



BERRIGAN SHIRE

BAROOGA • BERRIGAN • FINLEY • TOCUMWAL



Berrigan Shire

Advocacy DOCUMENT

2025-2026





Acknowledgement of country

Berrigan Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and thrive. We pay our respects to their elders; past, present and emerging. The peoples of these great Nations, their spirits and ancestors will always remain with our waterways and lands.

Message from the Mayor



A handwritten signature in grey ink, reading 'Julia McKean'.

Dr Julia Cornwell McKean
Mayor, Berrigan Shire Council

Berrigan Shire Council is committed to facilitating long term, sustainable growth of our community and economy.

We have a proven track record of working closely with other tiers of government and private industry to deliver projects that address regional challenges and capitalise on opportunities identified by our community in their Community Strategic Plan.

This Advocacy Plan outlines how Council will work with higher tiers of government, our peers and industry partners on priority and strategic initiatives to deliver economic and social benefit for Berrigan Shire and the broader region.

This document is a blueprint for these partnerships. I look forward to working with partners and decision makers to prioritise and deliver exciting and important outcomes for our community.

Berrigan Shire Advocacy Plan

The Berrigan Shire Advocacy Plan is aligned to the aspirations of our community through the Community Strategic Plan.

Plan on a page

BERRIGAN SHIRE, CREATE YOUR

tuture.

Vision

Our diverse population and productive natural landscape fuel a vibrant economy and a harmonious and thriving community.

Council's role

Provide

Services, facilities, infrastructure, programs, planning, and engagement.



Advocate

Amplify the voice of our community to get the best possible outcomes.



Collaborate

Partner with the community, business and industry, other councils, and other tiers of government.



CO. Our community

An inclusive, resilient community with a strong sense of belonging and pride.

We're healthy and well with equitable access to services.

- CO.1 Deliver initiatives, facilities and services to advance health and wellbeing priorities.
- CO.2 Strengthen community safety and disaster resilience.
- CO.3 Support recreation, sporting and health pursuits.

We have a vibrant, inclusive, and creative community life.

- CO.4 Respect, promote and celebrate our heritage, identity, diversity, and culture.
- CO.5 Acknowledge and embed Aboriginal culture and stories within our community.
- CO.6 Support young people to be empowered and resilient and to stay in our shire.
- CO.7 Our community groups are supported.

EC. Our economy

A resilient and prosperous economy that supports employment and learning opportunities.

An economy characterised by growth, diversification, and a skilled workforce.

- EC.1 Encourage and support projects that diversify the economic base and provide local jobs.
- EC.2 Attract new local employment opportunities across the area.
- EC.3 Ensure sufficient and appropriate land is zoned for business and industrial purposes.
- EC.4 Advocate for accessible education, training, and employment pathways.
- EC.5 Support existing businesses to adapt and respond to economic shocks.

A destination with a strong tourism sector and a resilient, innovative agricultural industry.

- EC.6 Develop and promote local attractions and experiences.
- EC.7 Market the shire as a tourist destination, highlighting the unique rural character, natural environment, culture, and lifestyle.
- EC.8 Foster a diverse, adaptive and innovative agricultural industry.

EN. Our environment

Our natural assets are protected and enhanced for future generations.

Our environment and natural habitats are protected, and biodiversity thrives.

- EN.1 Protect and enhance biodiversity, including our natural environment, waterways, native flora and fauna.
- EN.2 Enhance public access and amenities at natural attractions like the Murray River and Finley Lake.

We work together to reduce our shire's carbon footprint.

- EN.3 Mitigate the impacts of climate change through renewable energy and water conservation measures and encourage sustainable living.

Robust planning systems support the liveability of our shire.

- EN.4 Our rural character and heritage assets are protected and maintained.
- EN.5 Plan for the availability of diverse and affordable housing.
- EN.6 Our public spaces and residential developments are designed to support health, safety, and connection.
- EN.7 Developers provide positive social and environmental contributions.

IN. Our infrastructure

Reliable and efficient infrastructure that meets the growing needs of our community.

We can move through our shire, and to other places with ease.

- IN.1 Improve the road network to ensure safety, and connectivity.
- IN.2 Improve public and community transport options to enhance access for all residents.

Our hidden infrastructure works and meets the needs of our community.

- IN.3 Strive to deliver best practice waste, water, sewerage and stormwater.
- IN.4 Advocate for better internet and telecommunications infrastructure services.

Our community facilities are planned to meet community needs and enhance social connection.

- IN.5 Community facilities are planned and maintained to meet the needs of our growing population and promote maximum use.
- IN.6 Community pride is encouraged through the beautification and maintenance of our towns.

CL. Our civic leadership

Transparent and responsible leadership that actively engages with and serves the community's interests.

The community is serviced in an effective, financially sustainable and responsible manner.

- CL.1 Improve Council processes to make doing business with Council easier.
- CL.2 Manage people, assets, resources, and risks responsibly to support the Council's ongoing viability and maximise value for money for ratepayers.

Our community is informed and engaged in decision-making.

- CL.3 Enhance communication channels between the council and residents.
- CL.4 Strengthen community engagement and participation in decision-making.

A community where collaborative efforts enhance development and service delivery.

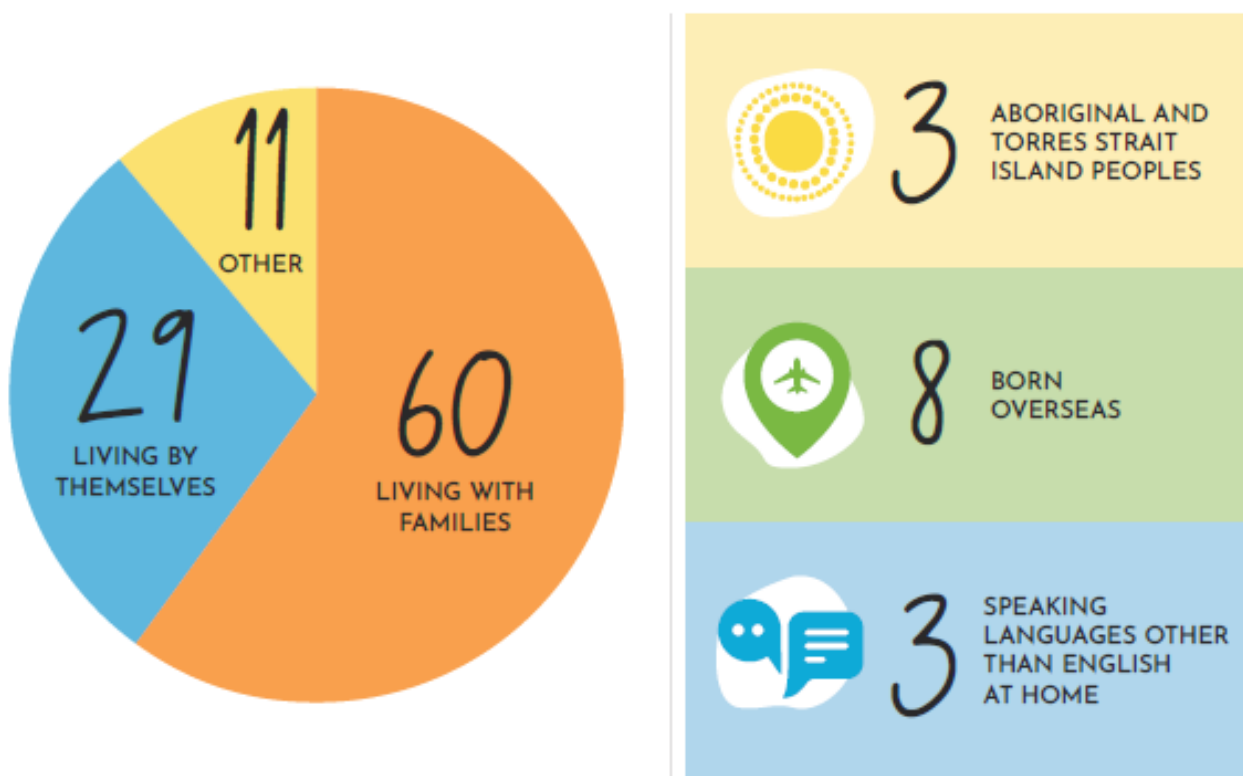
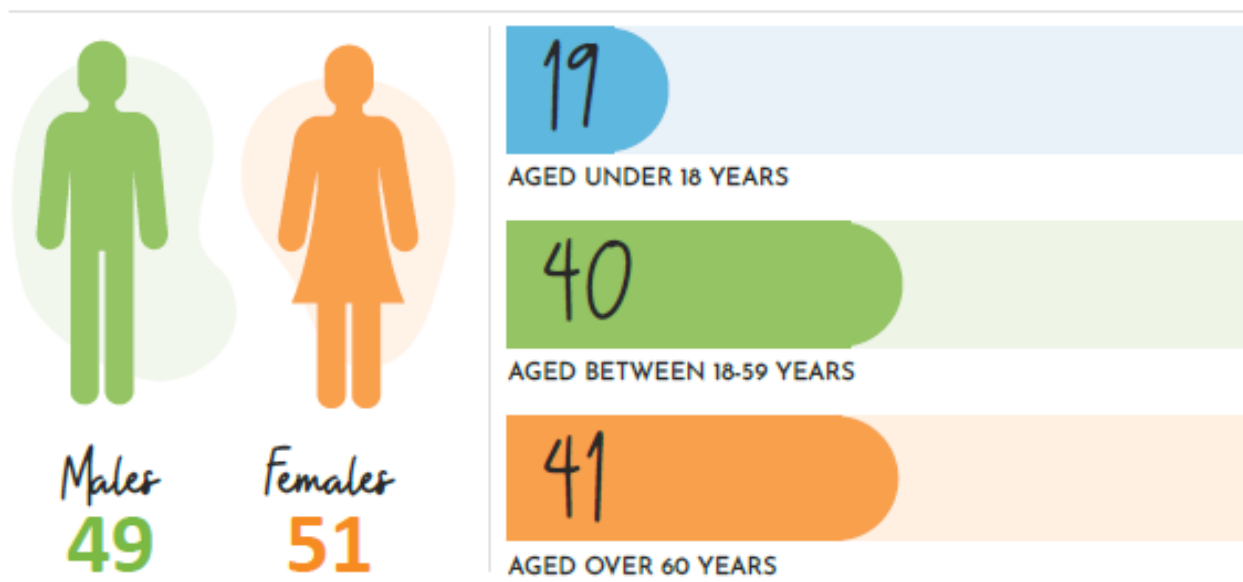
- CL.5 Build partnerships with state agencies, businesses, and non-profits.
- CL.6 Secure funding and resources for projects and services.
- CL.7 Actively participate in regional bodies to advance shared action for our region.

About Berrigan Shire

Berrigan Shire is a thriving rural community on the banks of the iconic Murray River, the border between New South Wales and neighboring Victoria, only three hours north of Melbourne (270 km) and 7 hours (670 km) south-west of Sydney. A growing population of 8,700 live in our four towns of Barooga, Berrigan, Finley and Tocumwal and the surrounding rural area. This population is expected to increase to over 10,000 by 2046.

Berrigan Shire's major industry is agriculture with most of our 2,066 square kilometre area having access to irrigation, allowing for intensive cropping and pasture with Finley and Berrigan acting as service towns. The Murray River and associated lifestyle options also attract many tourists from Victoria, especially in the river towns of Tocumwal and Barooga.

If Berrigan Shire consisted of 100 people, there would be:





7 have a disability



11 care for someone with a disability

LABOUR WORKFORCE (AGED OVER 15 YEARS AND UNDER 65 YEARS)



41

COMPLETED
HIGHER
EDUCATION



65

DID NOT
COMPLETE
YEAR 12

22

WITH AN INDIVIDUAL
INCOME LESS THAN
\$400 PER WEEK



65

WHO DROVE
TO WORK



5

WHO WALKED
TO WORK

Health

Objective

To advocate:

1. for the provision of equitable access to health care for our community,
2. to ensure the promises of state and federal government are realised on the ground,
3. for the provision of safe and sustainable quality care to our community and
4. to strengthen the services provided to our community which ensure all care from start of life to end of life is available, supported and dignified.



CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
CO.1 Deliver initiatives, facilities and services to advance health and wellbeing priorities	Finley Hospital Upgrade (see equitable access to renal facilities)	\$25,000,000
	Equitable Access to Renal Facilities	\$300,000
	Tocumwal Ambulance Service	\$20,000,000
	Regional and Rural Health Inquiries	N/A

OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Finley Hospital Upgrade	The Finley Health Services Plan (HSP) includes factual errors needing NSW Health's attention, including geographic and demographic misstatements. The 2022 \$25M rebuild budget has proven to insufficient, lacking CT scanning and renal services. Council will continue to advocate for these services.	Upgrading the Finley Hospital in line with the Health Services Plan will enhance health care access and provide essential services to our community. Improvements in early diagnosis, treatment options and overall health outcomes, reduces the need for residents to travel long distances for care, thus fostering a healthier, more resilient community.
Renal Services	As above, renal services and CT scanning were initially included in the Finley HSP, but were removed due to rising delivery costs. The Council aims to secure additional funding to address this gap and prevent health inequities, including developing a business case for renal services in the area.	Providing renal services within 30 minutes of home for Berrigan Shire residents will improve access to essential care, reduce travel burdens and enhance health outcomes. It ensures timely treatment, supports patient wellbeing and fosters a healthier community by addressing critical healthcare needs locally.

Health

Continued . . .



OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Tocumwal Ambulance Service	Priority ambulance response in Tocumwal averages 40 minutes, failing to ensure equitable emergency care access. The community's concerns regarding the introduction of a Community Emergency Response Team, combined with the presence of a paid First Responder unity, makes options other than a fully functioning ambulance station less viable.	A permanent ambulance station in Tocumwal would ensure faster emergency response times, improving access to critical care. This would enhance health outcomes and provide peach of mind, ensuring equitable healthcare access for the community. It will also ensure visitor have access to acceptable standards of care during surge periods, such as school holidays.
Rural and Remote Health Inquiries	Inquiries from 2020 led to Report No 57 on rural health services in NSW, published in May 2022. The NSW government supported 41 of 44 recommendations. In 2024, the implementation review involved Berrigan Shire's Mayor and CEO testifying to the Joint Select Committee. The final report is due in February 2025.	Berrigan Shire Council's engagement in rural health system reviews ensures local needs are addressed, influences policy decisions and advocates for equitable healthcare. Our involvement helps secure necessary resources and services, improving health outcomes and fostering a healthier community.

Alignment

Federal	State	Peers
Regional Development Australia (RDA) - Strategic Regional Plan 2022-2025	Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)	RAMJO Statement of Regional Priorities
	NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan	Murrumbidgee Local Health Network
	Riverina Murray Regional Plan	GV Health Albury Wodonga Health

Education, Training and Employment

Objective

To establish a Regional University Study Hub in Finley under the Southern Riverina Country Universities Centre (CUC) model, aiming to increase local access to tertiary education, address workforce shortages and foster socio-economic growth within the region.

CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
EC.4 Advocate for accessible education, training and employment pathways	Country Universities Centres Southern Riverina	\$1,600,000 (over 4 years) BSC has committed \$10,000 per year for first 4 years of establishment.
	Access to funded traineeships, cadetships and apprenticeships	Nil or minimal cost to council
OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Finley Campus, Southern Riverina Country University Centre	Berrigan Shire Council, Edward River Council and Country Universities Centres (CUC), aim to establish in Finley and Deniliquin. The Southern Riverina region faces significant barriers to tertiary education. A local CUC campus in Finley would address these challenges, providing modern facilities, academic support and community driven programs, boosting education access and socio-economic development.	Increased education access and equity by reducing relocation burdens and supporting underrepresented groups. Workforce development through local strategies and industry collaboration. Economic and social growth by retaining talent, encouraging lifelong learning and mitigating brain drain. Enhanced community infrastructure through the CUC as a learning and engagement hub.

Education, Training and Employment

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OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Trainees, Cadets and Apprentices	<p>Council has been successful in gaining the following positions under the Fresh Start program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cadet Development Engineer• Cadet Accountant• Trainee Accountant• Cadet Town Planner <p>These positions are fully funded including 15% of their overheads. Advocacy in this area will be to ensure the funding offered lasts longer than the initial \$252.2 M, 6 year program.</p>	<p>Council, and the Berrigan Shire as a whole, have a number of key positions vacant due to the inability to attract qualified professionals to the positions. The Fresh Start program will enable council to meet its goal of "growing our own talent". The program will also require increased links with local high schools and the CUC once it is established.</p>

Alignment

Federal	State	Peers
National Higher Education Initiatives	Higher education and tertiary policy	Edward River Council Country Universities Centres Central

Adaptive and Innovative (Agricultural) Industry

Objective

To advocate for an economy that is characterised by growth, diversification, resilience, innovation and a skilled workforce.

CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
EC8. Foster a diverse, adaptive and innovative agricultural industry	450GL Buy Backs	N/A
	Freight Infrastructure	N/A
	Murray Irrigation Bridges	N/A
	Tocumwal Intermodal	N/A

OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
450GL Buy Backs	Water security is crucial for Berrigan Shire's agriculture and community cohesion. The 450GL water buyback program threatens production, posing risks to the food industry and livelihoods. A comprehensive water management plan is needed to address value, seepage, evaporation and fair allocation, ensuring the region's agricultural future and fair outcomes amid federal reforms.	Prioritising equitable water access ensures Berrigan Shire/s agricultural productivity and food supply. Treating water as a national resource supports sustainable use and ecosystems. Engaging governments ensures fair, inclusive decision making, giving rural communities a stronger voice in water policy.
Freight Infrastructure	Berrigan Shire Council faces funding constraints, ageing infrastructure and limited resources in upgrading freight routes. Balancing local priorities with national heavy vehicle standards is challenging. Additionally, co-ordinating with multiple stakeholders and managing environmental impacts further complicates efforts to enhance infrastructure for safe, efficient transport.	Upgrading Berrigan Shire's freight route infrastructure is essential to meet national heavy vehicle standards. This ensures safe, efficient transport of goods, supports local businesses and boosts economic growth. Improved infrastructure reduces wear on roads, enhances safety and aligns with national logistics and trade requirements, benefiting the entire community.

Adaptive and Innovative (Agricultural) Industry

Continued . . .

OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Murray Irrigation Limited (MIL) Bridges	MIL was successful in gaining considerable funding to assess all MIL bridges in its footprint. In Berrigan Shire there are 472. The prioritisation of repairs to these bridges is essential to assisting council to prioritise freight routes and upgrading crucial infrastructure to accommodate High Productivity Vehicles and support economic growth.	Collaborating with MIL to upgrade strategic bridges will assist to enhance Berrigan Shire's freight network, ensuring safer, more efficient transport options. This partnership will support economic growth, attract investment and improve infrastructure resilience. Upgraded bridges will accommodate HPV, boosting local businesses and regional development.
Tocumwal Intermodal	The grain export industry in Tocumwal is growing and requires increased access to the Port of Melbourne. Council has been working with the relevant grain merchants and VLine to ensure the expansion of the site meets the growing needs of the industry, now and into the future.	Increased access to the Port of Melbourne will allow for heavy industry growth in Tocumwal and provided increased employment opportunities to the community.

Alignment

Advocacy Topic	Federal	State	Peers
450GL Buy Backs	National water policy National Water Reform 2024 The Murray Darling Basin Plan Water Amendment (Restoring our Rivers) Act 2023	NSW Water Strategy Basin-wide Environmental Watering Strategy Basin Salinity Management 2030	RAMJO Water Position Paper Murray-Darling Basin Authority Murray Darling Association

Adaptive and Innovative (Agricultural) Industry

Continued ...



Alignment

Advocacy Topic	Federal	State	Peers
Freight Infrastructure	National Service Level Standards for Roads	NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy	Heavy Vehicle Productivity Plan 2025-2030
	Heavy Vehicle Road Reform		RAMJO Freight Priorities
MIL Bridges			MIL Safe Public Bridges Project
Tocumwal Intermodal	Infrastructure Investment Program	VLine (Victoria)	Kelly Grains Grain Corp

Planning and Housing

Objective

The objectives of this section are to:

- increase the offering of affordable housing,
- provide equitable access to housing and
- provide for an increase in intensive farming practices in the area.



CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
EN5. Plan for the availability of diverse and affordable housing	Increase the offering of affordable and equitable housing in the Berrigan Shire	TBC
	Assist council in rezoning identified areas to allow for the increase in intensive farming practices	TBC

OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Affordable Housing	Berrigan Shire's housing stock is generally aging and therefore difficult to heat and cool for those who rent or own these premises. Access to funding through federal and state bodies would assist with upgrading the current housing stock to modern standards and provide new and affordable housing, particularly required in the townships of Finley and Berrigan.	People in stable housing are less likely to rely on social services, have better health and wellbeing outcomes, perform better academically and contribute directly to the community. Affordable housing can also contribute to environmental and infrastructure enhancements as modern standards reduce reliance on electricity and improve housing standards.
Intensive Farming	Berrigan Shire is experiencing an increase in the desire to implement intensive farming practices to diversify the industry in the area, reduce reliance on water and water infrastructure and to ensure the resilience of the agricultural industry into the future.	Intensive farming allows for reduced reliance on water and water infrastructure, whilst increasing crop production and farm outputs, helping to meet the growing demand for food experienced as a result of population growth. Finally intensive farming practices can lead to more affordable food for customers due to lower overheads in production.

Planning and Housing

Continued . . .



CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
EN5. Plan for the availability of diverse and affordable housing	Increase the offering of affordable and equitable housing in the Berrigan Shire	TBC
	Assist council in rezoning identified areas to allow for the increase in intensive farming practices	TBC

Alignment

Advocacy Topic	Federal	State	Peers
Affordable Housing	National Housing Accord	Land and Housing Corporation	Community Housing Providers
	Housing Australia National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness	NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines https://homesnorth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Affordable-Housing-Ministerial-Guidelines-2023-24.pdf Landcom Housing SEPP	Homes NSW
Intensive Farming	Climate Smart Agriculture Program Agibusiness Expansion Initiative	Intensive Livestock Planning Guidelines NSW Department of Planning	Agribusiness Owners

Water Utility and Trunk Infrastructure

Objective

To secure long term funding and support for the rationalisation and targeted upgrading of Berrigan Shire's water supply and trunk infrastructure, ensuring high quality, compliant and sustainable water, sewerage and stormwater provision for the Shire's growing population.

CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
IN3. Strive to deliver best practice waste, water, sewerage and stormwater	Water Utility Provision	TBC
	Tocumwal and Barooga Growth	TBC

OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Water Utility Provision	Berrigan Shire Council operates four aging water treatment facilities, with two facing compliance challenges. Local management ensures tailored, efficient services for rural populations. Challenges include ageing infrastructure, workforce shortages, population growth and changing regulations. A strategic, locally driven approach with targeted funding in essential for maintaining high quality, compliant water services as highlighted by the 2021 Productivity Commission's White Paper.	Upgrading ageing infrastructure ensures safe, compliant water delivery, meeting future demands. Local management allows tailored, efficient services for rural areas. Targeted upgrades maintain health and legislative standards. Funding and upgrades create local jobs, boosting the economy. Investing in the water network builds resilience against future challenges and supports growth.
Tocumwal and Barooga Growth	Our river towns are experiencing significant growth. Tocumwal in particular has primarily ageing infrastructure though both townships will struggle to keep pace with expected growth. Grant funding for repairs or upgrades is scarce. Flat topography and areas below river height necessitate pumps for water and sewer services, adding complexity.	Planning for growth in Tocumwal and Barooga ensures infrastructure keeps pace with community needs, enhancing quality of life. Collaborating with federal and state funding bodies secures necessary resources for upgrades, supporting sustainable development, economic stability and efficient service delivery, ultimately fostering a resilient and thriving community.

Water Utility and Trunk Infrastructure

Continued ...

Alignment

Advocacy Topic	Federal	State	Peers
Water Utility Provision	Water Smart Australia Australian Infrastructure Plan Recommendation 6.1 - Securing our water future Water Quality Australia	NSW Government water utility strategic planning Riverina Murray Regional Plan	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (federal) Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW)
Tocumwal and Barrooga Growth	Regional Development Australia (RDA) - Strategic Regional Plan 2022-2025	Riverina Murray Regional Plan Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)	Berrigan Shire Sustainability Report Berrigan Shire Growth Strategy

Digital Connectivity

Objective

To secure funding and streamline the process for the delivery of the agreed outcomes of the Regional Connectivity Project as noted below. The project is being delivered to ensure equitable access to high quality telecommunications for all residents in the affected region.

CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
IN.4 Advocate for better internet and telecommunications infrastructure services.	Regional Connectivity Project	Approx \$43,500,000

OPPORTINUTY	NEED	BENEFIT
Regional Connectivity Project	Berrigan Shire faces unreliable mobile and broadband services, network congestion and insufficient capacity. These issues worsen during emergencies and peak periods. Targeted investments are needed to bridge the digital divide. The proposed project will improve coverage, reliability and capacity, enhancing regional connectivity and driving socio-economic growth.	Enhanced connectivity will improve mobile and broadband services, support businesses and boost economic growth by attracting new investments and bolstering tourism. Upgraded and new infrastructure will enhance emergency resilience and reduce digital inequity. Streamlined implementation will ensure timely delivery of benefits, fostering greater inclusion in the digital economy.

Alignment

Federal	State	Peers
National principles agreed for improved mobile connectivity and coverage Data and Digital Government Strategy 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review	NSW Digital Strategy	Telecommunications providers RAMJO Councils Murray River Group of Councils (MRCG) Federal and State Ministers and representatives Private sector partners

Sustainability

Objective

To advocate for the cessation of cost shifting from state and federal governments to local councils, ensuring Berrigan Shire Council can effectively deliver core services to the community without the undue financial burden or compromising service quality.



CSP Alignment

CSP Aspiration	Priority	Budget
CL.2 Manage people, assets, resources and risks responsibly to support Council's ongoing viability and maximise value for money for ratepayers	Cost Shifting	Approx \$5.9M
	Equitable Funding of Local Government	N/A
	Removal of Red Fleet Assets from Council ownership	

OPPORTUNITY	NEED	BENEFIT
Reduce Cost Shifting	Cost shifting transfers service responsibilities to local councils without funding, straining finances and limiting revenue. Berrigan Shire faces increased obligations, risking service quality and creating unsustainable models. Ending cost shifting ensures fair resource allocation, enabling councils to focus on local development and community wellbeing through intergovernmental collaboration.	Reducing financial burdens on council ensures sustainable budgets and better long term planning. Freed from unfunded mandates, councils can improve essential services. Ending cost shifting fosters fair responsibility distribution, enhancing service delivery. Redirected resources boost community investment, supporting economic development and housing. Addressing cost shifting strengthens local government advocacy for rural communities.



How we Advocate

We provide civic leadership in advocating to the Australian, New South Wales and Victorian governments. We work closely with our local Members of Parliament and Cross Border Commissioners to address the issues that affect our shared communities.

We engage with candidates of all political parties and independents to help them understand our priorities.

Berrigan Shire Council conducts high level advocacy and government relationship building on behalf of the community. We build the profile of Berrigan Shire Council with policy makers to understand and delivery our Community Strategic Plan.

Submissions

Through direct and formal channels.

Public Awareness and Media Presence

Using marketing and communications to raise the urgency and importance, and to gather community support.

Platforms and Networks

collaborating with our partners to strengthen our proposals and position.

