

Acknowledgements

The Committee of Darling Downs and South West Qld wish to thank the many regional stakeholders who have contributed to this Regional Plan with documents and other assistance, in particular the ten Shire and Regional Councils that are represented within our region.

The Committee would like to thank and acknowledge the consultant team at Parsons Brinkerhoff for the expertise provided in developing the initial and ongoing foundation for the Roadmap document.

Please note, that the Roadmap will be further updated as the final Community Plans that each of the councils are preparing become available after December 2011. These documents are regarded as extremely valuable in providing the basis for determining the overall priorities for the region. A list of currently finalised documents can be found on the DD & SW website at:

http://www.rda-ddsw.org.au/Community_Plans.htm

A continually updated list of contributing documents can be found on the website of DD & SW at:

<http://www.rda-ddsw.org.au/Downloads.htm>

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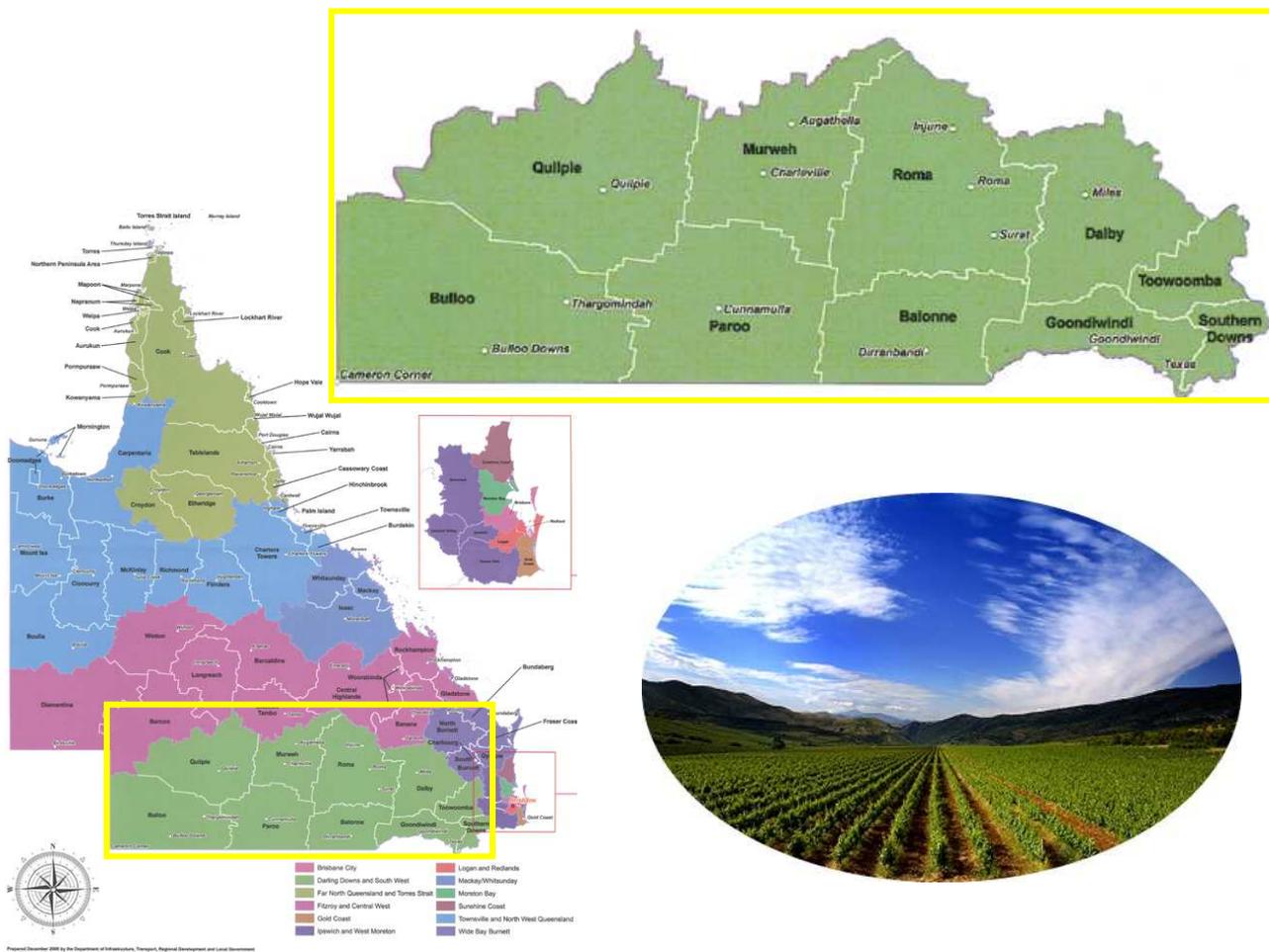
Executive summary

The Darling Downs and South West region commences at the top of the Toowoomba Range, 120kms west of Brisbane and extends to the SA border in the west and to the NSW border in the south. The area comprises the ten local government shires and regions of Balonne, Bulloo, Goondiwindi, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie, Southern Downs, Toowoomba and Western Downs. The region covers a total area of 397,240.8 square kilometres or 23% of Queensland's total area. The region is home to 273,000 persons, with an expected population of 376,000 persons by year 2031.

The Darling Downs basin is home to some of Australia's best farming country and is heavily devoted to intensive agriculture. The southern part of the region includes the northern part of the New England granite belt, well known for its orchards and vegetable production. To the west, the area becomes drier, and more pastoral. The area has an increasing resource development component, particularly through the Surat Basin area, with coal seam gas, coal, natural gas and oil being produced in increasing quantities.

Regional Development Australia Committees have been formed in 55 regional areas throughout Australia to focus on developing and maintaining a 'Regional Plan' that provides an overview of the region, including a description of the region, its attributes, industry, agricultural and employment base and key advantages, and highlighting the key issues, goals and priorities for action.

In Darling Downs & SW, the **Community Plans** which each Shire and Regional Council has been mandated to develop by December 2011, will play a key role in the identification of issues and priorities for development of the DD & SW Regional Roadmap. Corporate Plans and other stakeholder documents concerning the region will also be consulted for incorporation.



Review Process

The committee of RDA Darling Downs and South West Inc. comprises ten members, each a committed volunteer appointed to represent the community, business and local government.

The principal role of the RDA Darling Downs and South West committee is to provide a conduit between all levels of government and the community so that a better understanding of regional requirements is developed and key issues, goals and priorities are addressed for the benefit of the region.

The development of this Regional Roadmap has been prepared through a detailed and collaborative approach to identifying the key issues and top priorities for the Darling Downs and SW region.

RDA Darling Downs and South West Inc., through involvement with various stakeholder representatives throughout the region, have developed this document to address and highlight emerging and current economic, social and environmental issues and priorities within the region.

The Regional Roadmap will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure it remains consistent and reflective of current and future regional issues, priorities and goals.

Darling Downs and South West Inc. Committee

Chair – Cr Bill Cahill (Toowoomba Regional Council)

Deputy Chair – Cr Jo Sheppard (Mayor – Paroo Shire Council)

Committee:

Ms Megan O'Hara-Sullivan

Mr Derek Tuffield

Cr Vic Pennisi (Southern Downs Council)

Mr Lyndon Pfeffer

Ms Kate Tully

Dr Paul Clayton

Ms Michele Alroe

Cr Rob Loughnan (Maranoa Council)

1. Highlights

1.1 Overview of the region

The Darling Downs & SW Region has a total area of 397,240.8 km², or 22.9 per cent of the total area of the state. The region has an average daily temperature range of 13.7 °C to 27.9 °C and on average Darling Downs & SW Region receives approximately 445 mm of rainfall each year.

Demography

As at 30 June 2011, the estimated resident population of Darling Downs & SW Region was 270,660 persons, or 5.86 per cent of the state's population.

Darling Downs & SW Region's population as at 30 June 2031 is projected to be 376,094 persons. This will account for 5.7 per cent of Queensland's total population at this time.

The population for Darling Downs & SW Region is projected to increase by an average annual growth rate of 1.7 per cent over the 20-year period between 2011 and 2031. In comparison, Queensland is projected to have an average annual growth rate of 1.8 per cent over the same period.

Within the region, the largest increase in population is projected to be the Toowoomba Regional Council Local Government Area (LGA), up by 79,839 persons over the 20-year period between 2011 and 2031.

The fastest-growing LGA in the Darling Downs & SW Region between 2011 and 2031 is projected to be Toowoomba Regional Council LGA, with an average annual growth rate of 2.0 per cent.

Table 1 Projected population Darling Downs & SW Region, 2011 to 2031

Local government area	Projected population as at 30 June					Average annual growth rate
	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2011 to 2031
	— number —					%
Balonne (S)	4,805	4,906	5,183	5,418	5,663	0.8
Bulloo (S)	359	362	363	365	368	0.1
Goondiwindi (R)	11,392	11,906	12,352	12,784	13,140	0.7
Maranoa (R)	13,296	14,091	15,301	16,200	17,172	1.3
Murweh (S)	4,838	4,828	4,819	4,811	4,804	0.0
Paroo (S)	1,892	1,860	1,848	1,838	1,829	-0.2
Quilpie (S)	998	993	990	982	979	-0.1
Southern Downs (R)	36,415	39,125	41,824	44,581	47,402	1.3
Toowoomba (R)	164,501	180,052	198,591	220,571	244,340	2.0
Western Downs (R)	32,164	34,494	36,503	38,447	40,397	1.1
Darling Downs & SW Region	270,660	292,617	317,774	345,997	376,094	1.7
Queensland	4,611,491	5,092,858	5,588,618	6,090,548	6,592,858	1.8

Source: Queensland Government Population Projections, 2011 edition

Society

In 2009, 65.1 per cent of students attending a school in Darling Downs & SW Region attended a government school and 34.9 per cent attended a non-government school.

At the time of the 2006 Census, in Darling Downs & SW Region, there were 43.9 per cent of persons aged 15 years and over with a post-school qualification.

At the time of the 2006 Census, there were 4.6 per cent of persons in need of assistance with a profound or severe disability in Darling Downs & SW Region.

Economic Performance

The smoothed unemployment rate for Darling Downs & SW Region in the December quarter 2010 was 4.0 per cent.

At the time of the 2006 Census, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing was the largest industry of employment for Darling Downs & SW Region usual residents, with 13.5 per cent of the region's employed labour force.

Industry and Development

In the 12 months ending 31 March 2011, there were 1,345 dwelling units in new residential buildings approved in Darling Downs & SW Region, which represented a total of \$326.1 million.

In 2008–09, there were 28,468 businesses in Darling Downs & SW Region, 6.8 per cent of all Queensland businesses.

Toowoomba is the major service centre for the region's agricultural industry. It is home to the University of Southern Queensland, one of Queensland's largest university campuses and is the focus point for industry, development and business.

Various tourist drives/routes are available throughout the region, such as:

- Australia's Country Way from Newcastle New South Wales through to Rockhampton Queensland
- Great Inland Way down into New South Wales linking to Sydney
- Leichardt and Warrego Highways linking Matilda Highway
- Capricorn Highway and Outback Highway for linkages through to Northern Territory
- Mitchell Highway coming up from New South Wales through to North Queensland
- Adventure Way linking into South Australia down to Adelaide.

Brisbane Airport is the nearest commercial interstate and international flight airport. Airlines such as Skytrans and Qantaslink provide flight services to the region. Toowoomba has a recently upgraded airport for light aircraft, including private and charter operations. Regular flights include services to locations such as Roma, Quilpie, Dalby, Charleville, Cunnamulla, St George and Goondiwindi.

Queensland Rail's Westlander passenger rail service makes the return journey between Brisbane and Charleville twice weekly. Passengers arriving at Charleville can catch connecting road coaches to Cunnamulla and Quilpie and the region is serviced by a number of national highways and key outback roads. Queensland Rail also provides rail linkages to towns such as Chinchilla, Dalby, Miles and Roma.

Toowoomba has local bus services as its key public transport option and is also a key transit point for intrastate and interstate bus lines. Greyhound Australia, Crisps Coaches, McGuire Coaches and Kynoch Coaches all provide bus services to towns and centres such as Cunnamulla, Charleville, Roma, St. George, Toowoomba, Goondiwindi, Chinchilla and Dalby with linkages to New South Wales and Far North Queensland and Northern Territory.

The South West and Darling Downs region also provides many social and tourist opportunities for travellers and visitors to the region across a broad spectrum of tourist interests.

1.2 Key goals and priorities

The goals and priorities identified by RDA Darling Downs and SW Qld seek to achieve results that directly benefit the region as a whole and address the current issues the region is experiencing. The key goals identified include:

Goal 1: Promote the sustainable management of the region's natural resources and environment.

Goal 2: Foster Innovation and Connectivity.

Goal 3: Advocate for the enhancement of all levels of infrastructure within the region.

Goal 4: Acknowledge the economic diversity of the region, support and retain existing wealth and encourage economic development.

Goal 5: Promote the ongoing development of liveable communities that enhance the social capital of the region.

1.3 Key issues

The region is presented with a range of issues with varying degrees of importance. The main issues identified within the regional context have been prioritised to support the growth of the region. The key issues for the region, identified in consultations with stakeholders and confirmed by the RDA Darling Downs and South West Queensland, are as follows:

- demographically diverse region - high population growth in some areas and growth rate slowing in others
- high percentage of over 65 age group in sub regions that provide high levels of amenity and proximity to essential services
- some sub regions 'hollow out' for 15–24 year old age groups who leave the region to access education or employment
- housing shortages and affordability concerns for some sub regions
- employment opportunities
- low levels of education in some areas

- need to manage resource development with sustainable agriculture practices
- the region no longer serves local markets
- centralised information communications technology
- inadequate road, rail and air transport system
- need to preserve and protect natural resources and unique environment.

1.4 Key strategies

In response to the key issues, a number of strategies have been determined:

- encouraging and promoting environmental strategies which focus on conservation and appropriate landuse management
- achieving a balance between sustainable management of land and resource development activities
- facilitating the uptake of efficient and modern internet and communication technology
- promotion of the region as a cultural and innovative place
- advocating the upgrade of existing rail and road infrastructure with government funding
- encouraging an integrated transport network to deliver goods and services
- promoting and benefiting from the economic impacts of mining for the entire region
- developing a diversified local economy which builds on existing strengths
- creating a liveable and enjoyable region to live, work and play
- Attracting and retaining population throughout the region and addressing housing shortage and affordability
- providing a range of educational opportunities
- highlighting marketing strategies to attract business, industry and development.

2. Introduction and background

2.1 Regional Development Australia – Darling Downs and South West Region

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a new partnership between the Australian, State, Territory and local governments to strengthen regional communities.

There are 55 committees nationally, including 12 in Queensland. RDA committees are not-for-profit community based incorporated organisations.

The RDA Darling Downs and South West (DD & SW) Committee was set up in October 2009.

The principal role of RDA–DD & SW is to provide a conduit between all levels of government and the community to promote a better understanding of regional requirements.

Focus areas will include:

- regional business growth plans and strategies, which help support economic development, the creation of new jobs, skills development and business investment
- environmental solutions which support ongoing sustainability and the management of climate change, including the impact of natural disasters
- social inclusion strategies which will bring together and support all members of the community.

2.2 Development of the Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West Regional Roadmap

RDA Darling Downs and SW Queensland held its first formation meeting on 12 November 2009 with 10 committee members representing the areas of business, local government, natural resources, management and regional development.

Stage 1 (June 2010) included the commencement of the Regional Roadmap, with the first round of public consultations having commenced in July/August 2010 with a variety of Council's, business groups, community groups and industry.

Throughout July/August 2010 consultations were undertaken in the form of various workshops and forums. These consultations included the:

- South West Regional Economic Development Forum
- Southern Downs Economic Strategy Forum
- Darling Downs Economic Development Forum
- Australian Institute of Company Directors Forum

- Queensland State Compact Forum
- Darling Downs Symposium into Staff Attraction and Retention rates.

Other activities with specific industry and business groups were also held.

Stage 2 (August 2010) provided the opportunity for the committee to identify and determine regional issues, goals and priorities within a workshop format and formed the basis to commence preparing the regional roadmap.

Towards the end of August 2010, a draft roadmap document was presented to the committee for review and comment.

Early September 2010 saw the regional roadmap uploaded to the committee website for public comment, providing stakeholders with the opportunity to provide comments.

September 2010 saw the finalisation of the regional roadmap and submission to the Australian Federal Government and Qld State Government for review.

The document is now in its 2nd edition

Guiding Principles of the Darling Downs and South West Committee

- 1. Respect the natural landscape and encourage the principles of sustainable environmental management***
- 2. Encourage cultural diversity through racial and religious tolerance***
- 3. Develop mutually beneficial collaborative partnerships with Regional stakeholder groups***

3. Overview of the Region

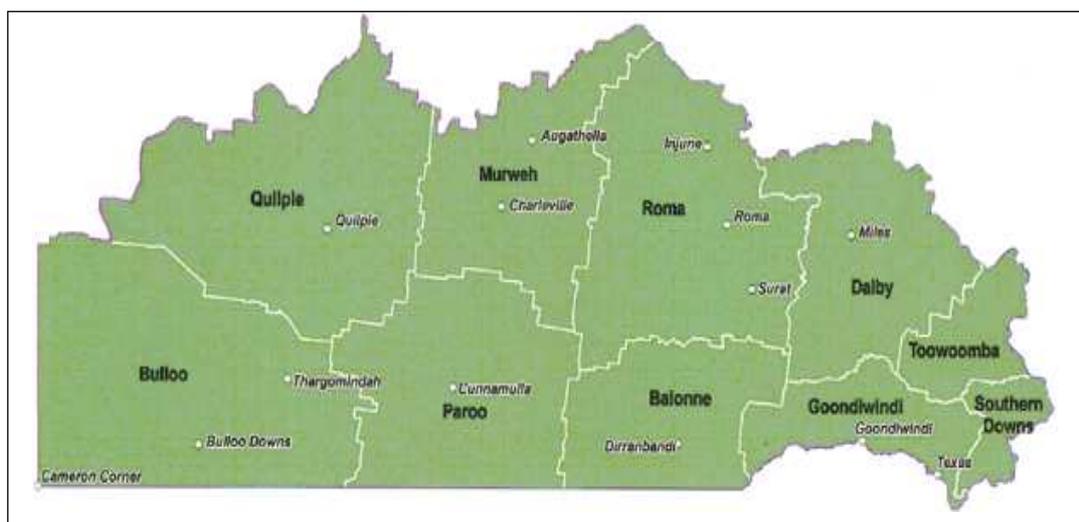
3.1 Introducing the DD & SW region

The Darling Downs and South West region is vast and varied. It includes the urban environment of Toowoomba, large rural towns such as Warwick, Roma and Goondiwindi, the emerging centre of Dalby and small service communities such as Texas, Paroo, Charleville, Bulloo and Quilpie. As varied as the region's towns, are its landscapes which include extensive rural holdings, areas of fruit and vegetable production, resource development and national parks.

The neighbouring RDA regions are:

- Fitzroy and Central West to the north
- Wide Bay and Burnett to the north–east
- Ipswich and West Moreton to the east.

Figure 3.1 RDA Darling Downs and South West region



Source: <http://www.rda.gov.au/resources/maps.aspx>

In order to present more accurate information and more effectively represent the entire DD & SW region, the region has been broken into six sub–regions described in the following sub–regional narratives.

3.1.1 Sub–Regional narratives

The purpose of the sub–regional narratives is to provide a background and explanation of each township or centre that encompasses the Darling Downs and SW region and a brief description with statistical data to highlight the unique characteristics of each town or centre.

Toowoomba

Toowoomba is the region's most populous and fastest growing LGA. Toowoomba City is the largest centre in the DD & SW region and has close links to South East Queensland

Toowoomba Regional Council, covering around 13,000 sq km and home to approximately 159,000 people, is the most populated and fastest expanding local government area within the DD & SW region. It is the eastern-most local government area (LGA) within the region and sits at the junction of major highways from Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Darwin and Brisbane. Toowoomba has close links with South East Queensland and Toowoomba City has been nominated as a Principal Regional Activity Centre under the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009–2031.

The settlement of Toowoomba dates back to the early 1800s when it emerged as a service centre for the vast pastoral holdings to the west. Substantial growth occurred when the railway reached the town in the 1860s. Toowoomba was officially declared a city in 1904.

Today, Toowoomba city is a vibrant urban centre with an estimated resident population of 104,927. It is the largest centre within the DD & SW region and the second fastest growing, experiencing a 1.9% per annum increase in population from 2004 to 2010. This growth is anticipated to continue, with the Toowoomba LGA projected to increase by around 65,000 people over the 20 year period between 2006 and 2026 - representing an average annual growth rate of 1.7%.

Toowoomba's major enterprises include manufacturing, provision of health services, retail, community services, agriculture, and education. Toowoomba City hosts the main campus of the University of Southern Queensland, the only university within the DD & SW region.

Southern Downs

Southern Downs Regional Council is the second most populated LGA within the DD & SW region, with around 36,000 residents. The major rural service towns of Warwick and Stanthorpe are within a two and a half hour drive of Brisbane and are approximately three hours from the Gold Coast.

Southern Downs is a high value agricultural area within the highly productive Darling Downs region.

Southern Downs has historically had a strong reliance on primary industries due to the highly productive Darling Downs farming region located on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range. Today, agriculture still remains a dominant industry in the Southern Downs, with agricultural earnings for the LGA reaching \$220m in 2005–06. Cropping is the major agricultural earner, amounting to 62.3% of the total annual agricultural production in the LGA. Manufacturing is also a significant employer, with these activities centred in Warwick.

Although the LGA's population growth is anticipated to continue, the rate will slow from 1.5% per year in 2010 to a projected 1.1% per year in 2026.

Currently, a comparatively high proportion of the population is over 65 (16.9%), above the State average of 12.3%. This is potentially due to the high amenity rural towns and villages and the proximity to essential services at Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Western Downs

The Western Downs Regional Council area is located approximately 200 kilometres west of Brisbane. The area is experiencing a period of rapid growth, with the resident population increasing from 29,476 in 2004 to 32,071 in 2010, a growth rate of 1.9% per year. Growth is expected to continue, principally due to the emerging resources development sector centred on the Surat Basin. By 2026, Western Downs is expected to be home to around 38,500 residents.

Western Downs is on the cusp of an energy sector boom, which could triple the LGA's output but place pressure on disadvantaged residents

Although the region has begun to diversify from traditional markets in the agricultural sector to support industries aligned with the energy sector, agriculture, forestry and fishing still account for 33% of the LGA's output.

It is anticipated that future growth will be focussed on the energy sector, which, quoting the Western Downs Regional Council's website 'has the potential to more than triple the gross regional product'. Although local residents can expect to share some of the benefits, it is already apparent that the anticipated population influx has had an impact on the housing market, with the Western Downs Regional Council's website noting that the median house price within the LGA has increased by 176% over five years, placing pressure on more disadvantaged residents.

Goondiwindi

Goondiwindi Regional Council is located approximately 350 kilometres south west of Brisbane. It is primarily an agricultural and pastoral area producing cotton, grain, wool, poultry, beef, lamb and pork. It covers an area of 19,294 square kilometres and extends from Texas in the east to Weengallon in the west.

Primary production and associated agribusiness is the economic mainstay of Goondiwindi.

Primary production and associated agribusiness is the economic mainstay of the LGA with the agricultural sector amounting to \$368m in 2005–2006. The area is supported by the Dumaresq, Weir and Macintyre Rivers and Macintyre Brook which provide water for the towns, irrigation, industry and livestock.

The town of Goondiwindi (population 6,436) is located on the northern side of the Macintyre River and provides a variety of services including health, entertainment and education. The other large towns of the area are Inglewood and Texas with smaller centres including Yelarbon, Toobeah, Bungunya and Talwood.

As at June 2009, the Goondiwindi LGA had a population of approximately 11,413, with an annual growth rate of 2% - a marked increase from 1.4% in 2005. This compares well with the Qld State average of 2.5%. It is anticipated that this growth will slow to around 1.6% per annum in 2026.

Maranoa – Balonne

The Maranoa–Balonne’s lifeblood has long been agriculture, however strong growth in the energy sector offers new opportunities if well managed.

The Maranoa Regional Council area is located approximately 480 kilometres west of Brisbane and 350 km west of Toowoomba. Around 18,000 people live in the LGA with Maranoa growing at 1.1% per year currently as opposed to a 0% increase in the Balonne area. This has stabilised somewhat from the 2005-2010 figure of minus growth 0.7%. Maranoa is projected to continue growing at the same rate to 2026 largely due to increasing development within the energy sector. The largest town is Roma, home to the Roma Saleyards, one of Australia’s largest cattle selling centres. As at 2009, around 6,500 people were resident in Roma.

The Shire of Balonne, located directly to the south of the Maranoa LGA on the New South Wales border, has an area of 31,119 square kilometres and a population of 4,847 in 2010. The population is projected to increase to 4,995 by 2026, however current indications do not support this projection. The largest town in the Balonne region is St George, with around 2,500 people.

The Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan released in September 2009, describes the region as ‘taking in rich cropping and grazing lands and significant reserves of coal seam gas, conventional gas and petroleum. The region includes a significant part of the Queensland Murray–Darling Basin, including the catchments of the Maranoa and Balonne–Culgoa river systems.’

Rural industry has long been the lifeblood of the Maranoa and Balonne LGAs with agricultural production totalling \$174m in 2005–6. Cropping is the most significant agricultural sector in Balonne Shire at 60.7% of overall production. Cotton is the most significant crop of the area. Cropping is becoming less significant in the Maranoa area at 13.3%

The Maranoa and Balonne LGAs are characterised by a younger average population due to a relatively high proportion of under–14s. The population then ‘hollows out’ between the ages of 15 to 24, typically due to young people leaving rural areas to access education or employment in urban centres.

The Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan identifies the following challenges facing the Maranoa–Balonne region over the next 20 years:

- managing growth associated with the development of energy resources
- maintaining profitability of enterprises reliant on transport services and facing fluctuating commodity prices
- addressing irregular climatic and weather conditions
- providing opportunities for young people who have traditionally migrated to urban areas
- attracting and retaining skilled staff
- accessing and providing essential services in smaller centres within the region.

The ‘South West’ – Bulloo, Murweh, Paroo and Quilpie

Bulloo, Murweh, Paroo and Quilpie Shires are described as the ‘South West’ and together cover a total area of 230,000 square kilometres. The South West Regional Plan, released in August 2009, describes the South West as ‘part of Australia’s arid inland and experiences extreme temperatures, drought and floods’.

The South West is known as ‘the home of the natural sciences’ with key industries such as gas, oil, agriculture and tourism.

The South West is primarily an extensive grazing area with agricultural earnings dominated by livestock production.

Population densities are very low within the South West region. Bulloo Shire has the smallest population within the DD & SW region, with 377 residents in 2010. Of the population, 14.5% within the South West are of Indigenous origin, well above the state average of 7.2%. Over a quarter of residents in Paroo are of Aboriginal origin.

Gross individual weekly earnings in the South West tend to be below the state average, with over 50% of persons aged 15 years and over in Paroo Shire earning less than \$400 per week. The South West also has a relatively low proportion of people with year 11 or 12 as their highest level of schooling, ranging from 36% in Paroo to 42% in Bulloo. Post school qualifications are also relatively low.

The rural communities of the South West are particularly resilient and maintain strong rural traditions. The South West has a strong identity and is known as the ‘home of the natural sciences’, recognising the South West’s considerable natural assets and the unique lifestyle opportunities they create.

Future challenges facing the South West include population change, increased transport costs, climate change, maintaining healthy river systems, renewable energy development and a shift to a more diverse economy. The South–West Regional Plan identifies health, education, transport and sustainable natural resource management as the South West’s top priorities.

3.2 Geography

3.2.1 Climate

The Darling Downs and SW region is extensive and climatic conditions vary markedly throughout the region.

Mean annual rainfall varies from less than 300 mm in Thargomindah to over 650 mm in Toowoomba and Warwick. The majority of rain falls within the summer months. The region can also experience a large range of temperatures with January the hottest month and July the coolest.

Table 2 Mean annual climate data – DD & SW region

Centre	Mean annual max temp (°C)	Mean annual min temp (°C)	Annual rainfall (mm)
Toowoomba	23.1	12.6	650.9
Warwick	24.7	10.4	654.1
Goondiwindi	27.3	12.8	594.4
Dalby	26.9	12.0	606.1
Roma	27.8	12.8	568.6
St George	28.0	13.8	507.3
Charleville	28.0	13.5	493.1
Cunnamulla	28.0	14.2	376.0
Quilpie	29.2	15.4	344.9
Thargomindah	29.5	16.3	280.3

Source: <http://www.bom.gov.au/>

3.2.2 Transport

The Darling Downs and SW region is serviced by a number of national highways and outback roads. Passenger rail services travel between Brisbane and Charleville run twice weekly. Freight and coal are also hauled by rail, also cattle and grain transportation to major ports. Coal has become the major commodity for rail transport throughout the region and this is impacting on the agricultural and livestock transport systems. Heavy traffic on the regions roads has increased rapidly due to resource development and lack of rail availability to traditional industries. Toowoomba has local bus services and is also a transit point for interstate bus lines.

Brisbane Airport is the nearest commercial interstate and international flight airport with the Gold Coast Airport at Coolangatta also providing interstate and international services. Toowoomba airport has been recently upgraded and is suitable for light aircraft, including private and charter operations. Regular passenger flights service Roma, Charleville, Cunnamulla, St George, Goondiwindi, Thargomindah and Quilpie. Other smaller airstrips in the region provide access for the Royal Flying Doctor Service and charter services.

Buses service most centres. Toowoomba has local bus services as its key public transport option and is also a key transit point for intrastate and interstate bus lines. Greyhound Australia and Kynoch Coaches both provide bus services to towns and centres such as Cunnamulla, Charleville, Roma, St. George, Toowoomba, Goondiwindi and Dalby with linkages to New South Wales and Far North Queensland in Northern Territory. Kynoch Coaches services Cunnamulla and Travel West coaches connect Cunnamulla to Bourke in New South Wales.

The region is geographically restrained in relation to transport. Toowoomba acts as the major transport hub which restricts the region interconnecting and currently acts as a 'choke point' for the region. A second Range Crossing is desperately needed to bring efficiencies to the transport network. Roma, St George, Goondiwindi, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Miles and Charleville are secondary transport hubs within the region which are important for the region in relation to tourism, freight and produce movement, transport movements and service delivery.

3.2.3 Water Resources

Major waterways in the South West include the Warrego, Paroo and Bulloo Rivers and parts of Cooper Creek and the Balonne–Culgoa river system.

The Warrego, Paroo and Nebine river systems form part of the northern headwaters of the Murray–Darling Basin, while the catchments in the west of the region, some of which form part of the Lake Eyre Basin, are internally draining. The Channel Country, which includes Cooper Creek, is a broad network of flooded alluvial plains, water courses and swamps.

Further east through Maranoa and Balonne Shires, the major water assets include the Maranoa, Balonne and Moonie Rivers, the Great Artesian Basin, and alluvial aquifers, wetlands and water storages. Nationally important wetlands include the Balonne River floodplain, Myola–Mulga Downs salt lake and claypans of the Balonne.

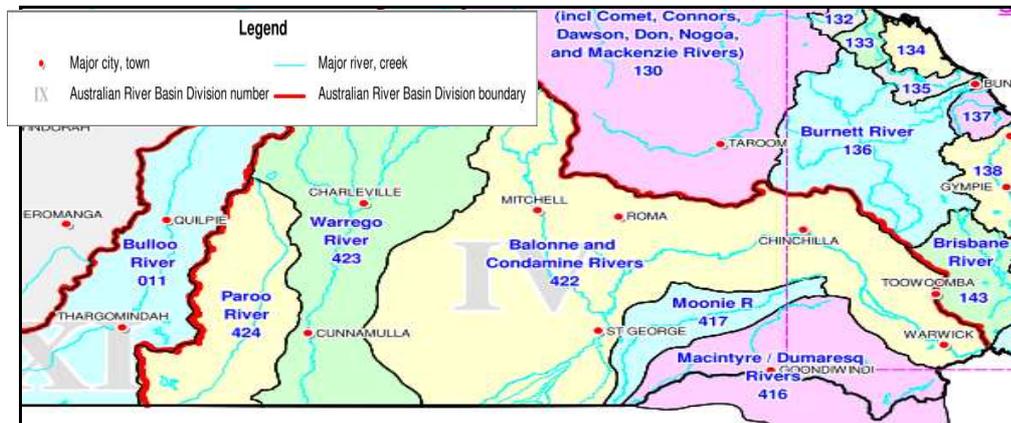
The Condamine River flows through the local government areas of Western Downs, Southern Downs and Toowoomba and is part of the northern catchment of the Murray Darling Basin. The Moonie River basin (which includes the Barwon and Moonie Rivers and Teelba Creek), is located east of St George. There are no major towns within this catchment.

The Macintyre and Weir Rivers drain a large area of southern Queensland and extend into northern New South Wales. The Dumaresq River forms part of the state border in this location.

Historic records show flooding occurring within many of the waterways in the DD & SW region isolating rural towns. Major and catastrophic flooding occurred throughout the region in the early part of 2011. The Bureau of Meteorology operates a flood warning system for major waterways based on rainfall and river height observations. Local governments are also able to provide information regarding flooding. Flooding rains are also essential to allow the Mitchell Grass country to regenerate after a period of drought. Mitchell grasses are endemic to Australia and grow mainly in northern areas where annual rainfall is between 250 mm and 550 mm. It is generally open country characterised by heavy clay soils.

The Great Artesian Basin is one of the largest artesian groundwater basins in the world. The Great Artesian Basin stores a huge volume of water, estimated at 64,900 million mega litres. Bore water is used for watering stock, irrigation, domestic water and town water supply throughout the west. Coal Seam Gas extraction in the region is creating much concern with regard to possible release of toxins during the process into the artesian aquifers.

Figure 3.2 River Basins within the Darling Downs and SW



Source: <http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/qld/brochures/qld/map.pdf>

3.2.4 Natural resources

Surat Basin

The Surat Basin occupies 300,000 square kilometres of central southern Queensland and central northern New South Wales. It is associated with rich coal deposits and gas fields. Significant reserves of both coal seam gas and thermal coal have been discovered in Toowoomba, Western Downs and Maranoa Regional Councils.

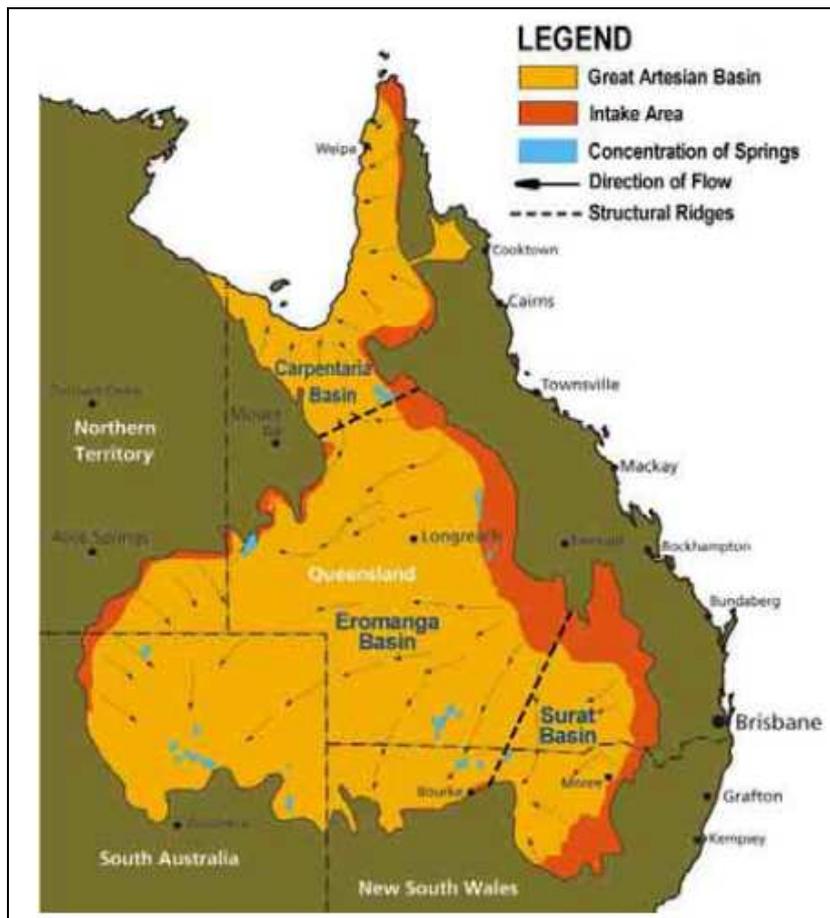
The Queensland state government is currently planning a new multi-use rail link to facilitate the export of coal and freight through to the Port of Gladstone.

Cooper/Eromanga Basins

The Cooper/Eromanga Basins, form part of the Great Artesian Basin and extend over South Australian and Queensland borders with the majority of the basin located within Queensland. The basin is known to produce gas, ethane, crude oil and gas liquids.

The basin supports a number of major oil and gas companies which play an important role through investment into the region. These include Strike Energy, Santos Limited, Origin Energy, Australian-Canadian Oil Royalties and Drillsearch.

Figure 3.3 Eromanga and Surat Basins



Source: <http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/factsheets/pdf/water/w68.pdf>

3.3 Tourism

The DD & SW region has plenty to offer tourists from the unique outback experience of the South West and Darling Downs, the Cosmos Centre in Charleville, and the urban environment of Toowoomba and its annual Carnival of Flowers held annually for over 60 years.

Driving holidays are popular, in particular with the 'grey nomads' and backpackers. There are a number of well known driving tours which pass through the region, which are promoted by Queensland Tourism, as follows:

- Great Inland Way – Sydney to Cairns. Total length of 2,800 kilometres. From Sydney to the Queensland Border via Bathurst, Dubbo, and Lightning Ridge, travelling through St George and Roma continuing north to Emerald and Charters Towers to finish at Cairns or further north to Cooktown.
- Leichardt Highway – Melbourne to Rockhampton via Dubbo and Moree in NSW, crossing the border to Goondiwindi and Moree, continuing north to Rockhampton and Yeppoon. Total length 2,000km.
- Australia's Country Way – Wallangarra to Rockhampton. 900 kilometres. Travels via Toowoomba and the Darling Downs towns of Allora, Clifton, and Nobby.
- Adventure Way – Brisbane to Adelaide via Thargomindah.

3.4 Demographics

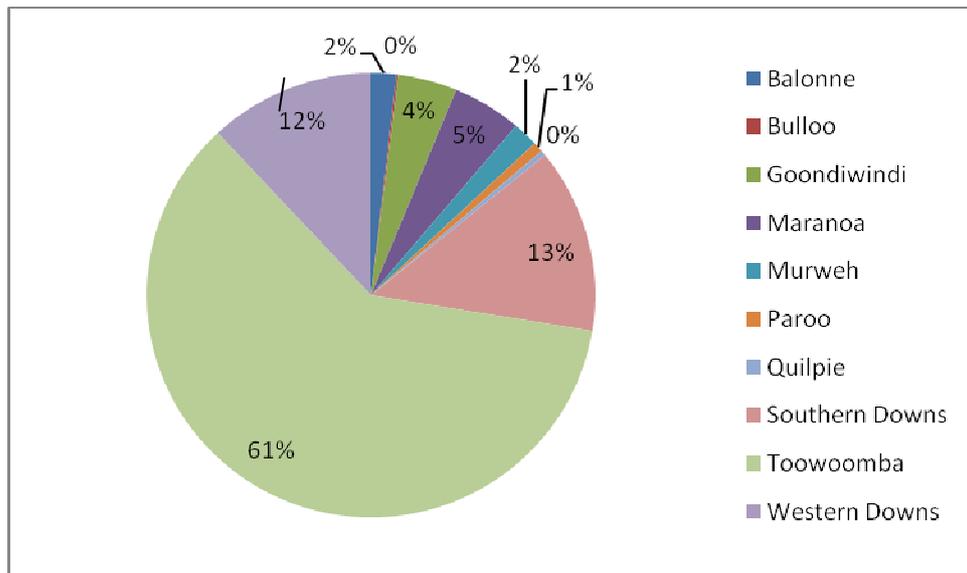
3.4.1 Population distribution

The DD & SW region is sparsely populated with its 268,026 people making up 5.9% of Queensland’s total population.

The most populous local government area is Toowoomba, with a population of 159,098 in 2009. Toowoomba is also the fastest growing local government area, with the municipality experiencing a 1.9% increase from 2004 to 2009, and has the region’s highest population density, at 884.7 persons per square kilometre. Toowoomba City is the region’s largest urban centre with a population of 104,927.

Bulloo is the smallest shire with the population changing from 429 people in 2004 to 377 in 2010.

Figure 3.4 Estimated resident population as at June 30 2010



Source: www.oesr.qld.gov.au

3.4.2 Indigenous population

The 2006 census recorded 9,249 indigenous people within the region comprising 3.9% of the region’s population. Within Queensland, 3.3% of people identified themselves of indigenous origin.

As a proportion of the total population, Paroo is home to 533 indigenous people, representing 27.6% of the population.

3.4.3 Population projections

By 2026, the DD & SW region is projected to be 330,204, or 5.6% of the State. This equates to an average annual growth rate of 1.4% per annum from 2006 to 2026. This is lower than the anticipated Queensland growth rate of 1.8% over the same period.

Within the region, Toowoomba is expected to grow by 61,484 people over 20 years from 2006 to 2026. This is an average growth rate of 1.7% representing 70.9% of the region’s total growth.

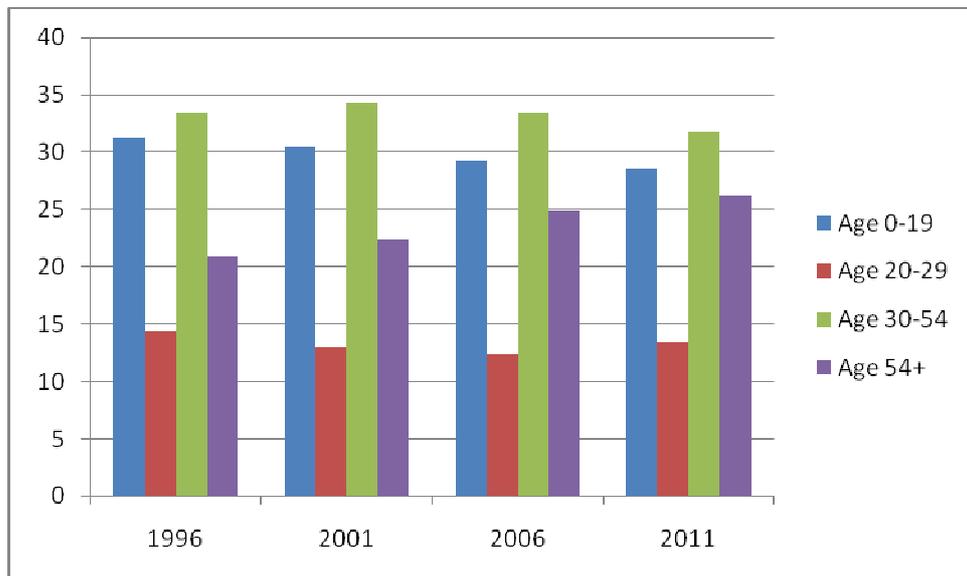
3.4.4 Age profiles

As at 30 June 2008, 21.6% were aged 0–14, 64.2% aged 15–64 and 14.2% aged 65 or older.

Balonne Shire has the largest proportion of children within their population at 25.7% with Bullo Shire the lowest at 16.5%. Typical of many rural areas across Australia, there are proportionally less young people between the ages of 15 and 24 within the region. This trend is particularly apparent in Balonne, Goondiwindi and Quilpie where this age group makes up only 10% of their respective populations. Toowoomba reverses this trend with 15% of the population made up by the 15–24 age group, above the regional and state averages of 13.7% and 14.2% respectively, perhaps due to the education and employment opportunities in Toowoomba not available elsewhere in the region.

Southern Downs has the highest aged 65 or older at 16.9% potentially due to the Southern Downs location within an easy driving distance of essential services at Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Bulloo has the lowest proportion of over 65s, at 9.8%. The state average is 12.3%.

Figure 3.5 DD & SW Estimated resident population by age



Source: www.oesr.qld.gov.au

3.4.5 Social characteristics

The following table shows the percentage of the population within the DD & SW region according to the Socio–Economic Index of Disadvantage. By definition, Queensland has 20% of the population within each quintile, with Quintile 1 representing the most disadvantaged and Quintile 5 the most disadvantaged.

Within DD & SW 27.5% of the population were within the most disadvantaged quintile, with only 11.9% in the least disadvantaged quintile, compared to the Queensland average of 20% within each.

Table 3 Socio–economic index of disadvantage within DD & SW region

LGA	Quintile 1 (most disadvantaged)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (least disadvantaged)
Balonne	38.9	30.4	6.5	20.1	4.1
Bulloo	16.6	54.6	21.5	7.3	0.0
Goondiwindi	20.8	34.4	18.5	20.0	6.3
Maranoa	31.2	22.0	15.7	25.4	5.7
Murweh	35.5	46.4	7.3	4.6	6.2
Paroo	76.8	3.2	11.1	5.5	3.5
Quilpie	56.7	24.5	9.5	9.2	0.0
Southern Downs	39.4	36.9	19.4	4.4	0.0
Toowoomba	23.0	26.8	18.3	13.6	18.3
Western Downs	30.4	28.7	20.3	19.7	0.9
DD & SW Region	27.5	28.7	18.0	13.8	11.9
Queensland	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0

Source: www.oesr.qld.gov.au

At the time of the 2006 Census, 43.9% of residents within the DD & SW region stated their weekly income as less than \$400, higher than the 39.7% recorded for all of Queensland.

3.5 Employment

3.5.1 Employment characteristics

Generally unemployment in the region is extremely low, with the unemployment rate for the region in the March quarter 2010 at 3.2%, well below the state average of 5.6%. However, underemployment could be a related problem indicated by the region's over–representation within the lowest two quintiles of the socio–economic index of disadvantage. Additionally, over 43% of those working in the DD & SW region earn less than \$400 per week.

3.5.2 Industry base

South West Queensland and the Darling Downs region produces around one third of Queensland's agricultural output, and is a major producer of cotton as well as beef.

The 2011 figures showed that agriculture was the largest industry of employment, employing 13.5% of the region's labour force. Although mining is an emerging industry, in 2011 it only accounted for 2% of the region's labour force.

Education & Training, Health Care and Social Services, Retail and Construction are the major employment industries at present. Retail and Manufacturing are in significant decline. There is an increasing demand for Financial and Recreation Services.

Table 4 Numbers Employed by industry DD & SW region

Industry	2006	2011	2006%	2011%
Agriculture	14,666	16,104	13.8	13.2
Education and Training	9,442	13,080	8.9	10.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	11,561	12,458	10.9	10.2
Retail Trade	12,537	11,745	11.8	9.7
Other Services	4,055	9,024	3.8	7.4
Construction	7,747	7,365	7.3	6.1
Manufacturing	10,931	6,568	10.3	5.4
Accommodation and Food Services	5,892	6,354	5.5	5.2
Public Administration and Safety	7,330	6,298	6.9	5.2
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	4,981	5,804	4.7	4.8
Financial and Insurance Services	2,540	5,617	2.4	4.6
Wholesale trade	3,910	5,503	3.7	4.5
Administrative and Support Services	1,895	4,079	1.8	3.4
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3,566	3,368	3.4	2.8
Mining	1,078	2,407	1.0	2.0
Arts and Recreation Services	779	1,884	0.7	1.5
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1,100	1,429	1.0	1.2
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1,302	1,316	1.2	1.1
Information, media and telecommunications	973	1,277	0.9	1.0

Source: www.oesr.qld.gov.au

3.5.3 Occupations

The most common occupations for workers within the DD & SW region are managers (17.3%) labourers (15.5%) and technicians and trades workers (14.2%).

Table 5 Employment by occupation – DD & SW Region

Industry	Number	%
Managers	18,838	17.3
Professionals	15,219	14.0
Technicians and trades workers	15,464	14.2
Community and personal service workers	9,163	8.4
Clerical and administrative workers	13,519	12.4
Sales workers	9,753	9.0
Machinery operators and drivers	8,329	7.7
Labourers	16,875	15.5

Source: www.oesr.qld.gov.au

3.6 Environmental features

The region is made up of a variety of ecosystems, national parks, state forests, extensive ranges, floodplains, riverine and wetland areas, with a large focus on conservation and natural resource management at a local and state level.

3.6.1 Southern Brigalow Belt

Brigalow Belt South consists of predominantly Jurassic and younger deposits of the Great Artesian Basin and Tertiary deposits with elevated basalt flows. The climate of the area is subhumid and dominant vegetation includes eucalypt woodlands and open forests of ironbarks, poplar box, spotted gum, cypress pine, grasslands.

3.6.2 Mulga Lands

The Mulga Lands Bioregion extends north and west into the region from northern NSW.

The Paroo River flows through Wanaaring at the centre of the bioregion, the Warrego River flows through Enngonia to the east, and further east the Culgoa River flows parallel to the north–eastern border in the adjacent Darling Riverine Plains Bioregion.

The bioregion lies mostly within the Murray–Darling Basin and encompasses the Bulloo, Lake Bancannia, Warrego, Paroo, Darling, Barwon and Culgoa River catchments.

3.6.3 Murray Darling Basin

The Murray Darling Basin stretches from Queensland's channel country through NSW to the Australian Alps, Victoria's north–east and the Riverina, and on into South Australia's Riverland and the Coorong at the mouth of the Murray. The river system within the region includes the McIntyre Border Rivers, the Condamine–Balonne, Warrego and Paroo rivers.

The region is rich in cultural and natural assets (e.g. the Bunya Mountains National Park; the rich black soil plains; and the Paroo River floodplains, which include the Currawinya National Park).

3.6.4 National Parks and Reserves

Main Range National Park

Main Range National Park, located approximately 50 kilometres east of Warwick, is a World Heritage listed park and home to a number of rare and endangered wildlife.

Girraween National Park

Girraween National Park is located on the NSW–Queensland border near Stanthorpe. It is well known for its massive granite boulders dominating the landscape and its wide variety of wildlife.

Tregole National Park

Tregole National Park, located between Roma and Charleville in Murweh Shire, straddles the boundary between two of the state’s natural regions the Brigalow Belt and the mulga lands. This park is particularly significant due to its remaining stand of ooline *Cadellia pentastylis*, a dry rainforest tree now very vulnerable to extinction.

Currawinya National Park, Hungerford

Currawinya National Park is located on the Queensland–NSW border approximately 170 kilometres south–west of Cunnamulla. Large freshwater and saltwater lakes provide important inland habitats for waterbirds. Currawinya also protects mulga lands habitats, threatened wildlife and cultural heritage sites.

Lake Bindegolly National Park, Thargomindah

Lake Bindegolly is 40 kilometres east of Thargomindah in Bulloo Shire. This diverse 14,000 ha park has samphire flats, claypans, sand dunes, hard and soft red mulga country, gidgee woodlands, and *Eremophila* shrublands, The Park forms an important wildlife refuge in the arid zone and is home to more than 195 species of birds, 80 other kinds of animals and 300 species of plants.

3.7 Education

Toowoomba is a leading regional and inter–regional centre for the education industry, and provides high standard education and training services. The region offers specialty training and technical skills education in agriculture and engineering, among other industries.

The region offers extensive potential for education services for both regional and overseas students. It provides both academic and vocational training, from primary to postgraduate level. Existing educational facilities include the University Of Southern Queensland, Dalby Agricultural College, Queensland College Of Wine Tourism, Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, and various secondary and primary schools in Toowoomba provide boarding facilities.

3.7.1 Education characteristics

Within the DD & SW region, 41.4% of the population aged 15 years and over stated that their highest level of schooling was year 11 or 12 (or equivalent), compared to 49.5% for the state. Within the region, 43.9% of those aged 15 years or over within the region have a post-school qualification. Table 4.5 below illustrates the education statistics for the region.

Table 6 Education Statistics for the region

Town or centre	Year 11 or 12 (or equivalent)		Persons with a post school qualification	
	Number	%	Number	%
Balonne	1,492	43.3	1,362	39.5
Bulloo	128	42.1	114	37.9
Goondiwindi	3,091	39.9	3,250	41.9
Maranoa	3,627	38.6	3,703	39.4
Murweh	1,269	36.2	1,443	41.1
Paroo	539	36.1	583	39
Quilpie	312	40.6	289	37.6
Southern Downs	9,115	36.7	10,167	40.9
Toowoomba	49,046	44.2	51,418	46.3
Western Downs	7,776	35.6	8,632	39.5
Darling Downs and SW Region	76,395	41.4	809,61	43.9
<i>Queensland</i>	<i>1,534,024</i>	<i>49.5</i>	<i>,1560,868</i>	<i>50.4</i>

Source: www.oesr.qld.gov.au

3.7.2 Queensland College of Wine Tourism

The Queensland College of Wine Tourism is a joint venture between the Department of Education and Training and the University of Southern Queensland having opened in 2007 and provides an education and training facility for the Queensland wine tourism industry, the College is located on the campus of Stanthorpe State High School.

The university is also affiliated with the Queensland Wine Industry, the Department of Employment, Economic Development & Innovation and Southern Downs Regional Council.

The college facilitates education and training at secondary, TAFE and tertiary levels through its education partners:

- 13 Gateway Schools to the Wine Tourism industry
- Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE
- USQ – Faculty of Sciences; Faculty of Business.

Source: <http://www.usq.edu.au/qcwt>

3.7.3 Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE

Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE has various campuses spread throughout the Darling Downs and South West Queensland. Courses include arts and media, building and construction, information technology and engineering, specialist studies in horticulture and agriculture, and hospitality. The various campuses throughout the region provide apprenticeships and traineeships for students within an array of courses.

3.7.4 University of Southern Queensland

The University of Southern Queensland based in Toowoomba providing on-campus and distance education. The university includes campuses at Fraser Coast and Springfield, Queensland and is home to a number of leading Australian research centres including the Australian Centre for Sustainable Catchments (ACSC), the National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture (NCEA) and The Centre of Excellence in Engineered Fibre Composites (CEEFC).

Source: <http://www.usq.edu.au/aboutusq>

The university provides a range of tertiary degree opportunities for both national and international students it generates wealth and investment within Toowoomba, which creates flow-on effects for the region as a whole.

3.7.5 Charleville School of Distance Education

The Charleville School of Distance Education provides distance education services to approximately 200 students throughout a 400,000 square kilometre area of southern and south-western Queensland. The School was established in 1966 and is a State-run educational facility serving students from Prep to Year 10. Students complete units of work, participate in daily on-air lessons and communicate through email and web-based 'classrooms' with their peers and teachers. Face to face field events such as camps, In-school Weeks and Mini-schools, Cluster Musters and Swim and Sports Musters are also held to allow assessment, socialisation and enhanced learning.

3.8 Health and emergency services

A range of public and private health services and hospitals are currently funded and provided by Queensland Health for the Darling Downs and South West communities. These health care services are provided within most of the regional towns and centres within the region including Charleville, Cunnamulla, Quilpie, Dalby, Goondiwindi, Warwick, Roma, Texas, Stanthorpe, St. George, Miles, Augathella, Thargomindah and Morven or through access to larger facilities in Toowoomba and Brisbane.

A number of visiting specialist services are also provided and service delivery varies, with some services offered daily, while others range from weekly to annually. Charleville is the key health service provider for the South West, with Cunnamulla the secondary service provider. Primary emergency services are available out of each centre, with the exception of Morven, where after-hours emergency services are provided through Charleville. Uncomplicated birthing services for the South West are offered in Charleville, with access to complicated birthing services available in Brisbane or Toowoomba.

A range of health services are currently funded by Queensland Health for the Maranoa–Balonne. These services are provided from the activity centres of Roma, St George, Mitchell, Injune, Mungindi, Surat, Dirranbandi, Wallumbilla and Yuleba, or through access to larger facilities in Toowoomba and Brisbane.

A number of visiting specialist services are also provided. Service delivery varies, with some services offered daily, while others range from weekly to annually. Roma is the key health service provider for Maranoa–Balonne. Primary emergency services are available out of each centre with the exception of Wallumbilla and Yuleba, where after hours emergency services are provided through Roma.

Uncomplicated birthing services for Maranoa–Balonne are offered through Roma and St George, with access to complicated birthing services available through Brisbane and Toowoomba.

A number of additional health care services including private health care services exist within the region providing specific health care needs for a whole range of additional health issues. However, the majority of these additional health care services tend to be located within the larger ‘centres’ such as Toowoomba.

The region is also serviced by the Royal Flying Doctor Service which provides immediate health care services, transport and emergency care for rural areas within Australia. The region includes two Royal Flying Doctor Service bases in the townships of Charleville and Ballera, which provide an aircraft available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The RACQ Careflight helicopter is also available for the region based out of Brisbane and Toowoomba for additional emergency rescue based services.

The region also involves at least one rural fire brigade service or fire rescue/fire station within each town or centre to attend fire related matters. The region incorporates 29 fulltime ambulance stations, with ‘Local Area Committees’ set up in townships such as Charleville, Toowoomba, Roma and Dalby to provide informed community feedback on ambulance/performance based issues which need addressing.

3.9 Infrastructure

Transport

The region provides for a range of transport network connections to New South Wales, Northern Territory and South Australia. Some existing road connections throughout the region include the Gore Highway, Mitchell Highway, Great Inland Way, Warrego Highway, Adventure Way and Great Inland Way opening the region to the neighbouring regions and states within Australia and provide development roads links to mining and agricultural centres such as Mt Isa and Longreach.

A number of areas in the region offer strategic location opportunities as inter–modal links for road and rail distribution centres. The region has the potential to develop major freight and logistics centres, with specialist skills in warehousing, distribution and material handling.

Major infrastructure projects to enhance transport capability are underway. These will improve transport facilities and enhance opportunities for development of all sectors of the economy including resources, food processing, agribusiness and manufacturing.

The development at Charlton/Wellcamp, immediately west of Toowoomba, has been planned as a future major industrial area. This area is located at the intersection of the Warrego Highway and the future realignment of the Brisbane to Melbourne national highway. Australian Transport Energy Corridor Ltd has announced it will invest up to \$100 million to develop further areas of the Charlton–Wellcamp precinct.

Source: www.dalbychamber.com.au

QR National, through the Australian Railroad Group, provides freight movement services for the area, including transportation of beef, grain, sugar, lead and copper. The West Moreton Coal System which stretches from the Port of Brisbane through Toowoomba, Chinchilla and Dalby, provides coal transportation service. Queensland Rail's Westlander passenger rail service makes the return journey between Brisbane and Charleville twice weekly.

Brisbane Airport is the nearest commercial interstate and international flight airport. Airlines such as Skytrans and Qantaslink provide flight services to the region. Toowoomba has an airport for light aircraft, including private and charter operations. Regular passenger flights service includes locations such as Roma, Quilpie, Dalby, Charleville, Cunnamulla, St George and Goondiwindi.

Telecommunications

The region is serviced in most areas by a telephone network and most populated centres have broadband or wireless internet access. Mobile telephone services and 3G, GSM and CDMA are available in settled areas of the region. Data services are available via two-way satellite, ADSL, wireless broadband and ISDN. A joint State and Commonwealth initiative is currently assessing the region's future ICT needs.

The State Government continues to encourage advanced telecommunications infrastructure by leveraging expenditure to stimulate carrier investment in areas such as mobile towers and broadband. The State's major energy supplier is deploying optic fibre infrastructure for energy management and improved supply to consumers. Excess telecommunications capacity is available to other carriers and this provides an opportunity for improved access to service throughout the region.

Source: www.dalbychamber.com.au

Energy

The region incorporates a range of renewable and non-renewable energy resources such as the Surat Basin and Cooper/Eromanga Basins, Braemar, Darling Downs, Kogan Creek and Spring Gully Power Stations.

The townships or centres of Toowoomba, Injune, Miles, Chinchilla, Roma and Yuleba all contain coal deposits of either hot dry rock or coal seam.

Oil and gas pipelines run through the region extend from Toowoomba in the east through the townships of St. George, Cunnamulla and out to the Bulloo local government area in the west. The pipelines also extend up as far as Quilpie, Roma and into the Fitzroy and Central West region.

The interest and investment for the region in coal and energy resources is expected to greatly increase over the next 20 years. There is a range of coal and energy projects either

proposed or within a preliminary proposal stage with the relevant State Government departments for consideration.

Housing

Increased cost of living, interests' rates and the global financial crisis have contributed to the housing shortage, housing affordability and depressed market concerns for the region.

A high emphasis should be placed on improving land availability, reducing time and costs associated with providing new parcels of land to the market and more equitable infrastructure charges to encourage development aimed at addressing housing shortage and affordability for the region.

The majority of smaller towns and centres within the region have experienced limited housing development over the past year. Limited development of housing and housing estates can result in housing affordability issues, when demand outsources supply.

The Surat Basin area is expected to generate approximately 12,500 possible employees, and will place additional stress on the existing available housing stock. The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation along with the Department of Infrastructure and Planning are jointly implementing the Surat Basin Future Directions Statement, which aims at building a prosperous and sustainable future for the Surat Basin. A headline initiative of the statement includes 'developing a town housing affordability strategy' to address the housing affordability issues within the Surat Basin area.

3.10 Major projects

A range of major projects are currently underway, proposed, or identified as essential within the region. Major projects are important in delivering and addressing community expectations for development and growth within the region.

Toowoomba Range Crossing/Warrego Highway

The Toowoomba bypass (Range Crossing) is an essential and required major project for the region. The existing Warrego Highway currently passes through the centre of Toowoomba generating a large volume of traffic movements with both heavy and light vehicles passing through a dense urban environment. The current highway through Toowoomba generates pollution, air and noise concerns along with pedestrian and road safety issues for Toowoomba. The problem has been greatly increased by the huge increase in heavy traffic servicing the resource development areas to the west. This has also meant that a greatly accelerated degradation of existing infrastructure has occurred.

A bypass, which diverts unnecessary traffic from the centre of Toowoomba, will reduce traffic and transport movements, improve safety, facilitate future growth in the region, provide a more efficient and time reduced state highway system and facilitate regional and interstate transportation.

The project is estimated to cost \$1.75 billion, however entirely depends on both state and federal government funding.

Surat Basin Coal Seam Gas

The Surat Basin, which encompasses the Toowoomba, Western Downs and Maranoa regional councils, holds significant reserves of both coal seam gas and thermal coal and the region's reputation as an 'energy hub' is evolving rapidly.

The Surat Basin incorporates a variety of different ways to access the coal resource which includes, coal seam gas through extraction of CSG with water, liquefied natural gas, which is a method of converting natural gas to a liquid form, and underground coal gasification, which is a method of igniting coal underground in a controlled burn and the extracted hot gases are processed to produce a liquid hydrocarbon.

Braemar Power Station

The Braemar Power Station complex is located 40 kilometres South West of Dalby. The complex includes two existing power stations (Braemar and Braemar 2) and the proposed Braemar 3, which is anticipated to be operational by 2013.

Source: <http://www.ermpower.com.au/power>

Darling Downs Power Station

Construction of the 630 megawatt gas-fired Darling Downs Power Station, located near Braemar, 40 kilometres west of Dalby, began in August 2007 and is scheduled to be complete by 2010. Between 200 and 300 construction jobs are anticipated to be created during the 30 month construction period, with approximately 25 full time jobs created during operation.

Source: <http://www.originenergy.com.au>

Kogan Creek Power Station

Kogan Creek Power Station located near Chinchilla opened in 2007. It is a coal fired power station with capacity to generate up to 750 megawatts of baseload electricity. Coal is supplied to the power station from the adjacent Kogan Creek Coal mine. The power station is also the site of the Kogan Creek Solar Boost Project, a 44 megawatt equivalent solar thermal plant.

Source: <http://www.csenergy.com.au>

Spring Gully Power Station

Origin Energy are proposing to develop a 1,000 megawatt combined cycle gas fired power station at Spring Gully, 80 kilometres north-east of Roma. The power station will be built in two 500 megawatt stages. The plant will be located within the Origin Energy Spring Gully coal seam gas production development area.

Source: <http://www.originenergy.com.au>

Moree NSW to Toowoomba Railway expansion

Australian Transport and Energy Corridor Ltd., a private consortium, is planning to construct a standard gauge railway connecting Moree in New South Wales, to Toowoomba. The railway expansion is part of what is known as the 'Inland Rail' project, and will connect to the

existing railway from Moree to Parkes, which links with tracks to Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

Surat Basin Railway (southern missing link) expansion

The proposed Surat Basin Railway will be approximately 210 kilometres in length and link existing railways at Wandoan and Banana connecting the Surat Basin with the Port of Gladstone. It is anticipated that the Surat Basin Rail will accommodate freight as well as coal.

The Coordinator-General declared the project to be a significant project in November 2007 for which an EIS is required in accordance with Part 4 of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (Qld).

The link will be built by a private consortium comprising Queensland Rail, Xstrata Coal, Anglo Coal, Industry Funds Management and the Australian Transport and Energy Corridor (ATEC) Dawson Valley Railway.

Source: <http://coalrail.qnetwork.com.au>

Charlton Wellcamp Industrial Hub

The Charlton Wellcamp Industrial Hub is a national level freight hub to be established at Charlton, 11 km west of the Toowoomba CBD. The Hub will be the junction point between major east west and north south rail lines as well as the Warrego and Gore Highways and ultimately the proposed second range crossing.

Toowoomba Airport upgrade

Toowoomba Regional Council has recently completed an upgrade to the current Toowoomba airport. The upgrade involved extending the existing sealed runway, thereby providing a safer environment and also allowing the airport to accommodate larger aircraft movement. The upgrade will benefit Toowoomba and the burgeoning Surat Basin and existing passenger services are also likely to be improved, including a service between Toowoomba and Sydney.

Council is currently calling tenders for extended air services.

The State government committed to \$4.7m to upgrade the Toowoomba airport adding to the \$5.3 million put forward by Toowoomba Regional Council.

Source: <http://www.toowoombarc.qld.gov.au>

Roma Airport upgrade

Maranoa Regional Council has recently upgraded the Roma Airport. This included:

- a \$1.75 million upgrade of the passenger terminal
- lengthening, widening and strengthening of the existing runway to allow larger aircraft to land
- construction of a 250 space secure car park with lighting
- widening of the existing taxiway and apron to accommodate larger aircraft.

The State Government and energy company Santos have committed to \$4.7 million and \$2.5 million respectively to help fund the project.

Source: <http://www.maranoa.qld.gov.au>

Dinosaur Business Plan and Marketing Strategy Project

South–West Queensland is becoming a discovery area for Australian dinosaurs, with the towns of Roma and Eromanga within the Roma and Quilpie local government areas respectively now boasting the oldest and largest dinosaurs in the nation.

April 2004 saw the discovery of internationally significant dinosaur specimens in the South West region. Subsequently, Queensland Museum, Santos Limited and other stakeholders formed a partnership known as the ‘Outback Gondwana Foundation’ with the principle purpose of:

‘Discovering, preserving and displaying outback Australia’s dinosaur and fossil heritage, cultural heritage and natural history’.

Source: <http://www.ogf.org.au>

The Outback Gondwana Foundation has identified the South West region as an important and largely un–tapped resource for scientific research, and the need for a research repository and learning centre and museum in Eromanga, near Quilpie.

To promote the provision of this research and learning centre, a Dinosaur Business Plan and Marketing Strategy Plan has been prepared which analyses the long–term viability of such a project within the region.

The key aspect of the business plan, which is most important for the region from a tourism perspective, is to strengthen links between Queensland Museum, Santos and other stakeholders to ensure the appropriate management and governance of the museum.

The project requires a degree of Government intervention and funding to ensure the long term viability of the region for a dinosaur tourist museum.

4. Stakeholders

Stakeholder groups

The Darling Downs and South West Queensland region incorporates a range of various stakeholder groups which all play an important role in shaping and successfully delivering outcomes which identify the economic, environmental and social factors of the region.

This approach to regional planning involves a high degree of regional involvement by various stakeholder groups with a range of expertise, guidance and direction and develops opportunities for the region to collaborate and work together with the stakeholders to resolve regional issues.

The four major stakeholders for the Darling Downs and South West Queensland region are:

- Local Government (Balonne SC, Bulloo SC, Goondiwindi RC, Maranoa RC, Murweh SC, Paroo SC, Quipile SC, Southern Downs RC, Toowoomba RC, Western Downs RC)
- Queensland Government
- Australian Government
- Regional Communities

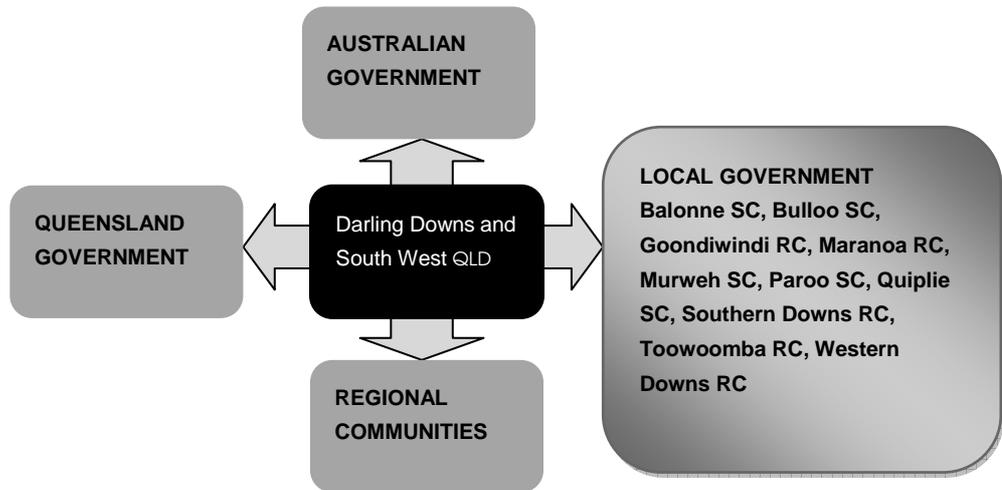
All four major groups of stakeholders have been further expanded to include additional stakeholder groups such as residents, community, industry, health/education and utility providers, with specific stakeholders relevant to the economic, social and environmental aspects of the region identified.

Figure 5.1 below details more specifically the various stakeholder groups associated with the region.

Communication Tools:

1. **RDA website www.rda-ddsw.org.au for a collection of data links, funding opportunities and services.**
2. **Regional newsletter developed fortnightly with updates, information, and programs.**
3. **Events/forums.**
4. **Media liaison.**

Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West Queensland Regional Stakeholders



RESIDENTS	COMMUNITY		INDUSTRY	HEALTH/ EDUCATION	UTILITY PROVIDERS
	Interests	Services			
Aboriginal & Torres Strait	Landcare and Environment	Housing and Homeless	Manufacturing	Hospitals	Water/Gas
Older People	Sporting	Employment	Retail/Trade	University	Energy
Young People	Service Clubs	Aged Care	Chambers of Commerce	Schools	Electricity
Immigrants	Not-4-Profit Organisations	Lifeline and Red Cross	Farming & Agriculture	TAFE	Tele-Communication
Multi – Cultural		Cultural	Energy Resources	Centres of Excellence	Infrastructure Communication Technology
Gender Equity		QCOSS	Employment	Medical Service Industries	Television
Transients		Disability	Social Services	Agriculture	
		Volunteers	Tourism		
		Multicultural	Industry	Australian Agricultural College Corporation	
			Infrastructure		

Figure 4.1 Stakeholder groups associated with the region

5. Strategic framework

The Darling Downs and South West region is extremely diverse. The region includes the growth areas of Toowoomba, a vibrant urban centre servicing the entire region, and Dalby, an emerging centre for the energy resources sector. The region is also justifiably proud of its long standing reputation as growers of quality beef, cotton, wool and grain.

The region no longer serves only local markets. Regions must now compete globally as new markets emerge and regions must adapt to the global changes.

By acting as a unified region, the Darling Downs and South West creates the opportunity to engage with a broad network of regional stakeholders, including government, industry and community groups and enables the region to create one voice - one that may not otherwise be heard on the global stage.

Acting as a unified region enables the region to more effectively leverage off its own success, for example, by developing 'supply chain' businesses to support the energy sector, and developing new products to reinforce the region's position as a quality food producer.

A regional approach requires the three levels of government to work more effectively together for their community. By facilitating a closer relationship, information can be more easily exchanged and the region will be better placed to access federal and state government programs, services, funding and regional development initiatives.

5.1 Strengths and weaknesses

Development of the region's energy resources whilst maintaining an appropriate balance with agricultural landuse activities

The Darling Downs and South West Queensland region is largely characterised by agriculture, manufacturing, mining, energy, health and education and retail, which are all major employers and create demand for a range of professional and trade skills.

Toowoomba is the main 'centre' for the region and operates as the 'service centre' for the region's agricultural industry. The region is fortunate to accommodate the University of Southern Queensland which provides for a range of professional degree courses.

The region contains one of Australia's largest Coal Seam Gas deposits, known as the Surat Basin which covers 8,000 square kilometres of the Darling Downs and South West region and the Fitzroy and Central West region of Queensland. This area is estimated to generate approximately \$9 billion worth of production output between the years 2013 to 2031.

The region also incorporates natural resources and environmental attributes which provide a range of natural waterways, creeks, national parks and conservation areas, as well as valuable agricultural land important for the future economic prosperity of the region.

Table 7 Strengths of region

Strengths

Energy resources and production

- Coal Seam Gas extraction is a major economic strength of the region, particularly over the next 20 years with significant direct investment, employment opportunities and infrastructure, all provided at an industry level.
 - The variety of different ways to access coal resources includes coal seam gas, liquefied natural gas, and underground coal gasification.
 - With any form of energy resource operations or open cut coal mining, comes a level of construction and manufacturing facilities to accommodate the activity.
 - Water produced through mining operations generates the potential for contributing water stockpiles to storage for the region.
-

Agriculture

- The region is favourable for agriculture and food production due to its location and available resources.
 - Large numbers of livestock which are bred within the region create a platform for the domestic and international trade of beef.
 - Roma has the largest cattle saleyard in Australia, generating significant economic investment into the local beef industry for the region.
 - The region's major agricultural industries include beef cattle, grains and cotton, all exported within and outside Australia. Toowoomba acts as the major service centre for the region in delivering and transporting agricultural products.
 - The region is the source of 29.2% of the total value of agricultural production in Queensland.
 - Crops accounting for 37.1% of the region's total value of agricultural production.
 - Livestock slaughtering accounting for 55.8% of the region's total value of agricultural production.
 - Livestock products accounting for 7.1% of the region's total value of agricultural production.
-

Environment

- The region is made up of a variety of ecosystems such as the Southern Brigalow Belt and Mulga Lands, national parks such as Currawinya National Park and state forests, extensive ranges, floodplains, riverine and wetland areas such as the Murray Darling Basin, with a large focus on conservation and natural resource management at a local and state level.
 - Opportunity to promote tourism and the natural wonders of the region.
-

Education

- The wide range of educational opportunities, skills, training and apprenticeship training on offer, from institutions including Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, University of Southern Queensland, Queensland College of Wine Tourism and Charleville School of Distance Education.
-

Table 8 Weaknesses of region

Weaknesses

Energy resources and production

- Existing and required infrastructure requirements such as pipelines, road and rail, housing and power generation (electricity).
 - Co-existence and balance between agricultural and energy/coal land use activities.
 - Water produced through mining operations and managing any by-products such as salt.
-

Agriculture

- International market trends significantly influence the price of grain exports and may have a direct impact on the region.
 - Balance between energy/coal and agricultural land use pursuits.
 - The protection of agricultural assets and crops are essential in maintaining the diversity of the region.
 - Impact of climate change, drought and limited rainfall. Queensland's Office of Climate Change has predicted limited rainfall, increased temperatures and increased evaporation over the coming decades.
 - Loss of good agricultural land within the region for the purposes of mining activities could create significant economic, environmental and social implications for the region.
 - Lack of an all-of- government approach to achieve an appropriate and manageable balance between mining land use activities and agricultural land use activities to sustain the region into the future.
 - Road infrastructure in and around the region is a fundamental component for the delivery of goods and services to meet market demands at both a domestic and international level.
-

Environment

- The natural wonders of the region are at risk from inappropriate land use activities that may cause significant environmental harm.
 - Increased population driven by the Surat Basin activities and the potential impact on the natural environment may be overlooked by the significant economic benefits that mining activity brings to the region.
 - Balance between managing and sustaining the existing environment with the imposing threat of increased land use activities. The goal is not to limit or prevent development or mining within the region, however the goal is to minimise the risk of environmental harm for the benefit of the whole region.
-

Education

- Promotion and public awareness of the range of educational opportunities, skills, training and apprenticeships that the region can offer.
-

5.2 Constraints and opportunities

The region provides for diverse, dynamic and challenging opportunities for industry, business and employment through the array of significant land use activities, in particular agriculture and mining.

The focus of the region is to manage growth, attract and retain skilled workers, develop a coordinated and sustainable infrastructure system, maintain liveable and socially desirable communities, promote a coordinated local, state and national Government system, manage the land use activities such as agriculture and mining and economically promote the region.

The region is faced with some constraints which limit the potential for the region to grow, along with opportunities which create a vibrant and liveable region.

Table 9 Constraints

Constraints

Retaining and attracting skilled and non–skilled workers

- The retention and attraction of skilled and non–skilled workers strongly influenced by employment and education.
- The retention and attraction of skilled and non–skilled workers can rely on external factors such as housing availability and affordability, transport access (air, rail and road), and availability of health and education facilities.
- Capacity constraints around transport, rail and air infrastructure impacting on ability to attract industry and business.

Maintaining liveable communities through the provision of aged care, housing shortage, maintaining and providing education and health

- The provision of aged care, housing, education and health in providing and retaining sustainable liveable communities and retaining populations within the region.
- The provision of housing within towns and centres is at a shortfall based on existing and future population projections.
- Housing affordability which is disadvantaging low–income earners.
- A trend towards declining provisions of educational and health services within the smaller towns of the region.
- The increasing mining operations within the region brings with it the requirement for housing of additional workers, along with increased populations within and throughout surrounding towns within the Surat Basin impacting on infrastructure and services.

Environmental management and rural and mining land uses

- Protection and management of existing natural resources and the environment in the pursuit of agricultural and mining land use activities.
- Lack of land use management programs/initiatives to protect natural resources and environment.
- Providing a balance between the natural environmental assets and future land use activities.

Agriculture, mining and energy resources and provision of infrastructure

- Lack of significant investment in infrastructure to sustain and manage the influx of population due to increased land use activities.
 - A coordinated and collaborative approach from all levels of government to appropriately manage the co–existence of agricultural and mining land uses.
 - Protection and management of existing natural resources and the environment in the pursuit of agricultural and mining land use activities.
-

Constraints

- Lack of significant investment and provision of infrastructure such as air, rail and road to support the increasing agricultural and mining land use activities within the region.
- Road infrastructure system which is not adequate to support growth, particularly in the mining industry.

Information Communication Technology

- In some areas, the region experiences limited and inaccessible telecommunication coverage and infrastructure for both landline and mobile phone usage, limiting business opportunities, growth and industry.
 - The various 'black spots' within the region which considerably contribute to the issues of telecommunication coverage within the region and limits connectivity within the region to share information, ideas, strategic direction and growth opportunities which is essential in ensuring an innovative and connected region.
 - Television broadcasting with a local and regional relevance and focus/lack of local and regional presence on television.
-

Table 10 Opportunities

Opportunities

Use of national parks and the environment for tourism

- Tourism and the benefits which can be gained from tourists visiting the region.
- The use of national parks and the natural environment can be a source of tourist activities whether it is bushwalking, hiking, camping or fishing.

Agriculture, mining and energy resources and provision of infrastructure

- An opportunity for the region is to capitalise on the significant wealth, employment and offsets that can be generated by existing and future land use activities.
- Advertising and television which targets specific audiences regarding the land use opportunities.
- Capitalise on the region's advantages through new management techniques, and diversification and locally based value-adding to primary industry products.

Retaining and attracting skilled and non-skilled workers

- The region's strong agricultural base, manufacturing, industry and mining land uses provide significant employment opportunities for the region's workforce over the next 20 years.
- Promote and expand the employment opportunities within agriculture which was the largest industry of employment for the region in 2006, accounting for 13.5% of the region's population.
- Capitalise on the potential employment opportunities for skilled and non-skilled individuals, with an expectation of 12,500 construction and employment opportunities as a result of the Surat Basin.

Liveable communities through mining operations within the region

- Mining within the region is seen as a major opportunity for the region in providing and upgrading existing housing provisions, aged care, education and health services, and through the provision of Surat Basin mining operations the region should capitalise on the value-adding effects from mining.
-

Opportunities

Information Communication Technology

- Expand and promote the concept of a ‘centre of excellence’ in specific fields throughout the region such as the Centre of Excellence in Engineering Fibre Optics and National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture.
 - Build on the strategic advantages of the region and encourage a ‘Home of Natural Sciences’ which capitalises on the region’s innovative approach to natural resources and the environment.
 - Increase mobile, landline and broadband internet coverage across the region to ensure the region is appropriately connected, informed and accessible to Queensland and Australia.
-

5.3 Relationship to existing documents

Refer Table 6.5 below.

Table 11 Strategic Context

Relevant Strategic Document	Relevance	Key Strategies/Goals	Supporting Regional Roadmap actions
Federal			
Australia to 2050: Future Challenges	Entire DD & SW Region	Identifies an ageing and growing population, escalating pressures on the health system and an environment vulnerable to climate change as major challenges that will place substantial pressure on the economy, living standards and government finances over the next 40 years	<p>The DD & SW Regional Roadmap has developed strategies to ensure that the region can take advantage of the federal government's infrastructure program, which includes a \$36 billion investment in transport infrastructure.</p> <p>It is intended that this regional roadmap will deliver productivity and growth which is identified as the major contributor to increasing living standards over the next 40 years. The regional roadmap will also improve the region's skills base through education and skills based training.</p>
State			
Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland	Entire DD & SW Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong: Creating a diverse economy powered by bright ideas ■ Green: Protecting our lifestyle and environment ■ Smart: Delivering world-class education and training ■ Healthy: Making Queenslanders Australia's healthiest people ■ Fair: Supporting safe and caring communities 	<p>The DD & SW Regional Roadmap will directly support the ambitions described in Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland as follows:</p> <p><i>Strong</i> – A key goal of the DD & SW Regional Roadmap is to foster innovation and connectivity within the region in order to create a business environment conducive to innovation, investment and entrepreneurship.</p> <p><i>Green</i> – Protecting the region's natural resources and environment is identified within the DD & SW Regional Roadmap as the responsibility of a number of stakeholders working collaboratively throughout the region.</p> <p><i>Smart</i> – The region already boasts quality education and training facilities. The DD & SW Regional Roadmap has identified as a key goal the need to upgrade the region's telecommunications and internet coverage to capitalise upon the opportunities created by these institutions.</p> <p><i>Healthy</i> – Further investment in infrastructure will be facilitated by the DD & SW Regional Roadmap, which will improve access to social infrastructure including health and community/social services.</p> <p><i>Fair</i> – Promoting, building and maintaining liveable communities has been identified within the DD & SW Regional Roadmap as an important facet in attracting and retaining population in the region, and encouraging employment opportunities.</p>

Relevant Strategic Document	Relevance	Key Strategies/Goals	Supporting Regional Roadmap actions
Queensland Telecommunications Strategic Framework 2009 – 2012	Entire DD & SW Region	<p>The Queensland Telecommunications Strategic Framework 2009 – 2012 is a State Government initiative aimed at providing the necessary telecommunications services for all areas within the state in line with Queensland State Governments ‘smart state agenda’ which aims at strengthening the economy through knowledge-intensive, value-adding industries.</p> <p>The 5 key strategies of the policy are to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leadership ■ Digital content and applications ■ Business continuity and community confidence ■ Building capacity ■ Sustainable policy directions. 	<p>The provision of quality telecommunications and internet service levels is identified within the DD & SW Regional Roadmap as being of high importance to the region.</p> <p>With this policy in place, the DD & SW region are well placed to benefit from the State Government’s initiatives in providing additional telecommunication infrastructure to strengthen the local economy and services throughout the region.</p>
South West Regional Plan	Bulloo, Paroo, Quilpie and Murweh Shires	<p>The South West Regional Plan will be an essential mechanism for managing change and shaping the prospects of rural communities in the South West by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ addressing key economic, social and environmental issues ■ prioritising infrastructure and service needs ■ maximising benefits and managing impacts of major projects ■ driving innovation and productivity ■ ensuring the public, private and community sectors are working towards the same goal ■ Improving cooperation between all levels of government and local communities. 	<p>The key priorities within the DD & SW Regional Roadmap are directly aligned with the overall purpose of the South West Regional Plan.</p> <p>The DD & SW Regional Roadmap’s key goals for the region are to protect and sustainably manage the natural environment and natural resources in an effective and appropriate way, encourage strong communities through appropriate infrastructure, social capital investment, increased urban and economic development to stimulate growth and investment within the region and encourage additional infrastructure into the region to sustain growth.</p>

Relevant Strategic Document	Relevance	Key Strategies/Goals	Supporting Regional Roadmap actions
Maranoa – Balonne Regional Plan	Maranoa and Balonne Regional Councils	<p>The Maranoa – Balonne Regional Plan will be an essential mechanism for managing change and shaping the prospects of rural communities in the Maranoa – Balonne region, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ addressing key economic, social and environmental issues ■ prioritising infrastructure and service needs ■ maximising benefits and managing the impacts of major projects ■ driving innovation and productivity ■ mobilising the public, private and community sectors ■ aligning efforts across agencies and all levels of government. 	<p>As for the South–West Regional Plan, the key priorities within the DD & SW Regional Roadmap are directly aligned with the overall purpose of the Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan</p> <p>Key consideration within the Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan has been given to managing the development within the Surat Basin. The DD & SW Regional Roadmap recognises the need to encourage landuse activities to promote the sustainable management of the region’s natural resources and protect the environment where required.</p>
South East Queensland Regional Plan	Toowoomba (part of) and serving the Region	<p>The regional vision for SEQ is a future that is sustainable, affordable, prosperous, liveable and resilient to climate change.</p> <p>The strategic directions outlined in the SEQ Regional Plan establish the broad policy framework for achieving the regional vision and intended growth management outcomes.</p>	<p>Relevant to Toowoomba are the following goals within the SEQ Regional Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ employment location – a principal challenge for the Toowoomba sub–region will be to provide adequate employment opportunities for its anticipated population growth ■ infrastructure – Key infrastructure requirements include securing an adequate water supply for Toowoomba ■ integrated transport – improving inter–regional transport links including a multi–modal inland port at Charlton–Wellcamp.
Surat Basin Future Direction Statement	Entire region, but particularly Maranoa and Western Downs	<p>Coordinated, region–wide approach to managing the Basin’s future recognising the potential growth from the vast energy reserves discovered in the region.</p> <p>The Future Direction Statement has six elements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ planning for growth 	<p>All six future directions within the Surat Basin Future Direction Statement underpin the DD & SW Regional Roadmap. The DD & SW Regional Roadmap highlights both the potential benefits (increased Gross Regional Product and employment opportunities) and challenges (infrastructure and housing required to meet increased population) anticipated as part of development within the Surat Basin.</p> <p>In addition, existing agricultural, manufacturing, retail and other forms of business and industry within the region needs to be appropriately managed to</p>

Relevant Strategic Document	Relevance	Key Strategies/Goals	Supporting Regional Roadmap actions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ planning and development of infrastructure ■ liveable communities ■ capturing economic opportunities ■ skilled workforce, and ■ sustaining regional environments 	ensure their long-term viability and direct economic benefits as a result of the Surat Basin.
Blueprint for the Bush	Entire region	To build a strong rural Queensland of sustainable, liveable and prosperous communities.	<p>The DD & SW Regional Roadmap works to support the Blueprint by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ assisting rural communities become more aware of government initiatives and plans including funding opportunities ■ facilitating and encouraging communication between the three levels of government and the communities they serve ■ involves a collaborative approach by a large number of stakeholders including educational institutions, industry and business bodies to ensure the issues and priorities of the region are being addressed.
Coal infrastructure Strategic Plan	Entire region, but particularly Maranoa and Western Downs	<p>The Queensland Coal Infrastructure Strategic Plan is a long-term strategic plan to ensure the provisions of Queensland's coal infrastructure will meet demand.</p> <p>The plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ determine coal demand and production forecasts ■ identify individual and regional coal infrastructure requirements ■ determine development triggers ■ estimate staging of infrastructure provision across regions. 	The Coal Infrastructure Taskforce also oversees implementation of the Coal Infrastructure Program of Actions which includes the Surat Basin Railway. Ensuring infrastructure keeps pace with development in the energy sector is a goal of the DD & SW Regional Roadmap.
DDSW Food Processing Industry Plan	Entire region	To foster positive working relationships with local industry, research bodies and other regional stakeholders to create opportunities, investment	The DD & SW Regional Roadmap has identified opportunities to become more innovative in food processing techniques and methods, target specific markets and attract new business to the region, whilst collaboratively working with

Relevant Strategic Document	Relevance	Key Strategies/Goals	Supporting Regional Roadmap actions
		and expansion into new markets for the region's food processing industry	business and industry to promote the valuable agricultural assets the region has to offer the food processing industry.
DDSW Surat Energy Province Action Plan	Entire region	To foster a working relationship with industry groups, mining and local supply companies for the purpose of the Surat Basin	One of the key priorities within the DD & SW Regional Roadmap is for the region to work together with the coal industry to identify and market regional opportunities, grow the supply chain through additional infrastructure and strengthen the foundations of growth to ensure the region benefits from coal mining, which either directly or indirectly impacts on the region as a whole.
South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program	Toowoomba (part of) and serving the Region	Toowoomba Bypass and Warrego Highway improvements, upgrade of the Toowoomba Hospital emergency department and two new birthing suites, and new tennis facilities at USQ.	The DD & SW Regional Roadmap recognises the need to improve transport and health infrastructure.
Local			
Maranoa Regional Economic Development Strategy 2010 – 2015	Maranoa	Determining the region's competitive advantages and how these can be capitalised upon.	The goal of the EDS is to deliver sustainable and balanced economic growth that provides a wide variety of employment opportunities and increases the quality of life in the region for every resident, which has a clear synergy with the goals and priorities set out in the DD & SW Regional Roadmap.
Southern Downs Operational Plan	Southern Downs	Foundation 5: Growth and Opportunity 60. Participate in Regional Planning Programs 64. Develop opportunities for value adding to the food production sector	The DD & SW Regional Roadmap includes strategies to develop the manufacturing sector by collaboratively working with all stakeholders within the sector.
Toowoomba Corporate Plan	Toowoomba	The Corporate Plan identifies five goals as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Community – A safe, healthy and equitable community, enjoying a quality lifestyle. ■ Governance – A well-governed Council respecting community values. ■ Built Environment – Well managed and integrated regional growth. ■ Natural Environment – A highly-valued, diverse, liveable and sustainable 	The DD & SW Regional Roadmap draws on some of the issues raised within the Cooperate Plan which are relevant at a 'regional' level including building liveable, well connected communities, protecting the region's natural environment and recognising Toowoomba as the key regional service centre.

Relevant Strategic Document	Relevance	Key Strategies/Goals	Supporting Regional Roadmap actions
Planning Schemes (10)	Entire region	<p>environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economy – A dynamic economy providing employment and opportunity. <p>The 10 local government areas which form the Darling Downs and South west region each contain a planning scheme which guides appropriate landuse development within the local government areas.</p>	<p>The existing planning schemes within the Darling Downs and South West region include Southern Downs Planning Scheme, Toowoomba Planning Scheme, Western Downs Planning Scheme (draft), Balonne Planning Scheme, Paroo Planning Scheme, Bulloo Shire Planning Scheme, Goondiwindi Town Planning Scheme (draft) and Maranoa Regional Council Planning Scheme (draft) and each planning scheme has been reviewed as part of this regional roadmap.</p>

6. Regional Issues and priorities

Setting the overall goals and priorities

The goals and priorities identified by RDA Darling Downs and South West Queensland seek to achieve results that directly benefit the region as a whole and address the current issues the region experiences.

The purpose of the goals and priorities are to bring forward the key goals for the region and key priorities which the Committee believes are important economically, environmentally and socially.

All the goals and priorities identified are realistic and achievable and reflect the issues identified within the region. The priorities identified are a direct and deliverable approach in achieving the intent of the goal.

Five goals to underpin the strategic framework

The 5 key goals for the Darling Downs and South West region are to ensure the economic, environmental and social attributes of the region are addressed and successful.

The priority goals for the region therefore are to:

- Goal 1: Promote the sustainable management of the region's natural resources and environment.**
- Goal 2: Foster Innovation and Connectivity.**
- Goal 3: Advocate for the enhancement of all levels of infrastructure within the region.**
- Goal 4: Acknowledge the economic diversity of the region, support and retain existing wealth and encourage economic development.**
- Goal 5: Promote the ongoing development of liveable communities that enhance the social capital of the region.**

6.1 Regional Plan – Goals and Priorities

Goal 1: Promote the sustainable management of the region's natural resources and environment.

The promotion and sustainable management of the existing valuable natural resources and environmental attributes of the region is most important.

National parks and State Forests are spread across the region and incorporate important examples of the region's biodiversity.

**Intent:
Encourage
landuse
activities to
promote the
sustainable
management of
the region's
natural
resources and
protect the
environment
where required**

The sustainable management of the natural resources and environment is the responsibility of a range of stakeholders, including local, state, federal governments, regional bodies, industry, landholders and traditional landowners. All stakeholders need to work together as a collaborative group to ensure an adequate level of consistency and management throughout the region.

The region is heavily characterised by agriculture and most recently mining opportunities which have created a competitive land use issue for the region where the existing agricultural assets are being overruled by the ever-growing mining operations.

The total value of agricultural production within the region in 2005–2006 was \$2,543.3 million or 29.2% of the total value of agricultural production within the state of Queensland. Given agriculture is a major contributor within the region, environmental and sustainable management must be considered to ensure the region prospers into the future.

A lack of identifying sub-regional issues has led to a fragmented approach to mining within the region which has directly impacted on the sustainable management of the natural resources and the environment. The successful sustainable management of the distinctive rural and natural landscape relies heavily on the agricultural and mining contributors within the region.

The region is impacted by the effects of climate change, varied rainfall, drought and high temperatures which can impact on the agricultural production within the region. An all-of-government approach is required to address issues which impact the region.

Mining resources are largely focussed around international market demand and the global growth of the economy and are an unpredictable industry by way of operations.

More focus and engagement between key Natural Resource Management bodies, is essential to ensuring the protection of valuable resources and the environment. One issue of concern for the region is wild dogs, foxes, and rabbits. Increased pest management programs are required to protect the agricultural assets within the region with some form of State Government involvement.

Priorities to achieve Goal 1

- Actively promote the region's agricultural assets at State and Federal level. This generates economic activity within the area, whilst providing a level of security for the region economically into the future.
- Target and capitalise on the vast and distinctive rural and natural regional landscape which is spread over the entire region. Promote the valuable agricultural assets of the region and encourage investment into the region.
- Encourage and promote environmental strategies that focus on conservation, appropriate land use management, sustainability and provide a level of understanding for all stakeholders to ensure sustainable management of the natural resources and environment.
- Promote a competitive advantage of the region's natural environment through various media outlets which target specific audiences.

- Implement pest management strategies that protect the environment, natural resources and the agricultural productivity of the region.
- Capitalise on the region’s advantages through the facilitation of new opportunities, management techniques, diversification and locally based value–adding to regional primary industry products.
- Advocation of funding for environmental strategies at a regional level, to ensure the capitalisation of positive advantages of the region.
- Advocating for sustainable and appropriate infrastructure for the region, developed under a collaborative understanding and commitment with all levels of government.
- Encourage water sensitive design and management strategies to ensure the appropriate and sustainable management of the region’s water resources.
- Encourage and facilitate an understanding of the implications of climate change, particularly on agriculture in the region and develop strategies to mitigate possible effects on the sustainability and management of land use.
- Encourage a regional data depository and data collection for the purpose of maintaining a physical and electronic database which identifies information that is crucial to determining the impact and required mitigation for disaster management within the natural resources and land management sector.

Regional Plan – Goals and Priorities

Goal 2: Foster Innovation and Connectivity.

**Intent:
Foster
innovation,
creativity and
development
across the
region**

Information and communications technology infrastructure has an important role to play in driving economic activity within a region.

The University of Southern Queensland provides important education opportunities for the region across a range of professional degrees and has the potential to drive innovation in the region.

There is a need to foster the links between business and the university and a critical component of these linkages are improved information technology across the region. The region must capitalise on the significant advantages of the university in Toowoomba and promote the Centre of Excellence in Engineering Fibre Composites and National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture, which are two very important drawcards for the region.

Mobile phone coverage, telecommunications, broadband internet, road and rail infrastructure are necessary to support connectivity between regions and states within Australia. The provision of an adequate broadband internet connection throughout the region is of high importance and the NBN presents some excellent opportunities.

The region experiences inconsistent and irrelevant television coverage which is not specific or relevant to the region or even to Queensland in some instances.

Current television broadcasting for the shires of Bulloo, Quilpie, Paroo, Maranoa and Murweh is coverage relevant to the Northern Territory, which significantly disadvantages a

section of the region given relevant and appropriate broadcasting for Queensland as a whole is not reaching a significant section of the region.

In some areas, the region experiences limited and inaccessible telecommunication coverage and infrastructure for both landline and mobile phone usage.

The region contains various 'black spots' which considerably contribute to the issues of telecommunication coverage within the region and limits connectivity within the region to share information, ideas, strategic direction and growth opportunities which is essential in ensuring an innovative and connected region.

Priorities to achieve Goal 2

- Advocate for television broadcasting with a local and regional relevance and focus by the television broadcasting organisations. This may result in lobbying to amend the licence allocations and provide television broadcasting services which relates to the South West region on a north/south line and not east/west line.
- Promote an environment that encourages innovation, investment, entrepreneurship and development throughout the region.
- Promote the strategic advantages of the whole region and encourage a 'Home of Natural Sciences' focus which capitalises on the region's many innovative examples of natural resources and environment management.
- Promote a culture of innovation and communities of interest to facilitate the extensive and culturally diverse population of innovation and creativity within the region.
- Promote the concept of a 'centre of excellence' in specific fields throughout the region such as the Centre of Excellence in Engineering Fibre Optics and National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture, which are two very important drawcards for the region.
- Facilitate the increase in mobile, landline and broadband internet coverage across the region to ensure that the region is appropriately connected, informed and has access to Australian and world communication.
- Facilitate and encourage the opportunities presented by the introduction of the National Broadband Network (NBN)
- Promote the educational and training institutions of the region and the opportunities for skill development and training that can be accessed.

Regional Plan – Goals and Priorities

Goal 3: Advocate for the enhancement of all levels of infrastructure within the region.

**Intent:
Development and expansion of all levels of infrastructure necessary to ensure growth within the region**

Infrastructure provision specific to the region includes rail, road, airports, communication, energy, water and social infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, community centres/buildings. All are essential forms of infrastructure to ensure growth within the region.

The South West Regional Plan 2009, Maranoa – Balonne Regional Plan 2009 and South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009 provide strategic and deliverable outcomes in providing regional infrastructure within specific town centres and further enhance the importance of providing additional road, rail, air and communication infrastructure within the region.

The Blueprint for the Bush 2006 provides a framework for achieving a rural economic development and infrastructure plan based around the existing and future infrastructure and economic activity as a result of the agricultural and mining opportunities the rural landscape has to offer. The document also focuses specifically on providing infrastructure which underpins the prosperity of rural Queensland.

Infrastructure at a local, state and national level is necessary for the region. The region is fortunate enough to incorporate valuable natural agricultural and mining resources that require an adequate level of infrastructure. Road, rail and air infrastructure provides connections for goods and services, tourism, expansion, freight in and around Queensland.

Priorities to achieve Goal 3

- Advocate and encourage water, road, rail and air infrastructure which encourages growth within the region.
- Promote and encourage measures that enhance the population growth of rural and regional centres.
- Advocate strategies to address the housing shortage that has been created in parts of the region by the increase in development.
- Advocate the importance of creating the Darling Downs Range Crossing, Toowoomba which is essential to the efficient and sustainable use of the Warrego Highway as a major transport and service corridor connecting the region to all parts of Australia.
- Promote the upgrade of the Warrego Highway as essential in ensuring the future economic growth of all rural towns within the region whilst also improving safety and transport/freight movement.
- Facilitate collaboration with and within all levels of government and enhance communication.
- Highlight the value of the social capital and current levels of infrastructure in the region.
- Advocate against the unnecessary closure of essential services solely based on population numbers. The closure of essential services based on population numbers

further restricts the remaining populations and infrastructure needs of towns and centres, creating additional infrastructure issues and concerns.

- Provide infrastructure to support economic growth and regional liveability which in particular provides additional roads, rail, water, power, airports and strategic land development.
- Advocate for an expansion of the manufacturing sector within the region, in areas that demonstrate increasing productivity and economic significance.

Regional Plan – Goals and Priorities

Goal 4: Acknowledge the economic diversity of the region, support and retain existing wealth and encourage economic development.

**Intent:
Capitalise on the economic diversity of the region and encourage new investment and opportunities for economic growth**

The region incorporates a diverse range of wealth generated from various forms of businesses, industries and other land use activities. The two key sectors within the region are the agricultural sector and the mining sector, which both provide substantial contributions at a local, regional, state and national level.

Agriculture is currently the largest industry of employment for the region, accounting for 13.2% of the region's labour force.

Most recently, mining opportunities within the Surat Basin which covers 8,000 square kilometres across the Darling Downs and South West region and into Fitzroy and Central West region have significantly come to the forefront.

The Surat Basin Region has the majority of the State's known Coal Seam Gas reserves and significant accessible thermal coal reserves. The region has also been identified as having crude oil and natural gas reserves with the potential for coal reserves to be used in a variety of ways, including extraction of Coal Seam Gas, underground coal gasification, and mining of the coal itself.

The region is expected to significantly benefit directly from the opportunities and economic advantages of Coal Seam Gas exploration. Gross Regional Product is expected to double by 2031 to approximately \$9.3 billion as a result of the activity, with the most rapid increase to occur between 2014 and 2018. The way the region manages the resource boom, attracts investment and resources will be an important challenge.

With the rapid economic benefits of the Coal Seam Gas activity, comes the potential for 12,500 employment opportunities and an expected population increase of approximately 44% between 2006 and 2031 for the region.

With the expected significant growth of the Surat Basin coal project, significant investment, infrastructure and housing is required to meet the increase in population, vehicles and growth within and around the region.

With the growth of the Surat Basin over the next 20 years, the existing agricultural, manufacturing, retail and other forms of business and industry within the region needs to be appropriately managed to ensure their long-term viability and that direct economic benefits are not lost as a result. The report, [2011-12 State of the Regions – Beyond the Mining Boom](#)

prepared for the Australian LGA by National Economics has some interesting observations to make in this regard.

Agriculture will continue to play an important role in the region during and beyond development of the energy sector. Maximising the economic potential of agriculture on a sustainable basis provides stability for the region.

The significant wealth differentiation within the region needs to be appropriately managed to ensure the region can be sustained economically into the future. The retention of skilled and knowledgeable individuals in all employment fields across the region must be addressed to ensure that the region can grow, not solely based on the Surat Basin as the main economic driver within the region.

Priorities to achieve Goal 4

- Encourage a regional data depository and data collection for the purpose of maintaining a physical and electronic database which identifies economic activity and opportunities for the region and forms a communication network for each town or centre to access as a way of promoting and attracting business and industry into the region.
- Promote the concept of 'industrial/commercial parks' and 'place based enterprise' which stimulates economic activity and develops areas within towns or centres for a whole range of land use activities operating collectively and benefiting from each other.
- Promote examples of the wealth of the region as a way of capitalising and retaining populations within the region and also promote the economic features of the region based on the existing industries/agricultural assets of the region.
- Actively promote business and development within the region through building on the existing agricultural, tourism, retail and health and community based services and strategies the region has to offer.
- Target the renewable and non-renewable assets the region has to offer and encourage State and Federal Governments to invest in the necessary infrastructure to sustain those specific land use activities within the region.
- Actively encourage building and construction within the region to address the housing shortage and provide the necessary housing stock for the resource development activities within the region over the next 20 years.
- Encourage productivity and value adding throughout the manufacturing, agriculture and the energy sectors and strengthen and broaden the Darling Downs and Southwest Queensland industries within the regional economy by promoting the region's strategic advantages.
- Support sectors such as energy, tourism, agriculture, and education to provide economic linkages within the region and surrounding regions and focuses resources.

Regional Plan – Goals and Priorities

Goal 5: Promote the ongoing development of liveable communities that enhance the social capital of the region.

Intent:
Maintain, promote and develop liveable and sustainable communities

Maintaining, promoting and building liveable communities is important in attracting and retaining populations and encouraging employment into the region.

Growth and increased population living and working within the region will increase the demand on community infrastructure and services such as housing, health and community/social services, lifestyle, education, safety, recreation.

The population throughout the region ranges from young and single individuals living in the far west towns and centres, to a denser and older population living within the larger town centres such as Southern Downs and Toowoomba. This can largely be attributed to the existing quality of life and liveable communities the larger centres within the region have to offer. With the expansion and growth of the Surat Basin, both Government and industry need to collaboratively work together to ensure a greater balance of service delivery across the region.

The provision of basic community and social based services presents a major issue and concern for the region in actively providing the necessary services to sustain liveable communities. Planning and managing sustainable and liveable communities must take into consideration the cumulative impacts of the region, businesses and infrastructure and provide a flexible and strategic approach to addressing those impacts.

One of the key challenges for the region is retaining and developing skilled and educated individuals within the region. The region is largely based on agricultural and retail trades with limited opportunities for professional educated individuals to remain within the region.

Liveable and sustainable communities can be based on population, growth and economic viability within a town or centre. State and Federal Governments along with industry must ensure a greater balance of service delivery within the region to ensure a liveable community with the region. The focus should be taken away from services based on populations, rather should be focused around services based on projected growth and opportunities that regional and rural Darling Downs and South West Queensland has to offer.

Priorities to achieve Goal 5

- Develop and encourage promotional strategies which illustrate the benefits of living and working within the region through various media outlets including newspapers, internet, television broadcasting, tourism, brochures.
- Promote the cultural diversity and heritage of the region and identify and advocate for the expansion of facilities and strategies that will continue to maximise the positive impact that they provide within the region.
- Promote the region as a place to live and work for all occupations.
- Promote the region and its many attractions as a major tourism destination.

- Promote the health and education infrastructure within the region and facilitate the development of programs which specifically educate individuals within the allied health and education professions.
- Promote the development and sustainability of Sport and Recreation facilities and organisations within the region and the positive social impact that they provide for communities.
- Promote specifically, programs and strategies that encourage the provision of services that address health and community/ social services, lifestyle, education, safety, recreation and community wellbeing and quality of life.
- Promote the existing efficient use of technology within the region through various media outlets.
- Develop in conjunction with relevant local government Councils and industry a regional framework or land use policy covering the Surat Basin which details specific offsets or community based benefits the resource development industry could provide as a result of their operations.
- Identify and prioritise the most desirable and appropriate use for which Government finding should be focused to provide the infrastructure and services that will enhance the liveability of the region. Advocate for appropriate investment directly to all levels of Government.
- Advocate for improved land availability, and a reduction in the time and costs associated with providing new parcels of land to the market and more equitable infrastructure charges to encourage development aimed at addressing housing shortage and affordability within the region.

7. Economic growth and job creation

Current economic status of the region

Encourage, stimulate, diversify and actively promote the region as an opportunity for business and industry to invest and develop with intent on creating employment opportunities and wealth for the region

The Darling Downs and South West region has generated the majority of its wealth through agriculture, manufacturing and retail. Most recently, mining and energy resources have become a major economic driver within the region and will stimulate economic growth and job creation.

The region incorporates many different forms of business and industry which play a role in economic growth and job creation within the region.

The major employers within the region include:

- agriculture
- retail trade
- health and community services
- manufacturing
- education
- property/business
- construction
- meat processing
- gas generation
- mining
- local government administration.

From a regional perspective, any collaborative partnerships or working relationships with any form of government should be to a 'regional scale' for the benefit of the local economy of the Darling Downs and South West region. The region identifies the strong need to capitalise on any major form of investment and employment opportunities that arise from various industry and business opportunities. The diversity of the Darling Downs and South West, places the region in a good position to significantly benefit from investment and interest from industry and business, particularly within agriculture and mining/energy.

The economic stability, financial performance and employment opportunities of the region stems from investment, employment, education and industry/business. The goals, priorities and actions identified within this roadmap, underpin the 'vision' for the region and will have economic, social and environmental impacts.

Table 12 Action list

Goal	Priority	Action	Key performance indicators
Promote the sustainable management of the region's natural resources and environment.	Promotion of the regions agricultural assets and importance of the region to the gross domestic product of Australia	Consultation and value adding to food security proposals and projects with related groups	Promotion through available media Consultation with DEEDI to discuss and promote importance and economic impact of agriculture for the state and for Australia.
	Sustainable management programs and strategies	Investigate and promote sustainable management systems	Promotion of sustainable management tools systems to rural stakeholders
	Advertisement and promotion of the environmental attributes and investment opportunities	Media opportunities and newsletter promotion	Promotion through available media and tourism organisations Consultation with relevant State agencies to discuss importance and environmental opportunities for the region, in particular for tourism and business
	Water sensitive urban design to preserve valuable water usage and consumption	Investigate and promote water sensitive design systems	Promotion of water sensitive design systems for industry and contribution to Murray Darling Basin Review process.
Foster Innovation and Connectivity.	Relevant television broadcasting focused and targeted for the region	Actively lobby relevant bodies for television broadcast with relevant content	Television broadcasting that has relevant content and displays information regarding the region
	Promotion of existing centres of excellence	Actively promote the concept and opportunity to study within the region through advertisement, marketing strategies	Increased admittance and interests in existing centres of excellence. Partnerships with USQ and SQIT to promote programs/courses/projects.
	Increased infrastructure communication technology	Identify ICT sectors and target growth, investment and infrastructure requirements through an NBN - ICT regional overview report	ICT report on specific ICT 'hotspots' for the region to support NBN rollout attractiveness to region.

Goal	Priority	Action	Key performance indicators
Advocate for the enhancement of all levels of infrastructure within the region.	Provision of essential regional infrastructure including road, rail and telecommunications	Identify essential infrastructure required within the region based on 'top priority' issues and advocate to State and Federal governments	DSLO facilitation for Darling Downs Establishment of an infrastructure 'taskforce' to identify essential high priority infrastructure requirements.
	Upgrade and build on existing road infrastructure	Identify and develop a road infrastructure priority list	Consultation with RTA to develop regional priority list.
	Maintain existing infrastructure, including social infrastructure	Identify essential infrastructure and social infrastructure required within the region based on 'top priority' issues and develop a maintenance plan	Consultation with relevant stakeholders to identify essential social infrastructure items with high priority and implementation plan.
	Develop an all-of-government approach to infrastructure provision	Actively encourage a collaborative all –of-government approach to the regions infrastructure provision	Periodic meetings with representatives from all three levels of government regarding the provision and maintenance of infrastructure for the region
	Increase efficient transport and freight movement networks	Identify possible freight transport routes and support projects	Initiation of report identifying possible freight hubs and transport routes for the region. Facilitation of TRAIN project.
Acknowledge the economic diversity of the region, support and retain	Regional depository and data collection system	Develop a data access and data collection system	Establishment of an interactive data access and data collection system on website.
	Promote business, industry, agriculture and development within	Investigate value –added projects within the region that will enhance economic	Promote and facilitate the progression of significant project proposals.

existing wealth and encourage economic development.	the region	development	
	Capitalise on energy and coal resources	Develop a coal and energy resources management plan	Coal and energy management plan which details offsets and community based schemes
	Encourage productivity and value adding	Identify growing market sectors and prepare a marketing strategy	Consultation with and facilitation of projects with Commerce Qld
	Focus on target employment generating sectors	Identify growing and potential target markets and potential employment opportunities	Consultation with and facilitation of Regional Economic Development Groups
Promote the ongoing development of liveable communities that enhance the social capital of the region.	Develop promotional strategies for the region	Identify marketing strategies that promote the benefits of the region	Consultation with local Chambers of Commerce and business groups to facilitate promotional strategies.
	Develop and expand education and training programs	Identify and aid the development of required new skills, education opportunities through all levels of education	Consultation with USQ, SQIT and DEEWR to promote and attract funding for significant programs.
	Regional framework policy for energy and coal developments with a community protection bias	Development of a regional framework policy that outlines a community offset system for coal and energy developments	Consultation with relevant groups to provide resource development implications data to both levels of government that will affirm or inform government policy.
	Target areas which need specific funding based on specific needs that will enhance quality of life.	Develop a regional community based infrastructure and development policy specific to community needs and expectations	Consultations with relevant stakeholder groups to develop a social infrastructure policy.

Additionally, RDA Darling Downs & SW is collaborating with the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) in the following Regional and Industry action plans as identified by the Surat Basin Economic Development Strategy:

Regional Action Plans

Table 3.1: Theme 1: Advocacy & Leadership

Strategic Theme	Actions	By whom	Further detail	Timeline
Advocacy and Leadership	Collation and communication of information and data	Lead: DEEDI, RDA Support: USQ, CCIQ, Chambers of Commerce, Local Government, REDO, SQIT, AWD, DEEWR	Develop key strategic regional linkages and partnerships which encourage and enable communication of information on key regional priorities. DEEDI to co-ordinate the CSG Engagement Groups and the Surat Basin Local Leadership Group. Support other Economic Development groups in the region. Highlight the current economic state of the Surat Basin region.	Ongoing Ongoing 6 monthly
	Promote the need for infrastructure and other transport system solutions	Lead: DEEDI, RDA, DTMR Support: DLGP, DET, MRC, REDO, Local Government, SQIT, AWD, DEEWR	Identify the future economic and social impacts of insufficient infrastructure to support and promote the need for the infrastructure improvements. Align key stakeholders to ensure the region puts forward one consolidated message of infrastructure required.	Yearly Yearly
	Providing planning support for Regional Planning	Lead: DEEDI, Local Government Support: RDA, DLGP, DTMR	DEEDI to update the 2010 industrial land study of the Surat Basin. Review and propose mechanisms to streamline development approvals.	2011/12 Ongoing

Table 3.2: Theme 2: Assisting and Supporting Local Businesses

Strategic Theme	Actions	By whom	Further detail	Timeline
Assisting and Supporting Local Business	Engage with local business and industry	Lead: DEEDI, CCIQ Support: QMI-ICN, USQ, Chambers of Commerce, Local Government, RDA, AWD	Facilitate and encourage local business and industry cooperation and collaboration through business network events and clusters. Provide assistance to local business to compete in global supply chains.	Ongoing
				Ongoing

Table 3.3: Theme 3: Innovation, Technology and Value Adding

Strategic Theme	Actions	By whom	Further detail	Timeline
Innovation, Technology and Value Adding	Encourage the use and adoption of new technology	Lead: DEEDI, USQ Support: AusIndustry, CCIQ, RDA, QMI-P&I, Local Government	Facilitate regional innovation networking events to bring together business, industry, R&D providers and research institutes.	6 monthly
	Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship	Lead: DEEDI Support: USQ, CCIQ, RDA, QMI-P&I, Industry, Local Government, AusIndustry	Connect local business with Government R&D business assistance programs and provide mentoring and guidance to businesses to adopt new technologies. Identify emerging technologies for potential adoption.	Ongoing Ongoing

Table 3.4: Theme 4: Attracting Investment

Strategic Theme	Actions	By whom	Further detail	Timeline
Innovation, Technology and Value Adding	Encourage the use and adoption of new technology	Lead: DEEDI, USQ Support: AusIndustry, CCIQ, RDA, QMI-P&I, Local Government	Facilitate regional innovation networking events to bring together business, industry, R&D providers and research institutes.	6 monthly
	Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship	Lead: DEEDI Support: USQ, CCIQ, RDA, QMI-P&I, Industry, Local Government, AusIndustry	Connect local business with Government R&D business assistance programs and provide mentoring and guidance to businesses to adopt new technologies. Identify emerging technologies for potential adoption.	Ongoing Ongoing

Table 3.5: Theme 5: Workforce Development

Strategic Theme	Actions	By whom	Further detail	Timeline
	Attract and integrate new workers	Lead: DET, ESQ, CSQ, SQIT, CCIQ Support: DEEDI, REDO, Local Government, RDA, DEEWR, Local Chambers of Commerce, AWD, QMI-MSQ, SBC	Establish a “one stop shop” recruitment and employment advisory service to support workforce attraction to the Surat Basin. Implement the CSQ Indigenous Engagement Strategy in the Surat Basin. Facilitate the development and operation of a regional “welcome committee” to provide information and a point of contact for new residents.	2011/12 2011/12 2011/12
	Engage with business and industry to understand evolving regional skill requirements	Lead: DET (Workforce Development Group) Support: SQIT, DEEDI, RDA, REDO, Peak Industry bodies, Local Government, QMI-MSQ, CCIQ, DEEWR, AWD	The Workforce Development Group will monitor employment levels, skills shortages and training capacity and develop strategies to meet the needs of the region.	Ongoing

Industry Action Plans

Table 4.3: CSG and Services Action Plan

Sector	Actions	By whom	Further detail	Timeline
CSG and Services	Improve industry competitiveness through innovation, technology adoption and improved efficiency	Lead: USQ, AusIndustry, DEEDI, QMI Support: SQIT, RDA, Local Government	USQ to investigate the opportunity to establish a dedicated groundwater research facility within the region focussing on water resource planning and the impact of CSG water.	2011/12
			Facilitate partnerships with organisations for the commercialisation and investment of new technologies, adoption of innovation and R&D opportunities.	Ongoing
			DEEDI to assist companies to adopt best practice by utilising 'QMI Probe' program to benchmark their processes and performance against other companies in their sector.	Ongoing

Table 4.5: Education and Training Action Plan

Sector	Actions	By whom	Further detail	Timeline
Education and Training	Foster skills development, labour attraction and retention	Lead: DET, SQIT, DEEDI, USQ, DEEWR Support: AWD, ESQ, MISC, Local Government, QMEA, QMI-MSQ, RDA	Implement the DET Workforce Development Strategy which addresses the region's education and training requirements. SQIT to develop pre-employment, induction and recognised prior learning training opportunities for the resource sector. SQIT to develop a resource sector faculty and partner with industry to deliver new courses in water treatment and management. SQIT to establish a trade training centre in Miles. SQIT to assist ESQ to build capacity and a data base of employment opportunities. USQ to develop formal linkages with SQIT to articulate pathways between existing and new programs. Increase access to the Dalby Trade Training Centre and the Australian Agricultural College Campus for secondary school and VET students.	Ongoing 2011/12 2011 2011 2011/12 2011 2011
	Improve industry competitiveness through innovation, technology adoption and improved efficiency	Lead: USQ, DET Support: DEEDI, SQIT, REDO, Local Government, RDA, AWD	USQ to explore the opportunities of undertaking independent research into areas of regional significance and develop a regional repository for this work. Encourage use of new technologies that facilitate improved education and training opportunities.	2011/12 Ongoing

8. Reference List

Table 13 Reference list

Author/Owner	Title	Date	Links
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Regional Development Australia	Regional Development Australia - website		http://www.rda.gov.au/
Queensland Treasury – Office of Economic and Statistical Research	Queensland Regional Profiles – Darling Downs and SW Region	2010	http://statistics.oesr.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles?
Department of the Premier and Cabinet	Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland	2008	http://www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/library/pdf/tomorrow/Towards_Q2_Tomorrows_Queensland.pdf
Department of Infrastructure and Planning	South West Regional Plan	2009	http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/regional-planning/regional-plan-8.html
Department of Infrastructure and Planning	Maranoa – Balonne Regional Plan		http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/regional-planning/maranoa-balonne-regional-plan.html
Department of Infrastructure and Planning	SEQ Regional Plan	2009	http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/seqregionalplan
Department of Infrastructure and Planning	South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2010-2031	2010	http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/seqipp
Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation	Surat Basin Future Direction Statement	2010	http://203.210.126.185/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/secure/docs/4187.pdf
Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation	Blueprint for the Bush	2006	http://www.regions.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=13346
Department of Infrastructure and Planning	Coal Infrastructure Strategic Plan	Not yet released	http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/statewide-planning/coal-infrastructure-strategic-plan.html
Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation	DDSW Food Processing Industry Plan	2008	http://www.regions.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=4986
Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation	DDSW Surat Energy Province Action Plan	2008	http://www.regions.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=4986
Queensland State Department of Public Works	Queensland Telecommunications Strategic Framework 2009 – 2012	2008	http://www.qgcio.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/Strategies/Queensland_Telecommunications_Strategic_Framework.pdf
Maranoa Regional Council	Maranoa Regional Economic Development	2010	http://www.maranoa.qld.gov.au/business/documents/Maranoa_Regional_Economic_Develop

Author/Owner	Title	Date	Links
	Strategy 2010 – 2015		ment_Strategy.pdf
Toowoomba Regional Council	Various planning schemes		http://www.toowoombarc.qld.gov.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=15&Itemid=27
Toowoomba Regional Council	Toowoomba Corporate Plan	2009	http://www.toowoombarc.qld.gov.au/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&qid=2403&Itemid=133
Southern Downs Regional Council	Various planning schemes		http://www.southerndowns.qld.gov.au/page/Economic_Development/Planning_Development/
Southern Downs Regional Council	Southern Downs Operational Plan 2010-2011	2010	http://www.southerndowns.qld.gov.au/page/Council_Information/Publications/
Western Downs Regional Council	Various planning schemes		http://www.wdrc.qld.gov.au/services/town_planning_schemes_regional.shtml
Goondiwindi Regional Council	Various planning schemes		http://www.goondiwindirc.qld.gov.au/web/guest/council/functions/planning/main.shtml
Maranoa Regional Council	Various planning schemes		http://www.maranoa.qld.gov.au/planning/P_and_E_TP_schemes_maps.shtml
Shire of Balonne	Balonne Shire Council Planning Scheme	2006	http://www.balonne.qld.gov.au/residentinfo/BuildingPlanning/index.shtml
Bulloo Shire Council	Bulloo Shire Planning Scheme		Not available online
Murweh Shire Council	Planning Scheme for Murweh Shire Council	2005	http://www.murweh.qld.gov.au/council/Publications/Corporate_Plan.shtml
Paroo Shire Council	Paroo Shire Planning Scheme		Not available online
Quilpie Shire Council	Quilpie Shire Planning Scheme	2006	http://www.quilpieshire.com.au/page20.html
Toowoomba Regional Council	Toowoomba Regional Community Plan	2010	http://www.toowoombarc.qld.gov.au
Far West NSW Regional Plan	Far West NSW Regional Development Committee	2010	http://www.rdafarwestnsw.org.au
Office of Economic and Statistical Research	Demography and Planning	2010	http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au/pifu
Darling Downs and South West Regional Development Committee	Darling Downs and South West – Regional Development		http://www.rda-ddsw.org.au
Regional Development Australia	RDA Darling Downs and South West region map		http://www.rda.gov.au/resources/maps.aspx
Bureau of Meteorology	River basins within Darling Downs and South West region		http://www.rda.gov.au/resources/maps.aspx
Department of Environment and Resource Management	Eromanga and Surat Basin		http://www.derm.qld.gov.au
Bureau of Meteorology	Mean annual climate data		http://www.bom.gov.au/
Office Economic and Social Research	Estimated resident populations	2009	http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au
Office Economic and Social Research	Estimated resident populations by age		http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au
Office Economic and Social Research	Socio-economic index of disadvantage		http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au

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Office Economic and Social Research	Employment by industry		http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au
Office Economic and Social Research	Employment by occupation		http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au
Dalby Chamber of Commerce	Information regarding education, transport, and telecommunications	2010	http://www.dalbychamber.com.au
Office Economic and Social Research	Education statistics		http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au
University of Southern Queensland	Queensland College of Wine Tourism	2010	http://www.usq.edu.au/qcwt
University of Southern Queensland	University of Southern Queensland	2010	http://www.usq.edu.au/aboutusq
Braemar Power Station	Braemar Power Station		http://www.ermpower.com.au/power
Origin Energy	Darling Downs Power Station		http://www.originenergy.com.au
CS Energy	Kogan Creek Power Station		http://www.csenergy.com.au
Origin Energy	Spring Gully Power Station		http://www.originenergy.com.au
Queensland Rail	Surat Basin Rail Project		http://www.coalrail.qrnetwork.com.au
Toowoomba Regional Council	Toowoomba Airport upgrade		http://www.toowoombarc.qld.gov.au
Maranoa Regional Council	Roma Airport upgrade		http://www.maranoa.qld.gov.au
Outback Gonwana Foundation	Dinosaur Business Plan and Marketing Strategy Project	2010	http://www.ogf.org.au
Office of Economic and Statistical Research	Darling Downs and South West Queensland Regional Profile	2010	http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au
Southern Downs Regional Council	Southern Downs Operational Plan	2010	http://www.southerndowns.qld.gov.au
Department of Infrastructure and Planning	Surat Basin Infrastructure Corridor	2010	www.dip.qld.gov.au/local/surat-basin-infrastructure-corridor
National Economics	State of the Regions - Beyond the Mining Boom 2011-12	2011	
DEEDI	Surat Basin Economic Development Strategy	2011	