physical distance of a location from the nearest urban centre (access to goods and services) based on population size.
<b>Reverse flow</b>	A type of patient flow, where services or service activity are expected to return to or leave a hospital or region.
<b>Rural generalist model</b>	A service model that employs medical officers who have completed the rural generalist pathway. The pathway provides junior doctors with a supported mechanism to pursue a career in rural generalist medicine. Those who complete the pathway obtain advanced skills in one of several priority skills areas (such as surgery, anaesthetics or obstetrics).
<b>Service demand</b>	The health service activity that a catchment population can generate—that is, the amount of activity that a defined population uses regardless of where it is accessed.
<b>Statistical local area</b>	Local government areas or part thereof. Statistical local areas are also defined for unincorporated areas, those areas for which local government areas are not defined. They therefore cover the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps.
<b>Transitional care</b>	The coordination and continuity of healthcare as patients transfer between different locations or different levels of care within the same location.



Sunset outside Tambo

Image courtesy of Tourism Queensland © Peter Lik

## Acknowledgments

The alliance of agencies involved in developing this plan would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following individuals and agencies that made significant contributions to the plan:

- members of the public who participated in consultation events and submitted responses to the consultation survey
- health service providers who similarly participated in consultation events and submitted responses to the consultation survey
- Michel Lok, Chief Executive of the Central West Hospital and Health Service, for providing project sponsorship
- individual members and contributors to the planning project board (representing the five alliance agencies) including:
  - ~ Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local: Evelyn Edwards, Phil Barwick, Sandra Moore and Sue Haines
  - ~ Central Western Queensland RAPAD: Cr Rob Chandler
  - ~ Central West Hospital and Health Service: Ed Warren and Michel Lok
  - ~ Queensland Ambulance Service—Central West LASN: Robbie Medlin
  - ~ Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section): Jennifer Craig and Stephanie De La Rue
- Queensland Department of Health for their involvement in managing the planning project and associated document preparations.

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RAPAD EMPLOYMENT SERVICES  
QUEENSLAND

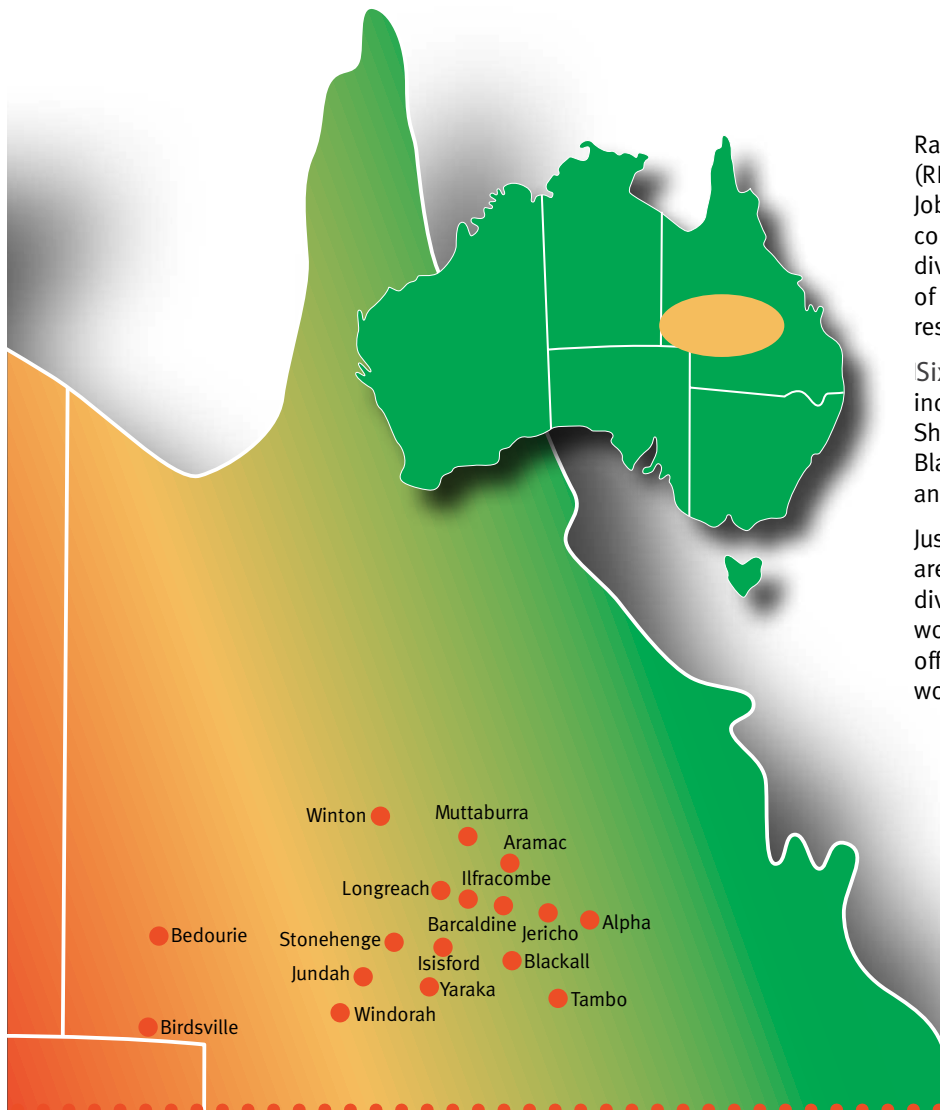


## 2014 ANNUAL REVIEW





## Our Region



Rapad Employment Services Queensland (RESQ) provides one of 60 national Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) contracts, covering one of the most vast and diverse of the geographic regions with an area of almost 400,000km<sup>2</sup> and just under 12,000 residents from a variety of backgrounds.

Six Regional Councils support the organisation including Longreach Regional Council, Winton Shire Council, Barcaldine Regional Council, Blackall Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council and Diamantina Shire Council.

Just ten staff (five permanent and five casual) are employed to cover this huge region and its diverse employment and training needs. They worked hard to service their communities, offering programs in 16 communities, and worked with 265 job seekers in the year.

Photography throughout this review generously supplied by Outback Pics Longreach [www.outbackpics.com.au](http://www.outbackpics.com.au)



## Rapad Employment Services Queensland Staff



## Chairman's Message



**Mr Rob Chandler**  
**Mayor of Barcaldine, Chairman of RAPAD and RESQ.**

The Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) in Longreach, in a joint venture with Employment Services Queensland (ESQ), was tasked in 2013 with establishing a successful program to service the Australian Government's Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) across Central West Queensland.

I am pleased to report RAPAD Employment Services Queensland (RESQ) came alive as the carrier of the RJCP and is effectively meeting the needs of our 15 communities within just one year of operation. For practical reasons Longreach is our operational hub. It's all about improved school attendance, real jobs and safer communities for both indigenous and non-indigenous people of the Central West. The Board is proud to lead our highly skilled staff, with General Manager Tony Rayner providing the strategic link between our direction and the implementation of RESQ programs and activities.

Our first year of operation has seen us establish a strong well-staffed and well-managed organisation. We have good personnel, financial management and governance. Our newly appointed chartered accountants gave RESQ a clean audit result which reinforces the Board's confidence in the organisation.

As testament to our sound management and good outcomes, we have been continually invited to participate in other programs that aim to grow employment in our communities. I am very proud to see our weed eradication program showing potential to provide strong outcomes for communities, landholders and the environment, across the entire Lake Eyre Basin.

As a Board it is important that we help facilitate solid community programs through healthy partnerships. In 2014 and 2015 we will continue to advocate for consistent long term solutions for training and employment across the Central West and persistently try and educate decision makers on our challenges and needs.



**David Arnold**

## Board Profiles

**David Arnold**  
**General Manager, Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD)**

With over 10 years as General Manager at RAPAD, David Arnold brings a wealth of experience in regional development, stakeholder engagement and project management. A well-known Longreach resident, he expands his service to the Central West through his involvement on the RESQ Board.



**Chris Martin**

**Chris Martin**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Job Connections (IJC)**

Chris Martin has worked in Indigenous service provision across the Northern Territory and regional Queensland for the past 30 years. He is passionate about Indigenous empowerment and for the past six years has led IJC (an all-indigenous led organisation) toward financial and operational independence. IJC's involvement in establishing RESQ is another of those steps for his stakeholders.



**Chris Hamilton**

**Chris Hamilton,**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Employment Services Queensland (ESQ)**

An active member of Legacy and ex-serviceman with past operational deployments, Chris Hamilton has extensive skills in governance and strategy, team management, youth engagement, training and employment. He brings these skills with the further experience of leading a major and successful Job Services Australia (JSA) contract provider, ESQ, for the past four years.

## General Manager's Message



RAPAD Employment Services Queensland (RESQ) has had a heartening response since our formation in July 2013. In just twelve months engagement of our communities, business people, and Councils has been encouraging.

Job Seeker numbers across the Central West Region grew steadily to 200 mid-year and towards the end of the financial Year we were servicing 265 job seekers.

We have invested significant time and resources in our first twelve months building networks and engaging with employers and job seekers to earn their trust.

The core objectives of the Federal Government's Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) - creating real jobs, improving school attendance and making safer communities - have been activated through RESQ's first twelve months even with challenging social and economic times.

The ongoing drought is having significant impact on regional communities with a decline in real communities and making employment opportunities scarce across all sectors. Entry level jobs are the first to disappear and we have witnessed a very tight employment market as businesses contract and downsize to ride out this poor business period.

With a huge variety of clients from across a huge geographic area including small regional and rural towns under our care, RESQ's team has made sure to tailor care and support for each group to suit their economic, cultural and lifestyle circumstances.

We have successfully placed job seekers in the Retail, Hospitality, Civil Construction, Age Care, Child Care and Agricultural sectors. These placements resulted from developing appropriate career pathways and providing skilling and training aligned to Individual job seeker requirements as well as providing ongoing mentoring and post placement support for job seekers.

The commitment of our team to bring projects to fruition and the enthusiasm of participants to improve their lives, when an opportunity is presented, is impressive.

We have developed a very strong partnership with RAPAD Skilling to ensure that job seekers throughout the Central West Region have ready access to training and skilling delivered at local community level.

The RESQ team have developed and activated a diverse range of Community Projects throughout the Central West. Some big, like the Drought and Weed Project, and others small, like the Birdsville Gazebo and Leatherwork Group. But all delivering outcomes for participants and their communities. You can read about some of these projects in this Annual Review.

Our leadership team will continue in 2015 to represent our region to Government representatives toward finding long term solutions for our community's employment needs. Stable funding and tenure would ensure the success of our employment and training programs. This stability would allow RESQ to invest in longer term projects between job seekers and employers with productive outcomes for the region's future.

**Mr Tony Rayner,**

**General Manager, RAPAD Employment Services Queensland (RESQ)**



## What to do when your passion is fashion

Young job seeker Fiona Bebb came back to Longreach with time on her hands. She wanted to work in events and fashion, but there is not a lot of opportunity for this passion in the country.

Fiona and her mum came in to see RESQ Employment Consultant Nikki Gay, looking for jobs, courses, anything that would help Fiona find a way to get into the 'game'.

Nikki sat down with Fiona and they worked through what she wanted to achieve.

"Nikki was great," Fiona enthused. "I'd never have found the course I've enrolled in or got the work experience."

"I'm doing my Certificate III in Event Management at TNQ TAFE remotely and I've been really lucky to work on two fashion events locally - the Lizzy Wagner Etiquette Course and the Way Out West Fashion Quest," Fiona explained.

"These events were fantastic. I got to help with co-ordinating the models and outfits, worked backstage to keep everything running smoothly and got lots of fashion tips too."

And it's let me practise what I'm learning at TAFE in the real world."

Nikki spoke with Irvine's Outfitters about possible work and Fiona was lucky enough to win a job in their shop.



Here she sells fashion and also does the merchandising and dresses the windows. All good skills when you are learning the events and fashion industries.

"I'm really busy now with my study and working. Nikki is mentoring me to make sure I stay on track. Studying is harder remotely and I appreciate her keeping me focussed," Fiona said.

"I've got a long way to go but I'd love to land a job in Brisbane down the track."



## Blackall Community Mural not for Galahs

RESQ job seekers joined two professional artists, community volunteers and Blackall State School students to transform the western wall of the school's undercover sports area into a colourful mural featuring local plants and animals.

Project partner and manager, Louise Campbell of Red Ridge Interior Qld said the project brought together highly skilled artists with community members and job seekers on a nine day residency.

She explained, "It was great to see people thrive as they got involved in this art and community project".

"The wall was accessible by everyone so lots of people came down from the school and town to see the progress each day. Participants were amazed at the community interest in what they were doing", she said.

"It's fantastic how some appreciation by others can change your outlook."

The job seekers got involved in a variety of activities. They assisted with the daily set up and clean up, but also in helping with the initial mural design, painting on the wall and helping create the 3-D cut-outs.



Louise said the job seekers gained skills in organisation, paint preparation and clean up, and how to work on large space murals/painting.

"Participating as part of a team they started to understand that they had value in a work environment and this gave them confidence toward seeking more work when they returned home", she explained.

"So Blackall got a new permanent public art work, the school got protection from the hot western sun, and our job seekers took home job skills and all important confidence in themselves."

"Our thanks to RESQ for getting involved."

## Staff

### Clinton Hall

Clinton Hall speaks softly but with firm undertones “I’ve been working around the bush all my life and there’s nothing these blokes can do or say, that I haven’t seen or heard before.”

“Most of them have had a hard row to hoe early on, but in the end you’ve got to put yesterday behind you and start today with the future in mind.”

“And I’m really proud that most of the blokes that I keep an eye on, get it after a while and start taking advantage of what’s available to them working with RESQ and me”.

Clinton is one of the supervisor/mentors employed by Rapid Employment Services Queensland (RESQ). He grew up on cattle stations in the Northern Territory, with parents who came onto poorly performing stations and improved them through hard work in weed control, stock management and employing and training top people.

He took much from their work ethic and has been running his own rural contracting businesses since he was 18 himself. Clinton’s skills range from building yards and fences to creating and managing a seed distribution business, being one of Australia’s top live export pregnancy testers and speyers and even sitting on company Boards. But he is still as down to earth as that young boy on the station.

“It all comes down to belief in yourself – and if I believe in these guys then they start to believe in themselves”, he said.

“We get all sorts registering with RESQ - they may never have had a job, maybe they’ve had a series of jobs but not been able to keep one, people with long term health issues or a physical disability or maybe some major trauma has happened in their life...”



But the one thing they have in common is they don’t have the self-confidence to believe they are worth a job.”

“And in my mind everyone deserves self-worth.”

“RESQ doesn’t give up on anyone, unless they give up on themselves” Clinton said. “We have so many options to help people get back into mainstream life.”

“At the moment I’m working with a group of guys learning weed control, which is a great long term skill in the Central West. We’re learning about safe handling and storage of chemicals, weed identification, GPS and grid mapping and lots of other things.”

“But it’s so much bigger than that. We’re learning that each of us makes up and contributes to the team – and if one of us doesn’t show, it leaves everyone else more work to do. We’re learning about appropriate work behaviour and language. About planning what we want to do, and putting enough time aside for work first, and including our social life around work – rather than the other way around!”, he laughed.

“RESQ is there to help – we arrange work gear, tools and PPE; health referrals if needed; contacts for accommodation and transport – overcoming the barriers to get our clients back to work and back into productive lives.”

Clinton has been instrumental in turning around lives with his tough but fair attitude and warm sense of humour.

### Tanya Doran

RESQ colleague, Tanya Doran has been similarly successful.

A born carer, Tanya grew up with little to her advantage. A mum at an early age, she raised her two boys alone for 19 years, holding down a job and studying to improve herself at night.

Tanya earned her Bachelor of Learning Management in Early Childcare and began working in kindies and child care centres. She moved out to Longreach in 2010 with her new husband, following the work. With government cutbacks at one stage they found themselves without a job between them.

Tanya said “We weren’t going to let that defeat us, we chased and chased and would do anything to keep our independence”.

“I remember hubby was working at the pub, and I was working behind the counter of a bakery and standing there one day I thought – I’m a qualified teacher what am I doing here? But I already knew the answer – keeping food on the table and the family together.”

Tanya is a giver, she wants to make a difference.

She explained, “When RESQ started up I knew that their outreach program had my name on it. I love every minute as an employment consultant.”



## Leatherwork project goes commercial

It started as a 'Men's Shed' activity in Blackall and now the Leatherwork Group has become so popular it has become independent and expanded to Birdsville as well.

A group of long-term unemployed men got together to gain some confidence, practice their social communication and develop new habits toward time management and work routines.

The opportunity to create leather products in a group also created a safe environment for participants to share stories and for mentors to help discuss various barriers that may be interfering with gaining a job.

Along the way they have realised some trade skills, and created a range of leather work commercially in demand.

As their leatherworking skills developed the men approached Louise Campbell from Red Ridge Interior to help them approach Blackall Shire Council and North Queensland Cowboys NRL to purchase handworked leather key rings. They won a contract from each of them!

Now they are looking for new challenges and are practising creating whips and hat bands with fine detail and workmanship.

Recently the group have been taking their work to three different markets and will take commissions for special orders.



"I know what it feels like to be unemployed and just how hard getting through each day can be. If I can co-ordinate programs that give people structure and habits for healthy choices, and skills and work readiness outcomes, then I've done a good thing."

"RESQ is so flexible and helpful, including in my small communities where job options are few. Whether it is Muttaborra or Jericho, Blackall or Winton we talk to each of our clients to identify what activities and skills will help them and then find ways to activate them to success", she said.



The latest plan is to start workshops to teach visitors to their communities how to make something special and unique that they can take home as a memento of their holiday.

Watching this group gain confidence and credibility in their communities and in the business sector is so rewarding for both the men themselves and their mentors.

They are creating real jobs through their own efforts that provide independence and a future.



"We've had great success working in partnership with other groups like Red Ridge Interior. One of our programs started out as a couple of men learning basic leather work skills and now we have two groups – Birdsville and Winton – with Winton producing key rings they have successfully sold in bulk orders. They are now developing a range of products like hat bands and whips."

"These are blokes who had no confidence, winning business credibility in their communities."

"These sort of results make it worth the commitment, the patience, all the K's each week. Brilliant!" she enthused.

## RESQ Drought and Weed Project

The biggest impact on our communities' future, the debilitating ongoing drought across the Central West, has provided RESQ job seekers with one of our most popular and successful training and employment programs.

The RESQ Drought and Weed Project is a partnership between RESQ, all our Regional Councils, Desert Channels Natural Resource Management Group, Longreach Pastoral College and rural landholders.

Four groups of job seekers actively participated in the program this year, seeing around 40 students learn skills that can provide ongoing employment locally, with some winning ongoing paid work on properties in the Barcaldine and Alpha area.

Project Manager Clinton Hall explained. "Job seekers complete two weeks of residential training and skilling at the Longreach Pastoral College. We encourage them to join in the residential program as it gives them additional time with their mentor away from home distractions to form new work habits."

"They have to commit to at least 20 hours a week in the program in a mixture of classroom, controlled environment and field work."

It's hot dusty work and takes a bit of commitment to stick with it, but the guys, and the girls, seem to understand what a great opportunity for a long term future these skills give them."

Some of the things we make sure they are safe and competent doing include handling and storage of

chemicals, weed identification, GPS and grid mapping," he explained.

"Knocking off a stand of Prickly Acacia, Parkinsonia or Rubber Vine - all nationally significant weeds - feels as good as a high score on your favourite X-Box game once you get your head into it."

Students are taught all the theory in the classroom and then practise the skills around the College in controlled environments.

Once teachers are confident they are safe and are confident with the basic skills, it's off to the long paddock, town common land parcels, graziers' properties and even National Parks, to help battle the weed infestations including locally problematic weeds such as rope and snake cactus.

Bill Chandler from Hillalong Station, Barcaldine - one of the project partners - believes weed control is a great long term skill in the Central West.

"Woody weeds are a major economic threat for graziers and well trained and disciplined teams of weed sprayers are a very effective means of controlling and eradicating weeds," Bill said.

"This in turn improves productivity and the long term sustainability of the land."

Bill has had various teams of job seekers undertaking both training and paid work on Hillalong Station and is very pleased with the results and efforts to date.





## Heavy vehicle ticket is a ticket to a job for life

When one end-loader costs upwards of \$300,000 to purchase and get operational, you have to be confident before you put a learner behind the wheel.

Managing Director of Suffren Moore Civil in Longreach, Richard Moore, is prepared to take that risk.

"How are they going to learn if I don't give them the opportunity", he said. "Living out here, the jobs are limited, but the good employees are few and far between too - they get stolen by the big towns on the coast."

"I've got to think about capacity building for the community, so I've got a pool of operators coming through. Council is looking for that too."

"One of my guys went back to RAPAD Training and did some upskilling. He came back a better operator."

"By giving these guys a break, I'm potentially giving them a future in the central west", Richard said.

"Keeping a family in town, spending their wages and contributing to the community through having their kids at school," he explained.

"I'm pleased to work with RESQ and RAPAD Training. I give these guys a break and hopefully they give back to me through becoming the next great employee."

"Any extra vehicle capacity we have, we give to the guys to practise", he said. "We do logged hours out at a private quarry so they are competent operators before they get their final hours on commercial jobs."



"You need 80 hours on a grader and 40 hours on a forklift to build the skills for a ticket".

"Everyone wants to drive the graders, but you have to earn the right to work those babies. It's no walk in the park - even if the cabs are air-conditioned these days", he chuckled.

"We have 5-6 men in a work crew and at any time we only allow 1-2 trainees, depending on their skill level. We look forward to continuing our partnership with RESQ and helping the students achieve their heavy vehicle operations licences".



## Get all the help you can

Local lady Kayla Smith came home to Longreach after an extended period away for health reasons and had to start again finding a job.

"I was determined to get work and knocked on doors as soon as I got home," she said.

I picked up some casual work at the local caravan park cleaning but I kept looking."

Kayla took a very proactive approach and registered as a job seeker straight away.

"If you're looking for work, it's definitely worth signing up with RESQ - they keep an eye out for you while you're looking," Kayla explained.

"They also helped me get enrolled in a Certificate II Hospitality and while I was studying I did a work placement and applied for the receptionist job at Longreach Motor Inn."

All my efforts came together and I got the job!"

Kayla loves her work at Longreach Motor Inn and they love her too.



Co-Owner Damien Kennedy said Kayla is a very important part of the team.

She has been rewarded for her commitment already, being promoted to Onsite Manager.

"The owners at the Longreach Motor Inn are really nice people, really helpful and encouraging."

"I'd encourage anyone looking for a job to get registered as a job seeker - and make sure everyone knows that you're looking, and what you're looking for - you can never have too much help."



## Quiet Achievers

We tend to think of job seekers reading ads, writing applications and attending interviews. But lots of effort goes in behind the scenes before RESQ's clients get to this stage.

Many of our clients have had difficult times in their lives and they have often missed out on things that the rest of us think just 'happen'.

Job seeker Luke Jones told how he didn't realise how complicated just surviving in town would become without being able to read things easily.

"I mucked around a bit at school. I wasn't happy and life wasn't great back then. You know - we think we'll always be able catch up later, but it gets harder as you get older."

"Everything is on a form or on a computer. I really wanted to be able to understand some court documents and I want to read them for myself", he explained.

"I'd registered for work with RESQ and they mentioned they had some literacy support classes. I knew the teacher Brendon from around town, so I thought I'd let him have a go."

"The first time we worked together I felt comfortable, so I've kept coming back."

Teacher Brendon Thorpe provides one-on-one tutoring for literacy with RESQ registered job seekers to help them catch up.

"I was really impressed with Luke's commitment. He's been coming in a couple of times a week and has picked up his reading really well."



"We do exercises and read the paper together - lots of sport results - it's got to be interesting. When you can read well you don't even realise you're doing it, and that's what we're working on together", he said.

"Then Luke can be in control of his life."

Luke really summed it up, "I've grown up on my own and I like when I don't have to count on other people. Getting this reading sorted means I know what's going on for myself and I can be in control."



## Birdsville Meeting Place

Small things make a big difference when you are short of confidence and social contacts.

The RJCP community participation projects are designed to help job seekers connect with their community.

Tony Rayner, RESQ's General Manager and the Employment Consultant looking after the Birdsville area, explained when you've been without a job for a long time your confidence and your communication skills can take a beating.

"By providing access to Community and activities that reinforce your worth and let you practise your communication skills, every time you turn up you are taking small steps toward getting that all important job," Tony continued.

"In Birdsville the Meeting Place was out in the open and becoming worn and the Indigenous rock artwork created by local artists required protection from the harsh climate.

RESQ job seekers got together with the community and helped build the gazebo to protect the area and provide much needed shade for gatherings. Our job seekers gained practical building and construction skills while



learning more about local Indigenous history and culture", he explained.

"The group has got motivated to further improve the space, now they're planning a bush tucker and medicine garden to surround it - just fantastic!"

## Iningai Health and Art

### Garden makes waiting more comfortable

We all know the feeling - waiting. Waiting for a doctor's appointment. Waiting for a visiting specialist appointment. Waiting for our family to be ready to go home. Just waiting...

It can be hot. The traffic keeps going past. People watching you. Wondering what you are waiting for. Nothing to do. No way to relax.

Father Maloney at St Bridget's Church in Longreach thought it was time people waiting for health services nearby had somewhere comfortable, safe and quiet to spend their time.

He approached RESQ, Red Ridge Interior and Longreach Regional Council offering land at the back of the church near the car park for a gathering place.

The partnership thought it was a great idea and so a plan was made to give RESQs job seekers some experience beautifying this community gathering space with gardens, seating, shade and public art.

Longreach Council contributed materials, Iningai Elder Tony Weldon through his involvement with Longreach Aboriginal Association provided advice; and Tony again, with Daryl McLaughlan as local tradesmen, worked with the RESQ participants to do the landscaping and construction needed to make the space beautiful.

Now there is plenty of space for families to gather, talk, play and have a picnic as they wait for health services. People can easily and safely access the health rooms and car park. And it's a pretty space now, where it used to be ignored and dusty.



## Putting your hand out, gets you a hand up

The team at RESQ are no strangers to hard work and hard knocks. Most have had their share of difficult times and they use this to help them understand their clients.

"Most of us need some TLC at times" agreed RESQ Employment Consultants Nikki Gay and Tanya Doran.

"And most of us need a kick up the butt on occasion too", they laughed.

Many RESQ participants have not had the advantage of family support to learn personal care and social skills - how to hold your cutlery properly, how to wash clothes, how to shake someone's hand when you meet, and how to join in a conversation with a group, for example.

The men and women who mentor and support RESQs participants try and establish trust and respect so their clients can ask for help without embarrassment and also offer a bit of helpful advice on the quiet to make sure the handy hints don't get missed.



"We live in small communities", Nikki said "getting involved with my clients and their lives is part of life, not just part of the job."

"I'm so proud when I see one of my clients down at the shops, or at a footy game or the fishing comp and they are keeping their lives together. They might have a training course they are doing, or hanging in at school when it's hard".

Nikki's right when she says "It all these little things that add up to make a difference in the end - to getting a job or keeping that job."







