Pathways to the future: building local strategies for regional resilience and sustainable development in central western Queensland

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA | Institute for Resilient Regions

Synthesis Report of Community Workshops
Barcaldine, Boulia, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Longreach

October 2015 – February 2016

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1.0 Background

In Central Western Queensland the current drought emergency has stimulated a range of responses including the Community Drought Leadership Groups with their toolkits enabling communities to develop drought response plans and make the most of existing resources.

Building on these initiatives and recognising the importance of assisting regional communities focus on longer term thinking and planning, in August 2015 the Remote Area Planning and Development Board invited Professor John Cole OAM, Executive Director of USQ's Institute for Resilient Regions to conduct a series of workshops to engage community participation in a creative process structured around the following questions:

1. What is the longer term future for central western Queensland?
2. What are the options for sustainable development in our region?
3. How do we make our communities as resilient as possible?

By working cooperatively across the region with key stakeholders in each local authority district the aim of the workshop series was to assist in strengthening community resilience by elevating leadership focus beyond the current drought emergency to the opportunities that might be developed sustainably and which inevitably would involve innovation of some form or another.

There are many possible or plausible futures for the region. Regional development is the outcome of a complex interplay of a myriad of factors, reflecting in part the capacities of local leadership and decision-making as well as community understanding and involvement in developing the narrative and exploring the possibilities. Compounding these considerations is the magnitude of innovation happening more generally in the world which bears directly on the future for regional communities.

Sustainable development means development that takes account of the needs of future generations as well as today's. 'Sustainable' means 'able to continue indefinitely'. So by definition, sustainable development for central western Queensland will be long term in its ambition and capacity, resilient, and anchored in contemporary communities.

The human capital factor is crucial to building sustainable development, making regions resilient and achieving a preferred future for the people. In itself resilience is not an end, but is actually a function of a thriving regional system. To build resilience, crucial enabling factors in a region or community have to be assured and developed.

The Institute for Resilient Regions views regional human systems as encompassing an array of characteristics across the psychological, sociological, economic and technological spectrum. Strengthening the resilience of a regional system requires all core elements of adaptivity to be applied through regional learning, innovation and knowledge (technological) functions - as they apply to personal and social health and well-being, community and cultural capacity, and business enterprise - reflected in the IRR schematic below:

As has been identified by the Rockefeller Foundation these process are based in a number of key factors underpinning resilience propensities and they include[i]:
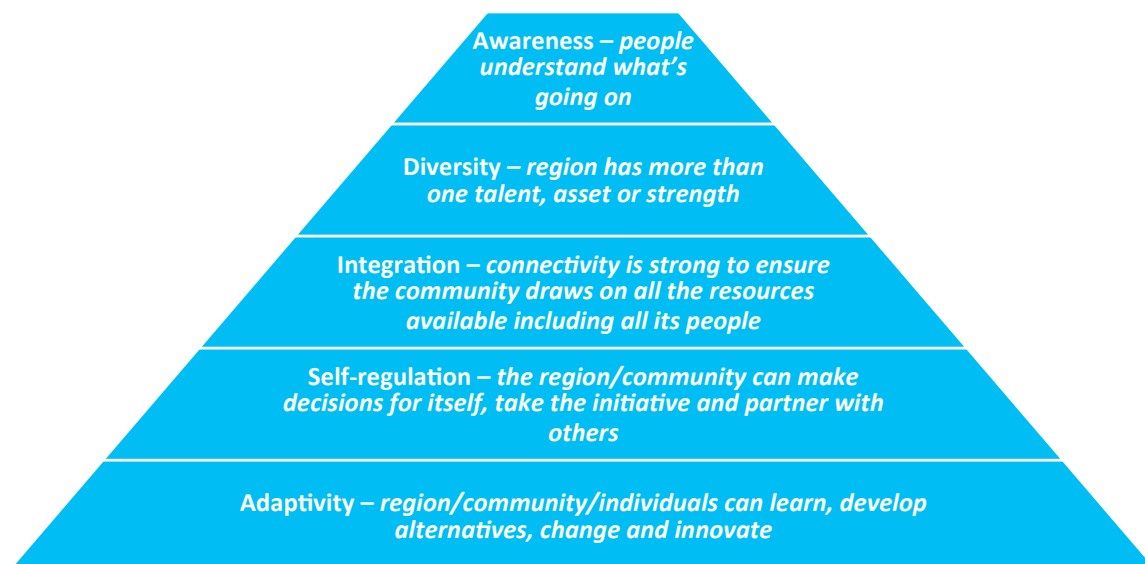
5 critical elements of regional resilience

1.1 The Workshops

Day long workshops involving in total approximately 100 community participants from across the central west region (most under the age of 40) were convened between 24 October 2015 and 29 February 2016 in Barcaldine, Boulia, Jundah, Blackall and Longreach. Scheduling difficulties prevented the proposed Winton workshop from proceeding and Diamantina Shire elected not to proceed after surveying likely participation. Each workshop was introduced and opened by the local Mayor.

Workshops started with an outline of the aims of the day and the key assumptions behind staging a series of community meetings to discuss the intermediate and longer term future of the region. The principles and protocols behind using a methodology called Appreciative Inquiry Framework were also outlined. Key themes likely to shape the future over the coming decades at the global, national, and regional levels were also canvassed and the function and character of resilience in regional development was explained.

Participants were shown how the workshop would be framed around a recognition that human systems "grow and construct their future realities in the direction of what they most persistently, actively, and collectively ask questions about"[ii] and that "…people [communities] and organisations are full of assets, capabilities, resources and strengths that can be located, affirmed, leveraged and encouraged."[iii]

In that context each workshop focussed on three strategic questions:

1.	Where are we now?
2.	What do we want to go for?
3.	How will be the best way to get there?

Positive or appreciative inquiry was explained as working in community planning and development by:

- Choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry.
- Inquiring into stories that give life to the region.
- Locating themes and drilling deeper into causality and linkage creating shared images of a preferred future.
- Applying knowledge of what works and what's possible.
- Imagining boldly and finding innovative ways to create that future.
- Collaborating and building collective capacity by sharing insights, information and resources.

Participants were informed that the purpose of the day was to gather information, formulate some positive ideas, and plan some desired beneficial actions. The mantra was collaboration rather than competition and working as a team.

1.2 Expectations of Participants

The primary process expectation of participants in the workshops was to

- Learn from others and share ideas.
- See what others thought.
- Achieve better understanding of their region/community and of its possibilities.

Strengthening community cohesion and connectedness through strategic conversations also emerged as a secondary and quite strong theme in participant expectations.

Workshop participants want to see stronger community integration, better social connectedness and cohesion, and constructive collaboration within and across the community. How to work together more effectively was a key interest at all five workshops.

Some attended with quite specific intentions, like ensuring "the future sustainability of the region" or helping the community "to progress and be productive, so that our kids can stay, or come back, if they want to".

Achieving higher levels of regional self-sufficiency, smarter use of existing skills, opportunities for economic development and diversification were also strong drivers of participant interest at all five workshops.

Workshop Facilitator: Professor John Cole

Professor John Cole OAM is recognised internationally for leadership in sustainable development, innovation for sustainability and regional resilience planning. Joining USQ in 2009, he has more than 30 years' experience in senior government, industry and community roles and was recognised in the Australia Days Honours List in 2016 for services to the environment, higher education and the community. He grew up in rural Queensland and has a PhD in Australian social and demographic history. He is a member of the Queensland Plan Ambassadors Council.

2. Valuing the best of the region

Workshop participants were encouraged to consider a range of questions aimed at building a positive narrative while attuning the thinking to positive appreciation. The aim was to tell stories that appreciated the best about life in region while creating group awareness of "our region, our community – its strengths, values and enablers".

 Participants were asked to make observations on the following:

1. What really defines us as a region and a community?
2. How did we get this far?
3. What's great about the region?
4. What's unique about our communities?
5. Why do we like living where we do?
6. What are the advantages of living in CWQ?
7. Why is our history remarkable?

2.1 Identity, values, community, belonging

When asked to discuss the positive things about living in central western Queensland, invariably participants highlighted the local people and their communities.

Strong recognition of the defining impact of personal values, heritage and behaviour came through in repeated references to resilience, self-reliance, dealing with hardship, heritage, gritty pioneers, and personal stoicism in the face of adversity. This was the initial and most evident regional profile participants had of central western Queenslanders, a collective self-image magnified possibly by the stresses of dealing with the current drought.

There was also an appreciation of the unique life experiences that came with living in the outback and the life skills learned living there. "We are connected to the land and the community" was a statement that resonated in different working groups. Rurality also was promoted in the description of regional identity: "We are a rural-based town", they would say in Longreach.

Beyond the personal characteristics of the local people themselves, the most important thing about living in central western Queensland was the community context of life itself – "We're all in it together".

Place, community ethos, and social interdependence were concepts woven into most reflections about the good things about living in the region. A relaxed and safe place to live and raise a family was a core description in every workshop. Communities were described as welcoming, friendly, and connected - with local populations being small enough for everybody to know each other.

The role of community in defining and supporting regional identity was evident in the "great sense of community and pride" reported by participants as was their acknowledgement of the importance of community in celebration and entertainment. "We love to celebrate stuff, be positive, have fun, and show our passion" was echoed in group reflections in all workshops.

The social constructive role of community in the region was also broadly acknowledged with reference to the relative ease (compared to urban communities) in which individuals might "have a positive impact". Community groups existed in a raft of different forms across the region and "everyone can be a part of something". In some of the more remote communities, people could actually achieve more because of the encouragement and support they received from others.

Other workshop participants pointed to the advantages of self-organisation that came from small communities where people could "organise and advocate" for particular preferred futures. The claim was made that "People are interested in the future and get involved and support each other – there is connection, we feel alive in our connection, we care about each other".

In several workshops too, reference was made to the power of inclusion: "We tend to be strongest when we're doing things that everyone can be part of".

The special and unique aspects of central western Queensland as a place in geo-physical terms came through in references to the landscape and in some districts the "untouched natural environment … [of] sand hills, wide open spaces, and unique pristine rivers". Participants in more than one workshop claimed to be "connected to our landscape". Others pointed to the unique wildlife species, sunshine, clean air and artesian water as environmental factors that made living in central western Queensland such a positive experience.

In the midst of drought, understandably economic factors did not reflect strongly across the workshops as being a compelling feature for living in the central west. Participants pointed to housing affordability, the infrastructural and human capital of the pastoral industry, the bounty of the land when it rained, the potential of renewable energy and prospective tourism growth as positive economic features of the region. Resonating strongest, however, was the optimism portrayed by participants themselves in their self-belief, their interest in having a go, and in their passion for "our people and our place".
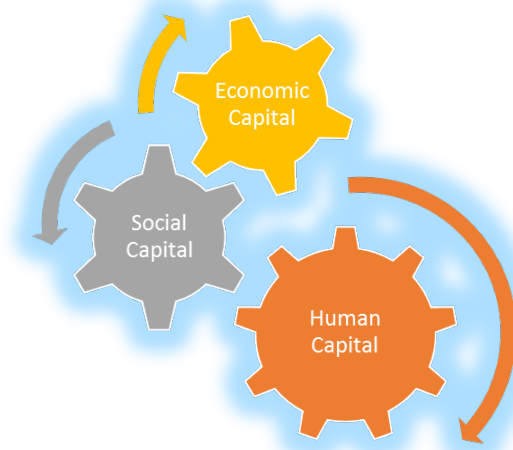
There was a consistent view expressed that emphasised the foundation of human capital and the formative role played by social capital (community) in

shaping the region's economic prospects.

2.2 Success and achievement

The history and achievements of the pastoral industry figured strongly across workshops when participants were asked to discuss regional successes, highpoints and community achievements.

Young primary producers in Barcaldine recalled the sheep boom as being the glory days of primary industries because prices were good and the local economy and employment was buoyant. More recently, they pointed to farm business cash flow improvisations like farm machinery outsourced to civil and civic projects and examples of local on farm business diversification. From Blackall to Boulia people talked about the achievement of "adapting our primary industries from sheep to cattle by adapting to change and opportunity".

In Jundah young primary producers talked of further innovation as the local industry sought to differentiate and add value through Clean Green Organic OBE grass-fed beef.

The establishment of the Stockmen's Hall of Fame and the Longreach Pastoral College reflected the primacy of the farm economy in central western Queensland's past.   In several locations mention was made of the frustrated potential of kangaroo management and harvesting as an industry well supported by local skills.

Besides the region's agri-industries, most frequent reference was made to the progress of the tourism industry especially heritage, rural, and remote landscape tourism as a regional economic achievement. "We are a special niche tourist destination providing the genuine Aussie heritage. People can visit here to experience a more relaxed lifestyle".   Besides the region's heritage museums there was also growth in events and celebrations attracting tourists – from yabby races to gymkhanas, picnic horse race days, and fossil digs.

Events organisation figured strongly in most reflections about the social successes across the region. "Community spirit" was the most oft used description of the social catalyst for local organisation and initiative. Whether it was a fund-raising dinner on the airport tarmac in Longreach, picnic races in Barcaldine, a fishing competition in Windorah, annual show days, or beach parties in Boulia, the willingness of people to link together and work cooperatively to make successful social events was held up routinely as a successful feature of life in the central west. The relatively high level of volunteerism was reported positively as was the proactivity and responsiveness of communities in times of need "because there is a desire from all to help".

Scarcity of resources and limited population gave rise to other successes, notably women in the workforce, capacity for local self-organisation, willingness

to adapt and adopt the new technologies to better connect to the outside world for things like education and telehealth. Inter-personal connectivity was also commonly mentioned as being important – in examples as varied as inter-generational connectivity in Blackall to indigenous and non-indigenous links in Boulia.

Safety, self-reliance, and creativity also jumped out of descriptions of social success in the region. And generally, there was acknowledgement that the things that worked best were the initiatives that drew most widely from the community.

When it came to celebrating the natural capital of the region, there was near universal appreciation of the "amazing" landscape, the "night sky in winter, or being able to go out to the open downs", the "untouched natural environment …. Sand hills, water, wide open spaces, unique river systems, and pristine rivers" the "life-blood of local recreation and relaxation". "We are in the Lake Eyre Basin, all our towns and communities except Alpha are all connected by the same, unique, inland river system". Talking of things unique, workshops were also quick to point out the region's flora and fauna and fossils.

2.3 Life in central western Queensland

Drawing out the positive reflections workshop participants made about their region, it is evident that the core elements of a resilient region are present and in play.

Here are 20 defining appreciative perspectives:

- We love where we live and want a future for our families here.
- We are strongly connected to our community and our landscape.
- We belong here.
- People are resilient, energetic, and self-reliant.
- The climatic and seasonal cycles have a major impact on our economy but we have shown we can adapt.
- We have a rich history and heritage – indigenous and European.

- We're all going through the same things, we have common experience and a lot of shared commitment.
- When we get ourselves organised and draw widely in our communities, we can do big things.
- Existing regional communication and cooperation can provide for even stronger and more productive collaboration.
- We've got a good primary industry base we can build on.
- There are opportunities for economic diversification through innovation.
- Some issues are a lot more extensive and complex but we are learning.
- There are local resources – human and natural - as yet untapped.
- Our young people are wanting to learn and be skilled for the future.
- We can and want to do things for ourselves independent of government.
- Our facilities are good but we can do a lot better with them.
- Our environment is unique and special.
- Our region has talents, resources and potential currently undersold.
- Direct regional engagement with the broader world can create new opportunities.
- We have adapted before and we will again to make a future here.
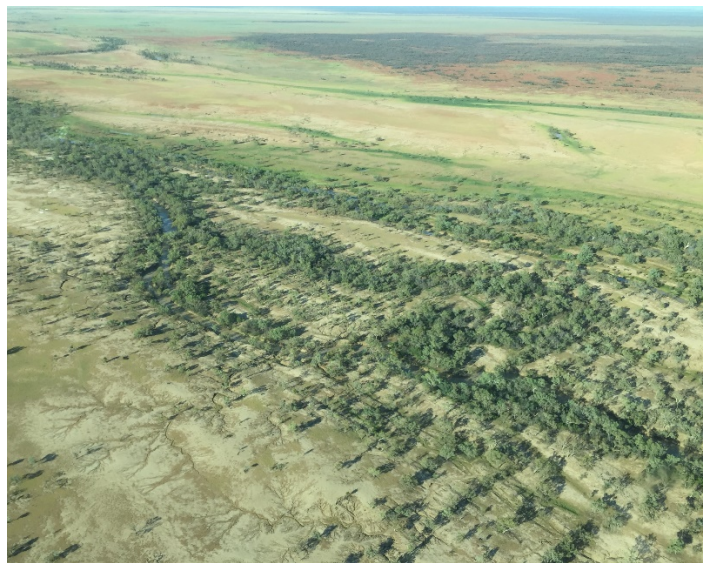
3. Imagining the region making the most of its strengths

This section reports the key ideas, suggestions and themes to emerge from workshop discussions that focussed on what might be possible in the region by building on the best of the successes and strengths outlined earlier. Each

workshop group was encouraged to boldly dream the possibilities by extending its thinking and harnessing the aspirations of each of the individual participants.

The group was asked to take account of what already is happening but imagine a stronger, resilient, more sustainable future for the region. They were invited to consider: What would it be like? How would it be different? If the region was to really excel at something in future, what could it be?

3.1 A Regional Vision for the Future

The ideas raised in workshops as part of imagining a future which built on the region's strongest attributes are presented below organised under the nine foundation headings of the Queensland Plan (*See explanatory note on Page 16*). The information has been arranged this way to assist CWQ achieve regional alignment with the 30 year Plan for the wider State. It also makes more visible those consistencies and complementarities in thinking between local, regional and State-wide aspirations for the future.

Foundations of the Queensland Plan[iv]

Education Building life skills and inspiring bright minds

Community Making connections

Regions Building thriving communities

Economy Forging diversity and prosperity

Health and wellbeing Being healthy and active

Environment Achieving balance

People Creating opportunities for everyone

Infrastructure Being connected

Governance Balancing all our interests

3.2 Regional Vision for Central Western Queensland

1. Education - Building life skills and inspiring bright minds
- We are a community rich in and aware of its own capacities, training our people and children for the roles needed for the future here.

- A place of opportunity to which our young people can return at the end of their education.
- Young people are choosing professions that will enable them to come back and contribute.
- A broadened role for a regional Agricultural College offers a wider range of courses.
- A regional Trades Training Centre offers a diversity of courses.
- A regional University campus offers courses in rural industries, science and tourism.
- New jobs and skills coming from new industries and local innovation.
- Families are able to educate their children up to Grade 12 at local schools which would also have great tele-education facilities.
- Our school and further education captures the imagination and the capacity of our children in ways relevant to the future of the region and we have the facilities to support the learning journey for our people who are training and studying.

2. Community - Making connections
- We are a community where young people contribute and older people listen more to the views of younger people.
- CWQ has a thriving network of community groups providing facilities and mutual support.
- People are relying less on government and drawing more from community members organising to do things for ourselves involving more people along the way.
- Organisations/structures for working better together across the region are established and achieving closer inter-community cooperation.

3. Regions - Building thriving communities
- Our region is attracting more families and is a region where young people can return to because it is affordable, has more industry including professionals, and infrastructure for modern living.
- We are a region where we are always improving what we're good at.
- The region boasts a rich and thriving cultural scene.
- The region has its own cultural brand.
- The 'leaving' mentality to seek opportunity elsewhere has changed and our kids can work here.
- CWQ is more creative and inclusive in making better use of the people already here in our community.

4. Economy - Forging diversity and prosperity
- Newcomers can move here to find opportunities.
- CWQ has an economy where people who want practical and physical work can still find opportunity.

- Local people are committed to supporting local enterprise and businesses are competitive so people will spend locally.
- Self-sufficiency and living affordability have been boosted by local cooperative purchasing arrangements especially in consumables.
- Business Innovation Centres support regional businesses developing and commercialising products and services.
- Farming production is diversified delivering new economic opportunity and local food security.
- Innovation in farming production has made it sustainable.
- The region is known internationally for organic/clean-green food exports.
- Food production has been boosted by innovations in primary production.
- The region has a rangeland agricultural brand.
- Water is better utilised especially during the huge floods that occur occasionally.
- Primary producers and their supply chains have developed redundancy strategies for resilience in dealing with climatic cycles.
- Tourism and agriculture are making the most of opportunities for integration.
- The rest of the world knows a lot more about what we have and our indigenous history and heritage are well presented and understood by younger generations.
- Our region is well promoted, well marketed and sign-posted locally to internationally.
- Our region is strategic and targeted in its promotion achieving a wider awareness of what we've got to share here.
- We have a stronger tourist industry, built on authentic, immersion experiences drawing on our heritage - pastoral, pioneers, landscape.
- Our towns are beautified and existing assets and resources are better utilised.
- Tourism numbers have increased by 50%.
- International direct flights connect Longreach to overseas.
- CWQ is a top 20 tourism destination in Australia for domestic and international tourists.
- Food tourism opportunities are being exploited with a paddock to plate experience - station cooking, beef and bush-tucker, enabling visitors to see, taste and buy unique food.

5. Health and wellbeing - Being healthy and active

- Health care facilities are equivalent to city standards.
- The regional collaborative health model is a role model for rural/remote communities across the world.
- Community services are delivered and managed efficiently locally (e.g. mental health, ATODS, HACC, and Family Services) and shared services provision does not discriminate racially
- We treat and care for our people locally using our qualified local health care workers and technology.
- We've closed the gap on indigenous health.
- We are sharing and selling the intellectual property we've developed in modern health care management.
- We care for our elderly in local aged care facilities.
- Locally trained doctors live and work in the region.
- We would care for ourselves through community programs like Meals on Wheels, Blue-Care, Home and Community Care.
- Local towns are more 'family friendly' in amenity for active living with parks, playgrounds, Skate Park, Water Park, and shade for swimming pools.

6. Environment - Achieving balance

- For those wanting serenity our core character will still be the same – and people wanting tranquillity and peace will still find it in CWQ.
- Local agriculture is a world leader in sustainable use and re-use of water.
- CWQ has reduced its carbon footprint substantially using sustainable renewable energy.
- Our pastoral industry fits well with our natural environment and assets as a sustainable pastoral industry.

7. People - Creating opportunities for everyone

- CWQ is a welcoming community, more able to provide for people who leave and come back.
- The rest of the world knows a lot more about what we have here.

8. Infrastructure - Being connected

- CWQ is region with facilities and infrastructure for people wanting to live here.
- CWQ is connected to the world physically and digitally.
- Slow internet speeds and communications blackspots are a distant memory.
- A regional Data Centre and High Technology Hub provide economic and social benefits.

- CWQ has the infrastructure to secure sustainable water resources.
- Central western communities own, produce, and store their own energy.
- Geothermal and solar energy are the main sources of reliable renewable energy.
- Renewable energy is delivered through a regionally owned utility working with private sector energy specialists
- Government regulations have changed to enable us to form our own cooperative energy utility.
- We make greater use of affordable renewable energy because the State regulatory requirements for off-grid systems now encourage growth in renewable energy generation and storage.
- State Government is more supportive of private sector development by making it easier and cheaper to convert land from leasehold to freehold.
- Our connectivity to the outside world is enhanced by better roads and public transport services.
- All of our communities including remote indigenous communities have essential utilities and human services.

9. Governance - Balancing all our interests

- Government and public servants would have a better understanding of the needs and unique circumstances of remote and regional communities.

More than 80,000 Queenslanders contributed to the formulation of The Queensland Plan, an aspirational community vision supported by The Queensland Plan Act 2014. The Plan enjoys bipartisan support and requires alignment of local government planning to its strategic direction.

3.3 Regional Vision: Place and Community

The consolidated workshops vision for the future of Central Western Queensland distils to two focal points: *CWQ as place, and CWQ as community*.

Central Western Queensland is **a place** where people can

- raise and sustain families
- connect to and engage the world
- Central Western Queensland
- enjoy employment opportunities
- sustainably manage natural resources
- care for each other 'on-country'
- innovate, diversify and have a go

Central Western Queensland is **a community** which is

Grounded in its values, history and heritage

- welcoming and attracting people
- making the future
- **inclusive, creative, connected, and open**
  - active, highly capable
  - making the most of its resources and opportunities
  - **confident, and self-organising**
    - working together
    - self-sufficient
    - collaborating with partners

4. Designing how the vision for the future will be realised

We create pathways to the future and new capacity by building on what we have discovered and imagined for our region. The focus in this section is on the changes workshop participants identified as being needed to make a reality of the vision for the future of central west region.

The key factors to emerge from the workshops that are crucial to shaping the future and resilience of central western Queensland can be organised into seven pathway planks extending on the five elements of resilient regional systems identified by the Rockefeller Foundation.
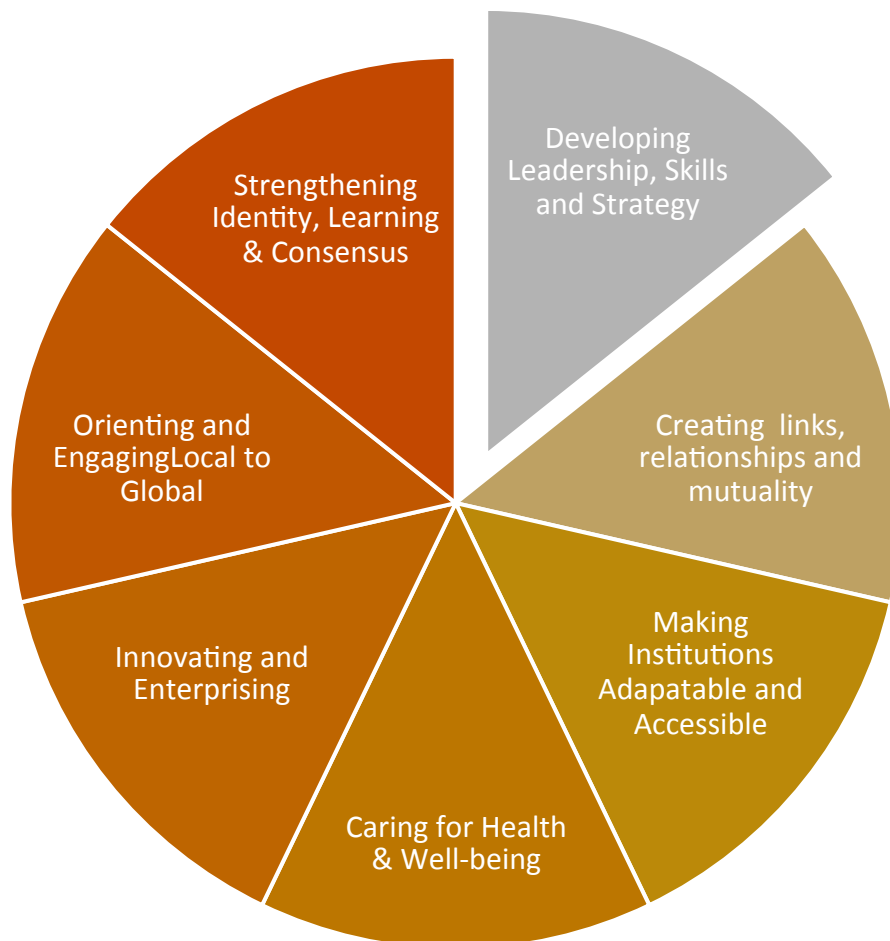
Future and Resilience Pathway Planks – CWQ

4.1 Central Western Queensland Future Vision – 7 pathway planks to build it on

Having envisaged a future for central western Queensland and their part of it, each of the five workshops spent an afternoon session focussed on the key ingredients (design steps) including changes which would have to occur, for the vision to be realised.   Here summarised are their findings and recommendations:

1. **Strengthening Identity, Learning, and Consensus**

    • Keep identity relevant to the future.

    • Strengthen community - inclusion, openness, diversity.

    • Reflect, acknowledge, learn, and be aware.

    • Explore possibilities, do things not yet done.

    • Take responsibility.

2. **Developing Leadership, Skills and Strategy**

    • Build pathways to the vision.

    • Work as "one community", involve everyone.

    • Proactively self-organise.

    • Leverage capacity and investment.

    • Change the brand, change the rules.

3. **Creating Links, Relationships and Mutuality**

    • Don't take each other for granted, check presumptions.

    • Strengthen the whole by linking beyond generations and communities.

    • Cooperate across and within the region and then collaborate.

    • Build local knowledge through connection and communication.

4. Making Institutions Adaptable and Accessible

- Make institutions accountable, multifunctional, and adaptable.

- Create information flows that are connected, constructive, open and accessible.

5. Caring for Health and Wellbeing

- Care for people locally.

- Educate and train our health care workers here.

- Exploit digital technology for local health care.

- Aim for a world class regional and rural health system.

- Create lifelong opportunities and learning.

6. Innovating and Enterprising

- Achieve economic resilience through diversification.

- Innovate for resource security for future development.

- Engineer energy self-sufficiency.

- Encourage business to business cooperation.

- Launch value chain marketing and branding.

- Make global connection through digital innovation.

7. Orienting and Engaging Local to Global

- Collaborate purposefully local, regional and beyond.

- Creative and connect to new pathways and new partners.

- Look beyond government to global possibilities.

4.2 How do we do it? Detailed feedback from workshops

Having envisaged a future for central western Queensland, each of the five workshops spent an afternoon session focussed on the key ingredients (design steps) including changes which would have to occur, for the vision to be realised.   Here summarised are their findings and recommendations:

1. Strengthening Identity, Learning, and Consensus

- Work together to function better regionally – 'Team Central Western Queensland'.
- Build our strong community spirit to embrace regionalism as well as localism.
- Foster pride by valuing our people.
- Define and brand CWQ as a region – create and market it as a regional identity/brand
- Develop a committee or working group that represents each shire – to get people involved – to manage an events calendar to assist coordination and better communication across CWQ.
- Local Government should harmonise and ensure consistent practices and systems across boundaries e.g. road quality, feral animal control practices.
- Regional Councils should explore what individual communities could gain from regional collaboration.
- Regional Councils should explore specialisation opportunities across the region to deliver complementary capacities in different parts of CWQ i.e. where some centres become a hub for services across western Queensland (e.g. aged-care services) – communities operating regionally with distinctive value propositions.
- Proactively utilise communications and technology effectively to support more frequent whole of region 'conversations'.
- Walk and talk 'regional' in government, business, media and social activities.
- Promote the need for change and collaboration in the community conversation.
- Beautify towns, improve street-scaping, re-purpose vacant buildings.
- Invest in and extend parks and public playground amenities to facilitate community integration and harmony especially among children through play and proximity.
- Start local conversations about ways to better use existing infrastructure can be a catalyst to helping us change the way we do things.

- Start conversations with young people and business owners to encourage new thinking and cooperation.
- Talk more inclusively to create community unity.
- Each Local Government develop its own version of the 30 year Queensland Plan.
- Ensure Council LGA names strengthen shared identity.

2. Developing Leadership, Skills and Strategy

- Local leaders at all levels to canvas opportunities to make a difference in new areas.
- Leadership groups can help people be more informed about options for the future.
- Change practices and cultures to build and lead and not wait for outsides to make decisions for us.
- Encourage stronger leadership by our youth.
- Bring together annually a regional leadership forum in each LGA drawn from all generations from schools to the elderly to discuss issues and ideas.
- Extend partnerships between local business and schools to provide work experience for school students.
- Build a local community development and learning cycle by shifting thinking and encouraging increased communication and cooperation between people learning and local business owners and managers
- Create a tourism-business networks for people seeking opportunities for further training.
- Develop digital skills in young people through improved connectivity and enabling mobile devices in education.
- Provide free access to the internet at libraries to draw young people into the facility for learning and social interaction as well as play.
- Undertake a skills audit of the community to identify available local technical skills not currently deployed.
- Stage local Business Expos with a focus on creating Elder/Younger Skills Exchange.
- Make more constructive use of indigenous people particularly in addressing development processes, stakeholder engagement and communication with Traditional Owners and historical peoples.
- Train people to negotiate the regulatory systems covering emerging industries such as tourism and food hospitality systems.

3. Creating Links, Relationships and Mutuality

- Strengthen community groups by helping them review their establishment and mission through education and sharper strategy for growth and renewal.
- Strengthen community resilience by seeking to do more ourselves (lessening dependence on government) and work as 'one community'.
- Promote involvement and volunteerism as a catalyst for getting experience.
- Draw on existing knowledge and capacity by establishing mentor relationships between older and young people in the community.
- Appoint people as ambassadors and role models for a lifelong opportunity and learning initiative
- Establish stronger and more productive local business networks including across the region.
- Study the form and role of cooperatives in building self-sufficiency and achieving efficiencies.
- Give greater recognition in the community to volunteering through thank you events and awards.
- Nurture community groups by active mentoring and education programs.
- Emphasise partnerships between community groups especially in sharing resources and capacities.
- Audit the skills of communities to collect and harness the capabilities of community members.
- Actively address community succession planning with initiatives to encourage new participation.
- Encourage community groups to draw insight, ideas and strength by partnering more actively with other groups beyond the region.
- Assist and encourage community groups to focus more on the idea of self-organisation, local initiation and building community self-reliance through their activities.
- Think and act as one community – members of the workshop group could lead by example and have a positive attitude to opportunities for collaboration.
- Make community organisations more aware of their regional associates and counterparts and invite broader participation in local events across the different communities.
- Establish a Youth Social Committee to coordinate events and organise a social calendar across the region for balls, sports days, mixed teams between towns.
- Government and industry should work together to create greater mutual awareness in city and country by establishing exchanges between city and country people, particularly gap year experiences in regional areas for city youth.

- Business should build stronger business networks and collaborations between towns, links and networks to assist businesses to be more proactive in addressing their needs.
- Our region should be a place where there is regional sport, reflecting regional collaboration.

4. Making Institutions Adaptable and Accessible

- Make existing resources more productive through multi-functional use of digitally enabled schools, libraries and services facilities.
- Encourage community ownership by cooperation, consultation, conversation and cooperative decision-making.
- Develop interactive creative ways to engage people and gather feedback using modern technologies.
- Engage the dis-engaged, listen respectfully and gather their views.
- Continue this cooperative conversation in the community.
- Encourage community ownership by cooperation, consultation, conversation and cooperative decision-making.
- Open up "future pathways" process to other interested community members.
- Use this type of process for sharing information between communities.
- Build success and strength by focussing on working together inclusively as 'one community' free of racial and cultural divisions.
- Share knowledge and information around the community so people know the full story about things that matter to them.
- Think about an organisation of people like us at this table, who can organise a conversation in the community, to work with council on some of these issues – to generate informed community discussion.
- Ensure Local Government provides more forums for people (including youth) to be consulted and have a voice in their community – effectively ensuring that the region consults with itself much more.
- Share information, help individuals understand how they make a difference.
- State and Local Government should explore opportunities to develop higher education facilities e.g. TAFE, university in the region and also re-purpose existing unused infrastructure, possibly by leasing/selling to private sector.
- Local Government and RAPAD should link to international think-tanks and external collaborators for ideas of how to stimulate regional economies and communities.

5. Caring for Health and Wellbeing

- Foster pride by valuing our people.
- Develop a world class rural and regional primary health care system focussed on achieving resilience through efficiencies and doing more with less.
- Promote a regional team approach to establish just one practice and administrative model in the central west and a raft of partnerships that generate impact, better use of facilities and increased capacity.
- Emphasise digital innovation in health services practice to generate efficiencies and new capacities.
- Increase local medical capacity by awarding sponsorships to locally born students to study medicine/health disciplines and return to the region to practice.
- Improve local health services to reduce transfers out in favour of people being cared for locally.
- Creates savings in the primary health care area by expanding allied health facilities and achieving softer entry to the health system.
- Efficiencies and technological innovation drive plans for a new regional hospital based in Longreach.
- Deliver health care through a range of media including telehealth, FIFO specialists, and an expanded regional profession.
- Increase emphasis on health education and awareness to slow growth in demand for primary health care and results in increased local health and well-being.
- Challenge the community to actively sponsor a range of public/private partnerships aimed at reducing chronic disease through healthier lifestyles and much better health awareness and literacy.
- Challenge health services to better engage with the community and evidence a customer focus in their culture and practice.
- Promote cultural diversity and new population by resettling refugees in vacant houses.

6. Innovating and Enterprising

- Pursue economic diversification through tourism, value adding in food production including kangaroos, and increased use of renewable energy.

Agriculture

- Develop of options for the cattle industry to minimise dependence on any one option either live export or meat processing.

- Innovate on farm production and value chain marketing to enable local livestock producers a strong differentiation on premium clean, green, and organic labels in a global marketplace.
- Create an industry structure to finish cattle as well as breed cattle, value-add to our current breeding.
- Build consumer awareness by cattle stations having people come and experience it.
- Develop more explicit and higher profile links to clean green marketing food labels – possible join OBE.
- Collaborate with the tourism industry to draw on visitor traffic to build consumer awareness of local agricultural products.
- Draw on resources of QDAF to build the market development strategy.
- Explore and develop new flexible models of farm ownership, business and production sustainable in the region.
- Invent and promote a unique regional brand for primary produce based on regional industry standards that encourage differentiation and premium grading of produce.
- Rec-capitalise local agriculture by accessing foreign investment and funding from international superannuation funds.
- Use existing supply chains in new ways to directly engage markets and offer niche and diverse products and services.
- Producers collaborate to develop intellectual property in farm production and marketing for commercialisation and diffusion.

- **Energy**
- RAPAD to lobby State Government to introduce a regulatory framework for regional renewable energy that encourages local self-sufficiency and involvement by private enterprise.
- Councils to lead community conversation and with interested third parties on the opportunities to increase self-sufficiency through renewable energy.
- Councils to discuss with utilities to make better use of the renewable energy opportunities in CWQ.
- Council and community to canvas potential private sector partners to install and develop renewable energy and storage capacity in the region.
- Council and the community to discuss with the State Government the regulatory changes required to support extension of renewable energy and local self-sufficiency in CWQ region.

   Water
- Develop strategies for sustainable utilisation of flood plain water by local organic beef producers.

- Undertake detailed feasibility analysis and prepare persuasive and strongly validated proposals informing the creation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) drawing on a range of water sources and technologies – bores, weirs, pipes, and ultra-efficiency in water use.
- Promote the use of solar and geo-thermal energy to filter bore water, secure town supply, and underwrite new industries in hydroponic foods and algal biofuels.

Tourism

- Make best use of regional assets - human, natural and built resources - providing great amenity for locals and facility for a regional tourism industry attracting visitors internationally.
- Develop and promote partnership culture within local tourism industry.
- Develop partnerships with other groups including Tourism Australia, international tourism providers, and international investors focussed on funding tourism infrastructure in the region.
- Develop a regional collaborative platform to host a "sinking fund" for the rejuvenation and development of regional tourism.
- Create a tourism collaborative vehicle facilitating group visitation and lowered flight costs.
- Ensure strong community-based advisory committees are established to actively enrich and promote tourism development.
- Extend the regional tourism vision by integrating existing town-based committees into a regional discussion to work together and with groups like Outback Qld Tourism Association.
- Strengthen the relationships with other communities to build a tourism strategy that includes all the major communities in organised trips and travel.
- Develop more effective and targeted marketing of the region including to tourism organisations, government agencies and on the web.
- Develop and conduct a cohesive regional marketing campaign focussed on both domestic and international markets and emphasising digital and social media connectivity.
- Promote tourism actively and directly using regional local governments.
- Develop a range of accommodation options across the region from home-stays to 5 star.
- Focus on developing a reputation for authentic high quality service and experience.
- Create and integrate large scale cultural events with the regional tourism strategy.
- Re-think/re-organise existing events and resources, emphasising better collaboration among variety of local people, and marketing to existing organisations.

- Create event specific tourism strategies staged in the shoulder seasons – river festival, concerts and corporate sponsored events.
- Develop immersive landscape, pastoral and heritage focussed tourism with interpretative historical centres.
- Integrate the green clean food marketing theme with existing events– and combine tours of properties with town restaurant outlets – collaboration between graziers and town businesses.
- Extend the utility of existing tourism facilities by developing partnerships with the education and creative arts sectors to explore other options.
- Provide a higher profile for indigenous art and culture in tourism profiles and strengthen the case for additional facilities attracting visitors and longer stays.
- Leverage tourism from the existing pass-through visitor traffic to grow regional centres as destination focussed on agricultural and food experiences
- Establish a tourism education college in the region to assist in customer focussed training and general quality assurance.
- Develop niche marketing opportunities around corporate retreats, youth groups, and international groups.
- Encourage visitation by providing free camping permits and facilities.
- Stay true to the region's core values and heritage and built a strong tourism industry and infrastructure without becoming Disneyland.
- Extend local government infrastructure to receive more tourists – showers and toilets, basic infrastructure.
- Appoint Community Tourism Ambassadors.

7. Orienting and Engaging Local to Global

- Lessen distance barriers and costs by extending existing fibre optic digital infrastructure and developing community level digital strategies.
- Create new options and stronger engagement with the outside world with improved bandwidth and connectivity.
- Facilitate local discussion and knowledge about how to better engage with the outside world and how to better utilise existing communications facilities through a community-based digital strategy.
- Hold economic development discussions with Mount Isa and other regional stakeholders through the Federal Government's Northern Australia Strategy
- Give new impetus to collaboration between RAPAD councils on infrastructure strategies

- Undertake detailed research into possible markets including services markets accessible by social media.
- Use existing supply chains in new ways to directly engage markets and offer niche and diverse products and services.
- Innovate in agriculture to achieve strong differentiation on premium clean, green, and organic labels in a global marketplace.
- Develop regional partnerships with international tourism providers and international investors focussed on funding tourism infrastructure.
- Re-structure agriculture to attract foreign investment and funding from international superannuation funds.

5. Next Steps: what to change and how best to work

Before closing, each workshop discussed a number of strategic questions to contextualise their strategies. A short list of questions framed the thinking and consequent observations:

- What do we really need to change to make these things happen?

- How can we best work collectively to achieve the collective vision?

- What are the new relationships we need to make our future happen?

Workshop reflections included:

- There is great scope to improve the connectedness between towns in the region.
- We can be more positive and creative in the way we think about things and contribute to a stronger frame of mind in our region.
- If we think and act as a regional economic system we will break down the separation between businesses and towns.
- By being more proactive we can help our region get on the front foot and stop being so reactive.
- When we strip away our formal, usual roles, we function better as a community.
- Forget who we are, and come together as a group of individuals, as community members.
- Every community needs ownership of their vision.
- Be aware of, and build links with, the range of groups in our community and bring people on the journey.
- To get community buy-in – let people with passion and strengths do their stuff – help them to run with it, we all have a civic responsibility to chip in and help those having a go.

- To overcome the perception from state and federal governments that there are no votes here or nothing that matters here, we need first to come up with our own solutions.
- Going forwards we should be juggling between bringing enough people on board, and getting action – sometimes we will make mistakes, the point will be to learn from them.
- Make sure our key relationships with the state and federal governments are well informed and that they know what we're doing and plan to do.
- Work proactively with government partners, and other business and community partners to develop our vision.
- There are a number of communities within our own Council region that we need to reach.
- It's not just a local thing – we should think regionally, and think outside our own region.
- Given there is some scepticism about councils –we need some kind of regional-based group drawn from across the community to provide guidance or discussion – not just councils.
- The role of businesses is important; they take risks, invest above and beyond –collaboration with and between businesses is essential to help momentum in starting projects.
- Look outside our community too, once we have road-tested the ideas and directions – look at what is going on in other regions of Australia and the world.
- Working more closely across groups and across the region eg between towns and between primary producers and tourism.
- Think bigger possibilities with some of our events.
- Look outside government for partners on projects especially in energy.
- Think more creatively about how to use water without impacting on the pristine quality of our waterways.
- Study and understand use of small scale business cooperation to achieve outcomes.
- We need to be committed to working together and uniting as a community.
- Council is vitally important but we can also do or at least start a lot more things ourselves.
- Community process will work much better if information is shared more widely in meetings like this to discuss local priorities.
- This report from today should be provided to the participants.
- Group participants should talk to local business and to existing community groups and tell them about what we did today.
- This "future pathways" process should be opened up to other interested community members and could be linked also to work sponsored by individual Councils.

- Each of us should speak about the possibilities of community doing things more broadly and collaboratively.
- Participant volunteers could provide presentations to communities.
- We want to stay involved in this process – we are all interested in being involved in continuing discussions.
- The Council must be involved.
- The report of this workshop must be taken back out to the community.
- Our work today should be reported back to council and used for regional plans and steps taken to promote community ownership of the future pathways conversation.
- The process should be extended also to include high school students.
- We should follow the lead of other successful community activities.

6. Reflections on the Workshop Process as community development

All the workshops concluded with a reflection on what had occurred during the day and how it was different. Most participants were taken by the focus on the positives and not on problems. "We've worked from our strengths….been positive today, not negative", was the general verdict. "We heard the voices of people concerned who want to make this their community a better place".

Asked to explain what they would tell other community members about the workshops, participants spoke of developing "a shared vision for the region….set some goals and identified the tools that we will need to get there". "We've shared our passions and information about our community and learned new things from each other".

Others spoke of using group "collective wisdom" to "flesh out the priorities and share how we can achieve this together". "We looked 15 years ahead and established what we want to see, and we came up with some really good ideas.

Coming from "different perspectives" and combining views was seen as a strength of the process with "strong commonalities of issues and pathways' being identified. "We have heard other people's knowledge and expertise, and transferred that across a range of issues….We have seen our problems through somebody else's eyes". The candour of discussion was appreciated as was the need to work together. "There was a lot more people here with positive things to bring to the table than I expected, and I'm really feeling a sense of community again because we've all been able to sit together". "We have a very diverse range of people in the group, however we've come together and raised complex challenges".

Most participants looked beyond the workshop and expressed their concern that there be meaningful follow-up. "Today will not be purposeful if we don't have a where to and what to do next". "Once we walk out of this door, we need to

unite". "Everybody is interested in coming together again". "**I** heard a lot of good ideas, I'd like to see something done".

The format of the Pathways workshop as a community discussion was seen as having broader utility in community planning and development: "Community involvement is here today, it needs to keep going". "Meetings like this could be held before council meetings to discuss things and provide clear community feedback to the council". "We've bridged local divisions in our thinking, tried to act as one community, and considered things in a broader regional setting". "We brainstormed ideas for the future of the area, and it's exciting, you should join the journey".

Acknowledgements

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[i] Rodin, J (2014) The Resilience Dividend: Managing disruption, avoiding disaster, and growing stronger in an unpredictable world, Perseus Books, New York.

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