



Submission on the *Second Review of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement*

Section A: General information

Purpose of this form For individuals and organisations to provide feedback on the *Second Review of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement*.

Do not use this form to [make a submission online](#).

Before making a submission See the [Discussion paper on the review of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement](#) titled 'The Second Review of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement'.

Closing date [4 weeks from launch date]

To complete this form **Electronically**
Save this Word file to your computer.

Manually
Use black or blue pen.
Print in BLOCK LETTERS.
Mark boxes with a cross.

Your submission must include your written or typed signature in [Section F](#)
 where relevant, supporting information from organisations, written on official letterhead.

Post or email (preferred) your submission Lake Eyre Basin Secretariat
Water Division
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT 2601
Email lebsecretariat@agriculture.gov.au

Section B: Respondent

1 Organisation name (if applicable) Central Western Qld Remote Area Planning and Development Board

2 Contact person

*Given name **David**

*Family name **Arnold**

Contact number **0428583301**

*Email ceo@rapad.com.au

3 Contact address

Postal address **PO Box 592** _____

*Suburb/town/city **Longreach** *State/territory **Qld** Postcode **4730**

4 Which interest group do you primarily identify with? (select one or more boxes)*

Agriculture Environmental interests Indigenous community

Tourism Small business Local government

Mining / petroleum industry NRM Board/catchment Research / education

Community group (provide details) Regional Development Agency www.rapad.com.au

Other (provide details) _____

Section C: Feedback on the current Agreement for consideration in the review

5 The Review found that the Agreement is broadly achieving its purpose, which is to provide for the development and implementation of policies and strategies concerning water resources in the Lake Eyre Basin to avoid cross-border impacts. In what ways do you think that the Australian, state and territory governments can work together to continue to achieve this purpose?

All feedback to Section C is provided separately _____

6 The Review mentions that the assessment of the condition of the Basin’s water resources occurs every ten years. The Review also suggests that there is value of having a monitoring framework that is more closely linked to resource assessment, research and policy outcomes. What are your thoughts on a monitoring strategy being developed to target priority areas? What improvements would you make to the Agreement in relation to the monitoring activities performed?

What are your thoughts on maintaining the current 10 year cycle of the reporting on the condition of the Basin and undertaking the review of the Agreement? (Refer to recommendations i, xvi, xvii and Section 2.1, pg 16, Section 2.7, pg 33 and section 2.8, pg 34)

7 The Review found that the Agreement does not include the triggers needed to raise management responses to emerging issues and recommends developing and using Key Performance Indicators to act as triggers. What changes do you think need to be made to the Agreement to effectively respond to the current and future threats and pressures?

What future scenarios should be explored to assess potential threats, pressures and opportunities in the Agreement? How should water demands across the Basin from development, agriculture and other industry be considered? (Refer to recommendations ii, vi, vii, xi and xiv, section 2.4, pg 22 and section 2.5, pg 25-26)

8 The Review found the Agreement was lacking a specific outline of funding and reporting arrangements. As a stakeholder, what other matters relating to governance/management would you like to see included in the Agreement? (Refer to recommendations iii and xv, section 2.2, pg 16 and section 2.6, pg 32)

For example financial arrangements, decision making processes, clear budgets and best practice operations.

9 The Review found the Agreement does not currently include a long-term action plan or strategic planning framework.

What changes would you incorporate into the Agreement to encompass a coordinated basin-wide approach for management of the Basin that addresses cross-border impacts? (Refer to recommendations section 2.3, pg 19 and section 2.5, pg 26)

10 The Review shows a commonality in approach between the Lake Eyre Basin and Great Artesian Basin governance and management. In your opinion, what benefits do you consider there are in integrating surface and groundwater management, and bringing the Lake Eyre Basin and Great Artesian Basin governance, stakeholder engagement and monitoring activities together? (Refer to recommendation viii, section 2.5, pg 27)

This includes the part of the Basin between the current boundary of the Lake Eyre Basin and Murray Darling Basin.

11 The Review suggests there is a need to strengthen the structures of the Agreement to allow it to operate effectively and improvements could be made to strengthen the collaboration between decision makers, community, industry and scientists. As a stakeholder, what details of how the Community Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Panel operate should be in the Agreement i.e. roles and responsibilities?

Including the Community Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Panel in the Agreement, what are your thoughts on providing them with the authority to create a sub-committee to advise on key issues? (Refer to recommendations ix and x, section 2.5, pg 26)

12 In your opinion, what potential economic developments in the Basin should be explored, and where in the Basin would these developments be best pursued?

13 Do you have any additional comments on the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement that should be considered as part of the Review?

Section D: Confidentiality *

The department will consider your submission as a public document unless you specify otherwise at Question 16, below. We reserve the right to accept or refuse such requests. We may publish or share information that you have not marked or had accepted by us as confidential.

14 Is all of your submission confidential?

No

Yes Clearly mark the submission 'In confidence'

15 Is part of your submission confidential?

No

Yes Clearly mark the relevant section(s) 'In confidence'

Section E: Publication of submissions on the department website *

Unless you request otherwise, the department will publish your name, organisation and the title of your submission on its website. Your contact information will not be made available.

16 Do you agree to your submission being made publicly available?

No Go to question 16

Yes Go to question 15

17 Do you agree to your name and state/territory being listed?

No

Yes

18 Do you agree to the department contacting you about your submission if required?

No

Yes

Section F: Respondent declaration *

To be completed by the person listed in section B of this submission.

I understand that:

- The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources reserves the right to accept or refuse my request to treat information as confidential and may publish or share information that I have not marked or had accepted by the department as confidential.
- A request may be made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* for a submission marked confidential to be made available. Such requests will be determined in accordance with provisions under that Act.
- Unless I request otherwise in [section E](#), the department will publish my name, organisation and the title of my submission on its website. My contact information will not be made available.
- The department reserves the right to refuse to publish submissions, or parts of submissions, that contain offensive language, potentially defamatory material or copyright infringing material.
- I have read [section G](#) and understand how the department uses and stores personal information.

- If I provide personal information about an individual other than myself, I must make that person aware of the privacy notice in [section G](#) of this form and draw their attention to the department's privacy policy.

Signature (type or sign your name) **David Arnold**

Date (dd/mm/yyyy) **02/05/2018**

Full name **David Arnold**

Section G: Privacy notice

'Personal information' means information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable.

The collection of personal information by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in relation to this submission is for the purposes of gathering information on the *Review of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement 2018* and related purposes. If you do not provide this information, the department will be unable to contact you to discuss your submission.

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Submission on the Second Review of the LEB Intergovernmental Agreement – Section C: Feedback on the current Agreement for consideration in the review.

5. The Review found that the Agreement is broadly achieving its purpose, which is to provide for the development and implementation of policies and strategies concerning water resources in the Lake Eyre Basin to avoid cross-border impacts. In what ways do you think that the Australian, state and territory governments can work together to continue to achieve this purpose.

Response: RAPAD recognises that the LEB Intergovernmental Agreement has facilitated a level of interaction and cooperation between the involved jurisdictions on the development of policies & strategies on cross-border impacts, particularly with the Senior Officer's Group, the Community Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Panel. However, on the political level, RAPAD has observed some level of parochial behaviour, which hasn't always been in the best interests of wise resource management or the resolution of cross border issues.

RAPAD also noted the reference in the Review Report which outlined that the Agreement was instrumental in addressing cross-border issues in water sharing such as occurred in the Cooper sub-basin. RAPAD is aware of a situation that emerged in 2013 during the development of the Cooper Creek Water Plans, which demonstrates a very different perspective on the collaboration on cross-border issues and presents a "case study" below.

The Newman LNP Government did not support wild river declarations in the Queensland section of Lake Eyre Basin (LEB), as they considered them to be an unnecessary regulatory burden on Western Queensland communities. Hence, the Queensland Government tasked the Hon. Andrew Cripps MP, Minister for Natural Resource and Mines with the development of alternative strategies to protect western rivers while allowing sustainable development to proceed.

In late 2012, Minister Cripps established a Western Rivers Advisory Panel (WRAP) , and RAPAD was the secretariat for the WRAP. The WRAP was made up of local stakeholder representatives to provide him advice on the alternative strategies. The membership of the WRAP included representation from Local Government, the NRM Regional Groups, AgForce, the Mining Sector, the LEB Community Advisory Group, the LEB Scientific Advisory Group and two LEB CAC members.

The WRAP delivered its final report containing seven recommendations to the Queensland Government in late May 2013. It is our understanding the report is publicly available on the Department of Natural Resources, Mines & Energy (DNRM&E) website.

In delivering on the recommendations of the WRAP, on 31 July 2013, Minister Cripps announced the following core principles of the alternative strategies:

- there will be no cotton grown on Cooper Creek and no further water released for irrigation purposes from these systems;*
- open cut mining will not be allowed in the Channel Country;*
- oil and gas development will be strictly controlled under strengthened conditions under the Environmental Protection Act; and*
- a special Channel Country Protection Area will be created which will protect a greater area of riverine channels and floodplains than the existing wild river declarations.*

Minister Cripps also announced that the Queensland Government has developed a water-trading regime that will support small-scale irrigation opportunities without increasing the volume of water available under the Cooper Creek Water Resource Plan. He outlined that the trading regime will allow existing water licences on the Longreach Waterhole and the existing “sleeper licences” at Windorah, to be traded - subject to conditions. It will also allow the sleeper water licences to be purchased and developed for small-scale irrigation elsewhere in the Cooper Creek catchment.

Minister Cripps also briefed the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum on the Queensland Government’s proposal to define a “Channel Country Protection Area” to better manage petroleum & gas developments in the Channel Country, the associated floodplains and the major rivers of the region.

However, RAPAD understands that there was little collaborative consultation between the South Australian and Queensland Governments on developing the provisions of the Cooper Creek Water Plans or the “Channel Country Protection Area”. While the Queensland Government agreed at the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum to provide information to South Australian officials, to allow them to assess the impacts of Queensland’s proposals for the Cooper Creek Resource Operations Plan and the replacement of the Cooper Creek and Georgina and Diamantina Basin Wild Rivers Declarations with “alternative strategies”, no such information was provided. The Hon. Ian Hunter MP, South Australian Minister for Water and the River Murray, on a number of occasions called on the Queensland Government to formally consult with South Australia as a co-signatory to the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement, regarding any Queensland proposals that potentially impacts flows into South Australia.

In response to the Hon. Ian Hunter’s requests, the Queensland’s LNP Government outlined that it is committed to implementing statutory arrangements that will protect the significant environmental values of the LEB within Queensland while allowing sustainable development to proceed. Minister Cripps stated that it is incomprehensible that such an initiative attracts such hysterical criticism from the SAP and the CAC, particularly given that the South Australian Government has

made no discernible effort to provide any level of protection to those parts of the LEB within that jurisdiction.

RAPAD notes that the “draft” Cooper Creek Resource Operations Plan did not contain provisions to allow the large existing Windorah “sleeper water licences” to be traded upstream in the Cooper Creek catchment. However, the finalised Cooper Creek Resource Operations Plan did contain these provisions in spite of there being no public readvertising of the “draft” Plan or opportunity for community or stakeholder submissions on this proposed last-minute change. This lack of transparency by the Queensland Government does not give RAPAD any confidence in the integrity of due statutory processes being universally applied.

*A key part of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement is for the Agreement signatories to work collaboratively to achieve the outcomes of the Agreement. Clause 2.1 of the Agreement states “ **The purpose of this Agreement is to provide for the development or adoption, and implementation of Policies and Strategies concerning water and related natural resources in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area to avoid or eliminate so far as reasonably practicable adverse cross-border impacts.**”*

*Furthermore clause 4.10 of the Agreement states, “**Each State will assist in the encouragement and promotion of research and monitoring to facilitate informed decision making for the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area, and the sharing of access to the results of such research and monitoring so far as either State may control such access.**”*

RAPAD contends that the behaviour outlined above by a Queensland Government Minister is not in the spirit of generating the mutual cooperation encouraged by the Agreement and the findings of the Review “that the Agreement is broadly achieving its purpose” is a “sugar coating” of reality. The renewal of a Queensland Water Plan only occurs every 10 years (or more) and it is essential that all stakeholders are engaged in the planning, information sharing and consultation processes and treated with mutual respect. RAPAD recommends that provisions are included in any revision of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement that requires each jurisdiction to exhibit a higher level of transparency, integrity and accountability to Australians, not just their State parochial interests.

It is RAPAD’s experience that the development of strong governance arrangements underpinned by a dynamic Strategic Plan, which guides a program of relevant research, and project delivery is an excellent catalyst for generating stakeholder engagement, involvement and collaborative cooperation. Once this is achieved the development and implementation of effective policies and strategies will evolve.

RAPAD notes the frequent references in the Review Report to the need to provide better clarity with the specific roles and operations of the Senior Officer’s Group, the Community Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Panel. There are also references to the need for:

- Secure funding for the monitoring and management of the LEB.*

- Increase focus on collaborative planning and policy development.
- Increased focus on a risk assessment framework.
- Better governance and accountability for financial & reporting obligations.
- A long term Strategic Vision and strategies for coordinated cross-border actions.
- Clear pathways for the public to source information on the actions of the LEB - IGA's jurisdictions.

RAPAD contends that the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement should be amended to include a robust governance model, which includes specific provisions to address the deficiencies listed above. Many of the Review Report's Recommendations the Review Report can be effectively addressed through a robust governance model.

6. The Review mentions that the assessment of the condition of the Basin's water resources occurs every ten years. The Review also suggests that there is value of having a monitoring framework that is more closely linked to resource assessment, research and priority outcomes. What are your thoughts on a monitoring strategy being developed to target priority areas? What improvements would you make to the Agreement in relation to the monitoring activities performed?

What are your thoughts on maintaining the current 10 year cycle of the reporting on the condition on the condition of the Basin and undertaking the review of the Agreement?

Response: RAPAD is aware that Section 53 of Queensland's Water Act 2000 outlines that a Water Plan has a life of 10 years unless it is repealed sooner, or it is extended by the Minister under the provisions of Sections 54 & 55 of the Act. As the Queensland Government undertakes an assessment of the Water Plan area and how well the Water Plan is delivering on its objectives, RAPAD contends that it would make sense to assess the condition of the Basin's water resources simultaneously. RAPAD also believes that a 10-year time frame for a robust review of the Basin's water resources is a realistic period – especially given the increasing focus of climate change and how it may impact on the Basin's water resources.

RAPAD notes the reference in Section 2.1 of the Review Report which states: "The Review found that the approach of the Agreement is broad, with a good focus on monitoring but that there is less focus on policy and planning. In addition to non-specific funding arrangements, the Agreement lacks a risk assessment framework, specific financial management or reporting stipulations, and explicit provision for the operation of the Community Advisory Committee or the Scientific Advisory Panel. This lack of detail presents transparency challenges for the operation of the Agreement." RAPAD agrees with this assessment.

RAPAD has noted the Review's suggestions in respect to the value of having a monitoring framework that is more closely aligned to resource assessment, research and priority outcomes. RAPAD supports this suggestion, but also proposes that the focus of any monitoring framework should be also aligned with the Strategic Plan for the delivery of priority resource management actions in the Basin. In supporting this position, RAPAD also notes that a monitoring framework is only as good as the commitment by the IGA jurisdictions to provide real and secure long-term funding to undertake the necessary monitoring. RAPAD is aware that in the recent documentation accompanying the renewal of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Water Plan, the Minister's Statement of Proposal (SOP) outlined on page 13 that the Department of Natural Resources and Mine's GAB Ambient Network and the Groundwater Level Network delivers a regional scale pressure monitoring network.

However, the Minister's SOP also stated that "due to priority constraints, routine monitoring on a triennial basis as required by the GAB Resource Operations Plan, has not been undertaken for all bores in these networks". This clearly indicates a lack of resources and commitment by the Queensland Government to effectively undertake the necessary monitoring to establish whether the first iteration of the GAB Water Resource Plan was delivering on the sustainable management of the Basin. In response to this outcome, RAPAD contends that unless there is a firm commitment by all jurisdictions to properly fund a monitoring framework; don't build up the stakeholder's expectations that a monitoring framework is going to be implemented.

While RAPAD is supportive of a monitoring strategy being developed to target priority areas, this support is dependent on a robust commitment by all the jurisdictions to provide appropriate and long-term resourcing for the delivery of such a strategy. RAPAD also strongly contends that any such strategy must be closely aligned with the Basin's Strategic Plan and the priority strategic actions identified in that Plan. While section 11 of the Agreement outlines that the Commonwealth & States will make available all necessary financial and other resources for the establishment and operation of the Ministerial Forum and associated institutional arrangements – it is the view of the RAPAD that this has not been delivered.

The Recommendations i) & xvi) in the Review Report on the need to develop a monitoring strategy that targets prioritised areas and indicators and a robust analysis of the outcomes of a monitoring program, are an integral part of a robust governance model and are supported by RAPAD.

7. The Review found that the Agreement does not include the triggers needed to raise management responses to emerging

issues and recommends developing and using Key Performance Indicators to act as triggers. What changes do you think need to be made to the Agreement to effectively respond to the current and future threats and pressures?

Response: Section 2.1 of the Agreement sets out the Purpose of the Agreement as “the adoption of Policies and Strategies on water and related natural resources”. Section 2.2 of the Agreement sets out the Objectives which are focussed on Water Quantity, Water Quality and flow regimes in the Basin. It is the view of RAPAD that the focus of the agreement needs to be expanded to deal with the environmental, social & economic impacts of other land management matters on water and related natural resources. The impacts of weeds (prickly acacia) and the expansion of the mining and unconventional gas industry into the Basin are introducing a new set of dynamics which should be addressed by the parties to the Agreement.

RAPAD notes that the State of the Basin Condition Report describes the current status of LEB watercourses and catchments with a particular focus on hydrology, water quality, fish & waterbirds. The Report identifies & evaluates current threats & pressures, especially those requiring an inter-jurisdictional approach. RAPAD notes that while the initial catalyst for the establishment of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement was a reactive response to the potential development of a cotton industry near Windorah in the Barcoo Shire, RAPAD also notes that the water licences granted to facilitate this development are still in existence and in fact the Queensland Government has allowed them to be traded to other locations within the Cooper Creek catchment as part of the new Cooper Creek Water Plan. So one might ask, what has been achieved in the last 20 years?

RAPAD takes the view that a number of “Key Resource Condition Indicators” need to be established & Monitored for the Basin. Indicators could include parameters such as water quality, ecosystem health, weed & pest presence, changes to flow regimes etc. If the monitoring of these indicators shows a deterioration of the resource condition then it triggers a review of what coordinated action may be necessary to either stop this trend or remediate it. This would introduce a proactive approach to identifying priority areas of action rather than waiting for a State of The Basin Condition Assessment every 10 years or so.

The inclusion of this framework into the Agreement as a substitute for the State of the Basin Condition Assessment, would allow for a real time ongoing assessment of the impacts of current and future threats on the water and associated natural resources of the Basin as well as the impacts of other land management matters on these water and related natural resources.

RAPAD acknowledges the essential input of the Community Advisory Committee (for local content and relevance) and the Scientific Advisory Panel (for scientific

relativity and certainty of approaches taken) in the development of Key Performance Indicators which facilitate proactive action on threats and pressures being experienced in the Basin. While this may require a revision of the respective roles of the Community Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Panel, this should be undertaken as an integral part of the LEB Intergovernmental Agreement's Review. Accordingly, RAPAD supports Recommendations ii), vi) & xiv) of the Review Report. In respect to Recommendation xi) on the assessment of the current and future water demands across the Basin, RAPAD is not convinced that this is a relevant role or responsibility of the LEB Intergovernmental Agreement.

What future scenarios should be explored to assess potential threats, pressures and opportunities in the Agreement? How should water demands across the Basin from development, agriculture and other industry be considered?

Response: RAPAD brings to reviews attention the consultation undertaken by Professor John Cole OAM for RAPAD and available on RAPADs website at <https://www.rapad.com.au/assets/Documents/Pathways-to-Futures/RAPAD-CWQ-Synthesis-Report-2016.pdf>; Pathways to Futures, which provides a current synthesis of the LEB communities view and aspirations and these combined with the LEBWRAP AgForce consultations provide some of the most recent contemporary views of the community. Professor Cole in his synthesis report offered 7 'pathways planks' and 'how do we do it' to realising CWQs future vision and these are starting points to future scenarios.

As secretariat for the LEBWRAP, RAPAD notes that in response to Minister Cripps' establishment in late 2012 of a Western Rivers Advisory Panel (WRAP), that WRAP provide him with advice on the development of alternative strategies to protect western rivers while allowing sustainable development to proceed. Ag Force undertook a survey of its constituents to gauge the level of local support for what values or assets should be protected in the Western Rivers and what was the level of support from their constituents for an expansion of "small scale" irrigation in catchments of the Cooper Creek and Georgina – Diamantina Rivers. The survey respondents identified the following "values" as being very important to them:-

- Groundwater quality.
- Groundwater volume.
- Weeds & pests control.
- Economic wellbeing of local communities.
- Surface water quality.
- Economic opportunities for local people.
- Surface water volume; and
- Surface water natural flows.

The majority of the AgForce survey respondents did not see a need for the regulation of; livestock grazing, road or fence construction, fodder harvesting or vegetation thinning. However they did see a need to regulate feedlotting, dryland cropping, small and large scale irrigation, vegetation clearing and timber harvesting activities.

On the floodplains and in watercourses, there was also a strong level of support from AgForce's constituents for the regulation of mineral exploration and mining operations, as well as petroleum and gas exploration and production. However, while there was a lower level of support for the regulation/prohibition of agricultural/pastoral production activities outside of watercourses and floodplains, the respondents still had a strong desire for the prohibition of large scale irrigation and the Resource sector's activities in these areas.

RAPAD contends that the values identified by a range of landholders in the Ag Force survey together with the consultation findings of Professor John Cole provides an excellent starting point for further examination of the threats, pressures and opportunities to be included in the operational aspects of the Agreement.

8. The Review found the Agreement was lacking a specific outline of funding and reporting arrangements. As a stakeholder, what other matters relating to governance/management would you like to see included in the Agreement?

Response: As outlined in RAPAD's response to Section 5 above, RAPAD has noted the references in Section 5 of the Agreement to the Ministerial Forum securing satisfactory access to "community advice". While Sections 5.11 & 5.12 provides an outline of the interests to be included on a Community Advice Committee, as well as the roles and payment provisions of Community Advice Committee, it is the view of RAPAD that they lack sufficient detail and are somewhat open-ended. Accordingly, RAPAD would like to see more detail on the following matters included in the Agreement:

- A detailed outline of the Roles, Responsibilities and Reporting arrangements for the Community Advisory Committee.*
- Details on the membership and how members are selected & appointed to the Community Advisory Committee. While there are details in the existing Agreement (Section 5.11) on the interests to be included on a Community Advice Committee – the RAPAD would like to suggest that Local Government representation should also be included on such Committees.*
- Governance details on the funding of the Community Advisory Committee, the frequency of convening meetings, the Chair of these respective meetings, the recording of meeting minutes, dealing with conflicts of interest and the accountability pathways of who they report directly to.*

RAPAD suggests that consideration should be given to the Agreement containing provisions for the appointment of a formal LEB Secretariat as the reporting and accountability pathway for forum business. While the Australian Government currently performs this function, RAPAD contends that it should be formally recognised in the Agreement and agreed to by all signatories. Obviously the role,

responsibilities and accountabilities for this position would need to be included in the Agreement.

Similarly, section 7 of the Agreement sets out that the Ministerial Forum can establish a panel of scientists to provide scientific and technical advice to the Forum. Here RAPAD holds the view that this section is as similarly vague as Section 5 on the establishment of Community Advice Committees. Accordingly, RAPAD would like to see more detail on the following matters included in the Agreement:

- A detailed outline of the Roles, Responsibilities and Reporting arrangements for the Scientific Advisory Panel.*
- Details on the membership and how members are selected & appointed to the Scientific Advisory Panel.*
- Governance details on the funding of the Scientific Advisory Panel, the frequency of convening meetings, the Chair of these meetings, the recording of meeting minutes, dealing with conflicts of interest and the accountability pathways.*

RAPAD notes that while the Review refers to a Senior Officers Group, there is no reference to such a Group in the Agreement. Again, for transparency and accountability reasons, RAPAD contends that formal inclusion of this Group, its role and responsibilities as well as its representation should be included in the Agreement.

RAPAD notes the Recommendations iii) & xv) in the Review Report and while it supports their intent, RAPAD contends that the provisions outlined above go much further in delivering effective governance and should be given strong consideration.

RAPAD also notes with some concern the changing role and level of support by the Australian Government to the LEB Facilitator position. This position was attached to the LEB Secretariat to primarily provide facilitative and administrative support to both the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee and the Lake Eyre Basin Scientific Advisory Panel.

The specific duties of the position included:

<i>Facilitate the development of LEBAC and LEBASAP advice to the LEB Ministerial Forum on the development of policies and strategies under the Agreement and the implementation of the five-year Action Plan and the Lake Eyre Basin Rivers Assessment (through preparation of agenda papers, discussion documents, briefings, correspondence and related material).</i>
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<i>Collaborate with Chairs of LEBAC and LEBASAP on developing content (including organising relevant presentations) of 2 meetings each year for each body and facilitate members' input into and output from those meetings.</i>
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<i>Lead the LEB Secretariat in developing content of, arrangements for and conduct of</i>

biennial LEB Conferences and Aboriginal Forums in regional locations.
Liaise with senior Australian, State and Territory government officials and key stakeholders and represent the LEBACAC and LEBSAP in meetings and workshops, as required by the Chairs of those bodies.
Provide advice to the members of the LEBACAC and LEBSAP in relation to activities under the Agreement, Ministerial Forum decisions, requests for advice and the work of each body.

RAPAD holds the view is that this is a critical position in maintaining open communication channels between the Lake Eyre Basin CAC, the Lake Eyre Basin SAP and the wider Lake Eyre Basin Community including Local Government.

After consultation with parties who have had direct contact and experience with this LEB Facilitator position, RAPAD suggests the following parameters are given strong consideration in regard to the future of this position:

- *The position needs to be refunded and physically located within the LEB community and within the Lake Eyre Basin, to enable regular face to face contact with at least some of the Basin community members. Without this, the role would lack the contact needed both for genuine learning and understanding of community perceptions and concerns, and to sustain the credibility in the eyes of the Basin community which is an essential ingredient for building trust between governments and the community.*
- *Of the ten guiding principles in the LEB Agreement, the two principles that underpin the need for, and funding of, the LEB Facilitator's role are:*
 - *'that the collective local knowledge and experience of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area communities are of significant value'; and*
 - *'that decisions need to be based on the best available scientific and technical information together with the collective local knowledge and experience of communities within the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area.'*
- *These two principles should be upheld in the LEB Intergovernmental Agreement review and a genuine commitment given to maintaining an "on ground" LEB presence in the Basin is essential.*
- *Governance matters about; who controls the position, how it's recruited, and to whom it's accountable to, are obviously critical. When the role was initially created in 2003, applicants were interviewed by a joint panel that included representation from the Australian Government, Queensland Government, South Australian Government (the NT hadn't yet joined), plus the Chairs of Desert Channels Queensland and the Arid Lands Water Resource Management Board – a multi jurisdictional and stakeholder*

approach. While the role was always hosted and managed within the Australian Government's - Department of Environment (now the Department of Agriculture & Water), there was a strong accountability to the Chairs of the CAC and SAP, and the role was expected to advocate for these two committees in interactions with the governments.

- *If agreement is secured again for the long term funding of the LEB facilitator's role, RAPAD recommends that it have some degree of joint accountability, ideally to the CAC and SAP and either a) the 3 X Regional NRM bodies in the Basin or b) to the collective Australian, Queensland, South Australian, and Northern Territory Governments, rather than exclusively to the Australian Government.*

9. The Review found the Agreement does not currently include a long-term action plan or strategic planning framework.

What changes would you incorporate into the Agreement to encompass a coordinated basin wide approach for the management of the Basin that addresses cross-border impacts?

Response: As already highlighted in RAPAD's response to Section 7 of this Submission - Section 2.1 of the Agreement sets out the Purpose of the Agreement as "the adoption of Policies and Strategies on water and related natural resources". Section 2.2 of the Agreement sets out the Objectives, which are focussed on Water Quantity, Water Quality and flow regimes in the Basin. It is the view of RAPAD that the focus of the agreement needs to be expanded to deal with the environmental, social & economic impacts of other land management matters on water and related natural resources. The impacts of weeds (prickly acacia) and the expansion of the mining and unconventional gas industry into the Basin are introducing a new set of dynamics, which should be addressed by the parties to the Agreement.

RAPAD contends that the Agreement needs to have a new section included which sets out the requirement to develop a Basin wide Strategic Plan which is guided by the establishment and monitoring of a number of "Key Resource Condition Indicators" as well as an effective Community & Stakeholder Engagement process. Through these "Key Resource Condition Indicators" which underpin a Basin Strategic Plan, priority areas for Policy and Strategy development leading to "on ground action" would be identified. It would also identify Key Performance indicators or targets for the delivery of "on ground actions" to mitigate the identified impacts.

An emerging threat in the Cooper and Diamantina sub regions is the spread of the perennial weed - prickly acacia. Prickly acacia is colonising extensively on the Mitchell grass downs country where it is destroying the Mitchell grass which is

resulting in increased soil erosion and stream turbidity. This is also resulting in a monoculture and a loss of biodiversity in native flora and fauna. Apart from causing severe productivity and economic impacts on the value of grazing lands – it is also having severe impacts on the stability of the riparian zone as well as associated water quality with higher turbidity levels. This weed is spreading downstream towards the South Australian Border and will become a cross-border jurisdictional matter in time. The adoption of a strategic approach through the development of a Basin wide Strategic Plan would facilitate the delivery of collaborative action to address such threats.

RAPAD has noted that the Ministerial Forum has been responsible for the development of 6 Basin Policies under the Agreement and supports this action. RAPAD also notes the recommendations in the Review Report in respect to the development of a long-term action plan for addressing cross-border impacts and the adoption of a review & reporting process for establishing the efficacy of the policies & strategies adopted for the Basin. RAPAD supports the adoption of these recommendations.

10. The Review shows a commonality in approach between the Lake Eyre Basin and Great Artesian Basin governance and management. In your opinion, what benefits do you consider there are in integrating surface and groundwater management, and bringing the Lake Eyre Basin and Great Artesian Basin governance, stakeholder engagement and monitoring activities together?

Response: RAPAD is supportive of an integrated approach to the management of surface and groundwater resources.

RAPAD notes that Table 1 on page 28 of the Review shows the relationships between the institutional arrangements for the management of the Lake Eyre Basin and The Great Artesian Basin – see Table 1 below.

Lake Eyre Basin		Great Artesian Basin
Intergovernmental Agreement	<i>Coordinating Instrument</i>	Strategic Management Plan
Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum established under the Agreement	<i>Ministerial Engagement</i>	Originally considered as part of Ministerial Committees under COAG framework with mandate for natural resource, environment and water issues.
Lake Eyre Basin Senior Officers Group established under the Agreement	<i>Government Engagement</i>	Senior Officers committee established in 2014
Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee established	<i>Community Engagement</i>	Coordinating committee established in 2004
Lake Eyre Basin Scientific Advisory Panel	<i>Scientific and technical advice</i>	Technical working group (now CW)

Table 1. Institutional instruments of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement and the Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan.

RAPAD believes there could be opportunities to rationalise some of the institutional arrangements at the Ministerial and Government “engagement levels”, however RAPAD is not supportive of the collapsing of the Lake Eyre Basin & Great Artesian Basin Community Engagement arrangements or the Scientific & Technical arrangements. RAPAD’s reasons for this position include:

- Great Artesian Basin and Lake Eyre Basin cover different geographical areas and hence this involves different stakeholders. The Great Artesian Basin extends up into the Cape of Carpentaria and east to Toowoomba which are very remote from the Lake Eyre Basin.
- The Great Artesian Basin also extends into large areas of New South Wales – but New South Wales is not a signatory to the LEB – IGA.
- RAPAD has requested that the scope of the LEB – IGA is expanded from the current water & related natural resources to include the dealing with the environmental, social & economic impacts of other land management matters on water and related natural resources. As the GAB institutional arrangements deal specifically with GAB matters – these two frameworks deal with completely different foci at the Community and Scientific/Technical level.
- It will be extremely challenging to find Community members who have the necessary knowledge of or expertise in LEB and GAB technical matters as well as the appropriate community networks & linkages over a greatly expanded geographical area. This may result in the quality of Community input being compromised and the stakeholder engagement process losing all credibility.

- *Stakeholders may perceive this as just another way for government to save money on engagement processes that involve people in remote areas. This could further support the perception that Canberra and Brisbane “care little about the bush” or the people who live there.*

In response to the suggestion of bringing the monitoring process of the LEB and GAB together, RAPAD notes that Queensland’s statutory water planning framework already applies an integrated approach, especially where there is connectivity between surface and groundwater resources. RAPAD also notes that the “monitoring and reporting” functions on the management of the water resources (both surface & groundwater) within a Plan area are an integral part of the statutory responsibility of the Queensland DNRM&E. These responsibilities are built into the respective Water Plans.

RAPAD considers that this is still an appropriate framework for the effective monitoring of surface & groundwater resources in a geographic area, however as already outlined in RAPAD’s response in Section 6 (see above), the RAPAD questions the commitment of the Queensland Government to effectively resourcing the delivery of these obligations.

RAPAD notes that page 9 of the State of the Basin Condition Assessment outlines how the water resources and riverine ecosystems of the Lake Eyre Basin are managed. Table 1 outlines that these resources are managed under a wide range of existing legislation, policy and non-statutory water resource plans.

Table 1 Current Status of water resource plans and modelling capacity for Basin catchments.

Catchment (State)	Surface water resource plan	Ground water resource plan	Hydrological model
Cooper (Qld)	Yes	Yes*	Yes
Cooper (SA)#	No	Yes	Yes
Diamantina (Qld)	Yes	Yes*	No
Diamantina (SA)#	No	Yes	Yes
Georgina (Qld)	Yes	Yes*	No
Georgina (NT)	No significant or licenced extraction	No	No
Finke	No significant or	Yes* (Alice Springs)	No

	licenced extraction		
Todd	Yes (Alice Springs)	Yes*	No
Hay (SA) [#]	No	Yes	No
Hay (NT)	No significant or licenced extraction		
Macumba [#]	No	Yes	No
Neales [#]	No	Yes	Yes

* Great Artesian Basin or mostly Great Artesian Basin.

In areas without a water resource plan - impacts to water resources are regulated through the South Australian Arid Lands Regional Natural Resources Management Plan and though Water Affecting Activities policies.

RAPAD also notes from Table 1 that a number of jurisdictions do not have statutory surface water plans for their Lake Eyre Basin catchment areas i.e the Diamantina, Hay, Macumba and Neales catchments in in SA and the Georgina, Finke , Todd and Hay catchments in the NT. While the South Australian catchments have an SA Arid Lands Regional Natural Resources Management Plan and some policies, it is RAPAD's perception that we have very different water management provisions across the three State/Territory jurisdictions of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement, so in fact we are comparing apples with oranges and pears.

RAPAD contends that on the basis of the huge differences in water planning strategies across the jurisdictions, the achievement of a commonality of approach for surface and groundwater monitoring activities could be a bridge too far for the respective jurisdictions to cross.

RAPAD notes the recommendation in the Review Report on the use of the Lake Eyre Vision and Adaptive Management Framework to investigate the development of a Strategic Planning Framework for a coordinated Basin approach. It is RAPAD's view that it would be better to ensure that there is "buy in" by the New South Wales and South Australian Governments for the inclusion of the entire Lake Eyre Basin in the Intergovernmental Agreement before there is a focus on a Strategic Planning framework.

11. The Review suggests there is a strong need to strengthen the structures of the Agreement to allow it to operate effectively and improvements could be made to strengthen the collaboration between decision makers, community, industry and scientists. As a stakeholder, what details of how the Community Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Panel

operate should be in the agreement i.e roles and responsibilities.

Response: RAPAD is supportive of the need to strengthen the structures of the Agreement. RAPAD has been observing the vacillating levels of support and commitment to the Agreement by the signatories of the Agreement. Unless there is a strong commitment by all jurisdictions to providing the necessary funding and logistic support to the “objects” of the Agreement, then any effort to strengthen the structures would be a waste of time.

RAPAD notes the current Agreement is quite non descriptive and in some cases vague on the respective responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the State jurisdictions who are signatories to the Agreement. There is nothing in the Agreement about a leadership function or capacity, or who is responsible for what funding. While the Agreement outlines that each State will consult with and involve Local Government in the implementation of the Agreement – this hasn’t happened in Queensland with any of the Councils who are members of the RAPAD.

To address these structural deficiencies, RAPAD contends the following actions should be taken:

- There should be a formal Secretariat for the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement matters incorporated into the Agreement. This Secretariat is the first point of contact for LEB matters and is the conduit between the Community Advisory Committee, the Scientific Advisory Panel and the Ministerial Forum.*
- Local Government should have “a seat at the table” of the Community Advisory Committee. If this is not acceptable to the Lake Eyre Basin jurisdictions – an alternative process should be put in place to ensure that Local Government are afforded the opportunity to be effectively engaged in the strategic planning and planning of operational aspects of any LEB sponsored projects in the Basin. There are opportunities for Local Governments to align some of their works activities to support priority actions of a Basin Plan.*
- The respective roles and responsibilities of the Community Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Panel should be clearly set out in a revised Agreement.*
- The governance matters associated with the establishment and operation of the Community Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Panel should be clearly set out in a revised Agreement. Issues such funding, the appointment of a Committee/Panel Chair, the replacement of vacancies, the frequency of meetings, the use of proxies, the transaction of business, the*

recording and distribution of meeting minutes, the payment of fees to Committee/Panel members, dealing with “conflicts of interest” all need to be addressed in the Agreement.

- *While the current Agreement (Section 5) does set out some parameters for membership of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), RAPAD has some concerns on the current balance of representation on the CAC. RAPAD contends there needs to be fair and equal representation from major interest groups, the Australian government, the stakeholder States and the Northern Territory as members of the Lake Eyre Basin CAC.*
- *The Agreement should contain provisions for the delivery of an “on ground” works program. This would require a firm commitment from the jurisdictions to provide a funding allocation for project work. The “on ground” works program would have to be aligned with the priority actions identified in a Basin Strategic Plan. The Agreement would need to contain governance provisions for calling for and assessing project applications as well as the accountability & management provisions for dealing with project funds.*

RAPAD’s observations are that when there is funding available to deliver real “on ground” works that are targeting a “priority action” then increased collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders is often the outcome.

RAPAD has noted the Review reports Recommendations ix) & x) in respect to amending the Agreement to include more detail on the operations of the Community Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Panel as well as the creation of a Sub-committee from the Scientific Advisory Panel and the Community Advisory Committee to advise on Climate Change impacts. Council is supportive of these two recommendations.

12. In your opinion, what potential economic developments in the Basin should be explored, and where in the Basin would these developments be best pursued?

Response: Recent census data highlights that the central west region of Qlds LEB is in significant decline. As such the future maintenance of the LEB and GAB assets are facing their greatest risk ever, becoming a stranded asset.

Population statistics taken from the last census 2011 - 2015 indicates whilst statewide growth has increased by 6% communities in the central west continue to decline Longreach decreased by 13%, Blackall Tambo by 15%, Barcoo shire by 25% and Winton by 16%. Further 2011 – 2026 predicted population growth for the state is an increase of 32% for the central west is a decrease of 2%.

Depopulation is the most significant threat facing the future of the LEB. For without population the long-term sustainability of these assets cannot be assured. As such leaders and decision makers need to look to lead a policy change to attempt to stabilize this threat and attempt to grow the regions.

Other significant challenges also face the region and as such the LEB and GAB assets:

- Lack of diversity in the economy;*
- Lack of new job opportunities;*
- Lack of investment in the region;*
- Difficulty in attracting and retaining families for the region's future;*
- An ageing population; and*
- Climate change will continue to have disproportionate effects on sparsely populated areas like the RAPAD region, which are dependent on industries such as agriculture.*

It is crucial everyone with an interest in the LEB and its communities work proactively to mitigate these challenges and look to new ideas and models to ensure the future of these assets. We need to:







- provide security for agricultural water sources recognising the importance of protecting the river systems of the region, and the Great Artesian Basin; to enhance outcomes for local governments, economic development, and the sustainability and liveability of the region.*
- play a role in leading a policy which maximises local jobs and economic benefit to our communities; has limited negative impacts on the region's water and environment, and that all impacts are understood and managed through credible research and communicated through excellent community engagement.*
- grow jobs and achieve improvement in profitability for rural businesses through supporting traditional industries and fostering future agricultural opportunities across the region; and*
- actively seek out and partner with great companies and people who can make a real difference to our regional economy.*

As such, we all must take the lead to ensure the future of the GAB and LEB and attempt to stabilize this decline to ensure the long-term sustainability of the region. Without a population and jobs the region will decline across all elements.

Further by taking the lead we have the opportunity to be part of a group of leaders that develops the rules around regulating the water assets to try and bring more people on board to manage the asset rather than having solution thrust upon them.

This opportunity is not about picking winners i.e. one industry over another it is about deciding on the framework with communities and industries to ensure the overall health of the river and basin continues and to ensure its long term maintenance by ensuring people remain in the region.

Regional Australia Institutes Pathfinder report undertaken for RAPAD <https://www.rapad.com.au/programs-and-projects/pathfinder/> , identifies a number of key priorities for RAPAD and the region.

	<p>Broadening sheep meat production and wool production to supply growing international markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential regional economic growth to \$38.8 million annually through increased gross margins from sheep production, stimulating jobs for an additional 158 people in the industry. • Actions: Support continued roll-out of cluster fencing, work with industry to ensure knowledge is available and skills are upgraded to deliver increasing profitability and implement regional brand.
	<p>Tourism growth to increase tourist numbers and expenditure, building on strengths of regional attractions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential industry growth of 262 per cent from 2016 creating \$1.67 billion expenditure in the broader Outback Tourism region. • Actions: Promote and support the high tourism performers, capture tourism data analytics, create new investment opportunities and enhance tourism experiences through capacity development and opportunities.
	<p>Infrastructure connections – ensure inter and intra connectivity and service delivery that enables the region to be globally competitive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early sealing of roads could save \$6.8 million in road maintenance, as well as \$56 million in additional benefits and productivity gains to key tourism, livestock and freight routes, including 24 potential new jobs from increased drive tourism market. • Actions: Seal Bedourie to Birdsville, Birdsville to Windorah Roads as well as Donohue Highway, improve access to telecommunications for all towns and rail utilisation across the RAPAD region.
	<p>Delivering low cost and stable energy sources with secure water access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By meeting Queensland's renewable energy target of 50 per cent, with residential households and small business self-consuming energy produced rather than feeding it back into the grid, Community Service Obligation subsidy payments would reduce by at least \$70 million out to 2031. • Actions: Maximise use of renewable energy generation, establish water security options, identify industry support.
	<p>Supporting services and infrastructure to ensure the RAPAD region is a preferred retirement destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential job growth of 600 people by 2031 based on increase in 61 per cent of retirees in the region. • Actions: Co-ordinate an 'aged' working committee to strategise regional approach, supplement current RDA 'aged audit' with a services review, stimulate support for aged services across RAPAD region, and identify options for 'ageing in place' infrastructure across the RAPAD region that meets whole of community demand.
	<p>Create the environment where the RAPAD region leads remote area delivery of telecommunication and digital infrastructure for regional growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential retail output increase of \$7.8 million, enhanced ICT jobs from 7 to 17.8 local jobs and increased overseas tourist numbers to 33,782. • Actions: Implement the Smart Central Western Queensland Strategy, target investment to enable priority areas e.g. tourism, bring back the sheep, and utilise existing technology to develop a brand and presence for the RAPAD region online.

The traditional industries like agricultural, tourism, and resources sectors are vital and we are seeing some interest in renewables such as solar. RAPADs overall strategic direction is outlined in the last section, and here RAPAD notes the consultation undertaken by Professor John Cole for RAPAD and found at, <https://www.rapad.com.au/programs-and-projects/pathways-to-futures/> which needs to understood along with the Pathfinder report.

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



Synthesis Report of Community Workshops Barcaldine, Boulia, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Longreach October 2015 – February 2016



Within the beef cattle industry, due to the clean & green attributes of the Channel Country a number of Channel Country producers have fostered the developed an organic initiative. This initiative has developed niche markets for chemical free grass-fed beef around the world. This niche industry is worth in excess of \$65mill/annum to the Region. RAPAD strongly believes that this niche industry will continue to grow and would be concerned if any activities destabilised this industry.

The sheep industry is strengthening its traditional foothold in the region and programs such as the cluster-fencing program have been instrumental in this.
<https://www.rapad.com.au/assets/Uploads/RAPAD-QFPI-infographic-2018.pdf>

It is of some concern to RAPAD that the State of the Basin Condition report made no reference to either the 2009 or the 2012 tailings dam spills by the Lady Annie mine in the headwaters of the Diamantina Creek. This spill resulted in heavy metal contamination of Mica Creek (a tributary of the Diamantina Creek) for some 52kms downstream of the discharge point. If these heavy metals were to be mobilised downstream they could potentially compromise the chemical free status of an “eco beef” producer. Of greater concern to the local community is the lack of concerted action by the Queensland Government to effectively deal with this polluting spill. It’s clearly a case of “out of sight – out of mind”.

RAPAD would like to see some constraints placed on the location of the Mining and Unconventional Gas Industries to manage the risk and reduce the likelihood of potential chemical contamination compromising the “chemical free status” of the Channel Country eco beef industry.

The tourism is a growing industry across RAPAD’s Shires and it is generating increasing economic returns in the Region’s towns. As RAI’s Pathfinders report states; tourism has potential to grow much more. RAPAD has the view that an increasing number of Australian and overseas visitors will visit the Basin to enjoy the unspoilt natural and cultural values and beauty on offer. Many of these visitors are utilising caravans and motor homes to visit the Basin and stay overnight on the Basins creeks and waterholes. This increased level of visitation may place some additional pressures on these water sources and associated riparian areas. RAPAD would like to see the adoption of consistent policy by the LEB jurisdictions for better managing the impacts of tourism.

The Queensland Government is actively promoting the expansion of the Resources sector into the Basin – in particular the Unconventional Gas Industry into the Eromanga and Cooper Basins. While RAPAD acknowledges the potential economic benefits of these industries expanding into the Basin – it also recognises that there are risks associated with such an expansion.

13. Do you have any additional comments on the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement that should be considered as part of the review?

Response: RAPAD undertook extensive community consultation in 2016, which later informed our strategic plan. This consultation was undertaken by Professor John Cole and the outcomes reports are found at

<https://www.rapad.com.au/programs-and-projects/pathways-to-futures/> .

RAPAD would urge reviewers to thoroughly read these documents as they give an indepth overview of CWQ regions communities’ aspirations and values. As stated based on these consultations RAPAD developed our strategic plan and we believe this provides a synthesis of our regions economic, social and environmental values

and aspirations. It can be viewed at

<https://www.rapad.com.au/assets/Uploads/RAPAD-Strategic-Plan-2018-20-print.pdf>

The regional priority areas for RAPAD are and more specifically related to this submission RAPAD notes those highlighted below:

1. *Technology and the Digital Economy*

Outcome: The digitalisation of the RAPAD region to become a technologically ready region of choice, providing a rich and fulfilling life style and opportunities for business growth and success.

2. *Infrastructure and Services*

- *Transport*

Outcome: A transport network that is safe, accessible, affordable and integrated providing regional connectivity and enhanced economic development contributing to the liveability of the region.

- *Water*

Outcome: Security for agricultural, industrial and urban water sources recognising the importance of protecting the river systems of the region, and the Great Artesian Basin; together with innovative and collaborative urban waste water and water supply arrangements, which enhance outcomes for local governments, economic development, and the sustainability and liveability of the region.

- *Bio-security & Environment*

Outcome: Enhanced environmental outcomes and regional bio-security, through innovation and working collaboratively with federal, state and local governments, key stakeholder groups and landowners.

- *Education and Training*

Outcome: That the region's education, training and skills capability develops to meet current and future needs recognising emerging economic, environmental and social change particularly in relation to disability services, tourism and the digital economy.

- *Leadership and Capacity Building*

Outcome: Leading the region to capitalise on current assets and capabilities, to fundamentally transform its social, economic and professional potential.

3. *Economic Development*

- *Tourism*

Outcome: The RAPAD region's tourism industry grows and reaches its potential as a global destination.

- Agriculture

Outcome: Grow jobs and achieve improvement in profitability for rural businesses through supporting traditional industries and fostering future agricultural opportunities across the region.

- Energy

Outcome: Secure affordable energy supplies particularly focusing on renewable energy opportunities that bring transformative benefit to the RAPAD region.

- Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Outcome: Globally connected ecosystems; and provision of hard and soft infrastructure that fosters innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship across the RAPAD region.

- Investment Attraction

Outcome: Actively seeking out and partnering with great companies and people who can make a real difference to our regional economy.

- Resources

Outcome: A resources sector which maximises local jobs and economic benefit to our communities; has limited negative impacts on the region's water and environment, and that all impacts are understood and managed through credible research and communicated through excellent community engagement.

4. *Health and Well-being*

- Aged Care

Outcome: Infrastructure and services that ensure the RAPAD region is a preferred retirement destination.

- Health Services

Outcome: Health services in the RAPAD region that reach world class standards for rural and regional communities

5. *Regional Narrative*

Outcome: A regional narrative of 'Team Central West' that embeds and demonstrates the region's vision, values, culture and history, its strengths, and potential; and capacity to attract and support new and expanded investment opportunities

The recently published (March 2018) *Beyond the Dust Western Drought Committee Report Impact of Drought on Town Businesses in Central West Queensland and some solutions* <http://wqda.org.au/beyond-the-dust> highlighted:

- **Between 2011 and 2016, 700 jobs were lost in the Central West** (REMPLAN 2017), more jobs were lost in the Service and Retail sectors than in Tourism or Agricultural town businesses;
- **Agricultural production has declined significantly due to drought, from approximately 50% of the regional economy in 2013** (Regional Development Australia 2013), to 25% in 2017;
- **The impact of declining output on the regional economy is likely to be around \$100 million between 2011 and 2016** (REMPLAN 2017);
- The survey indicates that **small business turnover in the Central West declined between 40-60% over the last 2 years, yet fixed costs have risen, and taxes, electricity and bank loans are among the most difficult costs to meet** according to the WQDC survey; and
- As the population declines, so do services provided. As families with children leave town, lower numbers at the school mean fewer teachers are needed; if the teacher has children, more children leave, and so a negative social spiral starts. **The flow-on effects of drought are complex and inter-twined, and once started, the momentum of a negative economic and social spiral is difficult to halt;**
- Health, including mental health, declines during times of stress. Over 90% of people rate their health as good (ABS 2017) however, **life expectancy in the Central West is slightly lower than the Queensland average, and rates of disease are 20% higher than the state average;** and
- People interviewed suggested that suicide was rarely spoken about, even though **suicide rates in remote areas of Queensland are up to 2.2 times higher than metropolitan areas** (Central West Hospital and Health Services 2014; Australian Government 2016).

The greatest threat to our region is economic decline and economic improvement is integrally entwined with environmental and social improvements and vice versa.