



RAMJO – STATEMENT OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES – BACKGROUND PAPER

August 2018

Abstract

What can the 11 councils of the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation do together that they cannot do alone to make a big difference the wellbeing and prosperity of their communities?

This is just one of the questions we need to consider then developing the Strategic Statement of Priorities.



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Premiers has established Joint Organisations to transform the way the NSW Government and local councils work together to deliver important projects on a regional scale. Let's not miss this opportunity.

Regional councils of NSW have an unprecedented opportunity to make change for their communities. The NSW state government has empowered 13 Joint Organisations (of 85 councils) with legislated powers and has committed significant funding to support major regional projects.

The Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) was proclaimed in May 2018 and became operational as from 1st July 2018. Membership of the RAMJO comprises the following 11 Councils; Albury City, Berrigan Shire, Carrathool Shire, Edward River, Federation, Griffith, Hay Shire, Leeton Shire, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera Shire. The RAMJO Board comprises the Mayors of the Member Councils (voting members), as well as the Riverina Murray Regional Director of Premier and Cabinet (non-voting member) and the General Managers of the Member Councils (also non-voting members). The Board is currently supported by an Interim Executive Officer and the intention is to appoint a new Executive Officer by the end of 2018.

This background paper has been developed to assist the newly formed Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation of Councils (RAMJO) to develop a Strategic Statement of Regional Priorities (Strategic Statement) by end December 2018 and to help identify “major game-changing legacy projects”.

This Background Paper will be used in two ways;

1. To provide the members of the RAMJO with a succinct summary of state, regional and local information to enable evidenced based and robust discussion and decision making for preparing the Strategic Statement. The focus of this discussion will be at a workshop in September 2018.
2. As a reference document to be built on to support the content of Strategic Statement moving forward.

Process

The process for developing the Background Paper has included a desktop review of state, regional and local strategic documents (identified by the RAMJO members, a list of which is in the appendix) and interviews with:

- the 11 Council General Managers and Mayors,
- the Interim RAMJO Executive Officer,
- the Riverina and Murray Regional Director of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and
- the two CEO's of Regional Development Australia – Murray and Riverina.

The focus was to identify state, regional and local priorities, highlight synergies and uniqueness, explore trends, challenges and opportunities, and pose considerations for the development of the Strategic Statement.

Assumptions

The 11 RAMJO councils have worked together for many years (as part of the former RAMROC) and have been involved in establishing the RAMJO since inception. It is therefore assumed that members are equipped with a basic understanding of the purpose/framework of the Joint Organisations and of each member council e.g. demographics, industry etc. This information is available in multiple documents sources (see appendix) and is therefore not duplicated in depth in this background paper.

Approach

No-one knows the region better than those we interviewed. This Background Paper is therefore presented using a bottom up – top down approach. It presents the priority issues raised during the interviews with Councils and key stakeholder (in no particular order) as the starting point and outlines the context and issues, strategic links and opportunities and considerations for moving forward.

It also considers the primary and secondary functions of the Joint Organisations (as per the Act) within the context of the issues e.g.

Primary functions

1. Strategic Planning and Priority Setting
2. Regional Leadership and Advocacy
3. Intergovernmental Collaboration

Secondary functions

1. Service Delivery to member councils
2. Delivery of services to community
3. Sharing of resources
4. Enhancing the capacity of member councils

Challenge

The NSW Premier is wants genuine collaboration and strong leadership. Joint Organisations are asked to focus on no more than five (5) high level strategic priorities, showing links to Premier and State priorities with tangible regional projects that will “future proof our regions (making them more resilient to change, so they can thrive not just survive)”. (NSW Government, July 2018). Significant funding is available through such funds as the Regional Growth Fund.

Additionally, the premier aims to “turbocharge visionary projects” with investment from the sale of the Snowy Hydro (\$4 billion) into major legacy projects (e.g. valued over \$100 million) that genuinely make game changing impacts across regional NSW.

It is crucial the RAMJO does not miss this opportunity to access the commitment and funding available to make life changing impacts for its communities.

Currently the RAMJO has a list of over ten (10) priority issues. Whilst all are important, our challenge is to prioritise the top five (5) strategic priorities that will make the biggest difference to the wellbeing and prosperity of our communities. This will require fresh thinking and potentially, looking beyond the boundaries of the RAMJO to our neighbouring Joint Organisations. Additionally, we need to consider what is already in train, where gaps exist or directions are ill formed, who is doing what, and what piece of the puzzle is the role of the RAMJO.

SETTING THE SCENE - A summary of key interview findings

The following priority issues were raised during the interviews and are expanded in the following sections. These issues would be considered primary functions of the Joint Organisation, requiring a mix of regional planning, priority setting, leadership, advocacy and intergovernmental collaboration.

1. Water Security – access, affordability and sustainability (and living with the impacts of the Murray Darling Basin Plan)
2. Energy – generation, access, affordability and renewable
3. Digital Communication Connectivity
4. Transport Connectivity (especially freight, but also public)
5. Housing – sufficient and an affordable mix
6. Health Services - especially medical/dental/allied, mental health for both young people and farmers (and extended to the lack of police services in rural communities)
7. Tourism
8. Environmental Sustainability
9. Waste Management
10. Industry/Employment/Job growth
11. Population Growth

These issues were underpinned by a desire to increase prosperity through an increase in population, especially in small communities and include considerations for migrant and refugee settlement. This also included a desire to advocate for further reductions in red tape across the board.

The supporting/critical factors for these priorities include:

1. Boosting council's workforce – especially in engineering, surveying, finance, planning, and project management
2. Navigating cross border / cross region relationships
3. A balance of projects that focus on renewal and new
4. Managing the mix of competition and collaboration between councils - high level of trust and transparency needed.

Within 10 years, the RAMJO members want to see: (in no particular order)

1. A government driven investment toward decentralisation/regionalisation e.g. 90-100% of residents can get all their health services here in the region
2. Steady flow of money to the region - clear funding agreements (financial surety) attached to priorities and plans that are linked rather than constant grant applications
3. Strong relationship with the region and the state govt
4. A trend of growing populations
5. Increased gross regional product
6. Connected road networks with reduced cost of freight (including international freight)
7. Sustainable and affordable electricity
8. Choices are made about priorities and projects that benefit the Region (and supported by all members regardless of whether it is in your council area or not)
9. Projects that enhance council capacity and to operate more efficiently e.g. RAMJO to use the benefits of scale and capacity to take on staff to coordinate projects, roles, or be a broker etc. Councils sharing local skills, knowledge etc across the councils (not just professional groups, but also per project/area of interest)

PRIORITY 1 – Water Security

The RAMJO region “has the opportunity to significantly expand its role as a food bowl of Australia and the Asia Pacific through further improvements in water efficiency and allocation.” (Corview, 2018)

The story

Much of the RAMJO region economy is heavily dependent on access to water that is consistent, reliable, affordable, good quality and sustainable. These communities are built on irrigated agriculture, horticulture, and viticulture. In fact, almost 80% of food production in NSW comes from the RAMJO area. Water based tourism is also an important feature thanks to the regions rivers, lakes and wetlands.

However, the effects of climate change are being felt across the region and many have been impacted by the decisions made as part of the Murray Darling Basin Plan. Some Councils spoke of businesses choosing not to invest in the region and of business closures due to water issues. The flow on effects of this being a loss of jobs, population and services, which can lead to broader social effects.

Almost all the RAMJO councils rated Water as being in their top priorities. They spoke of everything from a lack of fairness in water allocations to a need for drought proofing through better diversion strategies and smarter farming infrastructure plans. They spoke of the prohibitive capital costs for farmers to establish or upgrade infrastructure to the significant geographical area involved.

Regional Strategic documents recognise that water (and energy) is a crucial enabling factor and outline a need for a multifaceted approach with modernisation and global (market) thinking as themes. The messages include a need for more timely water allocation notification, improved agricultural productivity through diversification and a reduced reliance on high water use crops.

State and Regional Document Links

- NSW Govt – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 - 2019
- Regional Economic Development Plans – Western Murray, Western Riverina, Murray (?)
- Murray Darling Basin Plan

RAMJO Opportunities

- Advocate for improved access to affordable water through an improved Murray Darling Plan and water policies.
- Advocate for more timely water allocation notifications.
- Identify and protect important agricultural land and water availability and usage.
- Improve on-farm water management practices - enable and encourage farmers to adopt more efficient irrigation and farming practices e.g. reducing water loss/wastage through pipeline infrastructure and digital automated technology
- Reduce the reliance on high water use farming - supporting new farming methods / mix
- Feasibility study for a diversion strategy for the upper ridges of the Clarence River
- Reduce license restrictions
- Working with farmers to enable them to trade water optimally

PRIORITY 2 - Energy

We have high solar exposure, optimal wind conditions, plenty of waste and an abundance of open space. Let's turn this into affordable clean energy and thrive.

The story

The need for affordable and clean energy is important for both economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. Currently our region is faced with several energy challenges;

- Ageing infrastructure
- Gaps in infrastructure meaning demand outstrips supply (particularly for manufacturing growth)
- Generators are used in some areas because energy supplies are unreliable
- Lack of natural gas infrastructure
- Increasing energy costs and high costs of connecting to energy
- Pressure to be more environmentally friendly with renewable energy generation

Our current circumstances have meant a loss of investment growth in some of our LGA as the energy requirements could not be met. Whilst progress has been made on many fronts with solar farms being established in the north west of our region for example, much more could be done.

The retirement of ageing coal-fired generators over the next 20 years combined with increasing demands, especially at peak times, will put enormous pressure on an already struggling system. The NSW Government recently released a plan to establish “Energy Zones” across NSW to support a transition to a modern energy system. The Hay area is identified as one of the three zones. The RAMJO will need to work with government on this strategy as well as the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan.

The need for improved access to clean energy has been highlighted in many strategic documents. Additionally, a proposal was recently made to the NSW Country Mayors Association by the Chief Executive of Tenterfield Council, seeking support for a joint submission to fund a feasibility study to establish a waste to energy infrastructure and services. This was supported.

State and Regional Document Links

- NSW Government Submission Australian Energy Market Operator’s Integrated System Plan
- NSW Government – A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- NSW Government – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 (Direction 11)
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 - 2019
- Regional Economic Development Plans – Western Murray, Western Riverina, Murray (?)
- Country Mayors Association NSW Meeting Minutes Friday 3 Aug 2018 – Waste to Energy, Discussion Paper, by Mr Terry Dodds, Chief Executive, Tenterfield Shire Council

RAMJO Opportunities

- Work with government on their energy zone plans, support renewable energy investment (especially solar) by identifying suitable locations and advocating for faster approval rates for new projects, support the Waste to Energy Feasibility Study and subsequent recommendations, implement the Street Light LED Project, and lobby government for renewable energy incentives (like Victoria).

PRIORITY 3 – Digital Communication Connectivity

*“Sorry, I can’t hear you. You must be in a black spot”
“I need reliable internet access to run my business – and this keeps dropping out”
This just doesn’t wash is 2018.*

The story

A common theme across the region is the lack of digital communication. This includes mobile phone black spots, slow or patchy internet connections, poor NBN coverage, and poor satellite coverage.

The challenges are the exponential growth in demand and expectations by community and business matched with the large geographical size of the RAMJO area.

Our lack of ability to keep up with demand means we are at risk of losing industry investment and population growth. Improving digital connectivity is noted in multiple strategy documents as crucial for economic growth as well as our health and safety. However, there is a lack of strategies detailing or proposing solutions.

State and Regional Document Links

- State Priorities – “Better government digital services”
- NSW Government – A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 - 2019
- Regional Economic Development Plans – Albury, Western Murray, Western Riverina, Murray (?)

RAMJO Opportunities

- Work with the RDA Murray and RDA Riverian to develop a comprehensive infrastructure assessment
- Conduct a black spot assessment across the region and advocate for change
- Advocate for improved digital communication coverage and quality
- Work with digital communication providers to ensure needs are met across the region
- Investigate opportunities for the use of smart technologies to support economic growth
- Investigate opportunities for more locally based solutions to improved connectivity

PRIORITY 4 – Transport Connectivity

Huge investments for huge returns.

The story

Everyone wants to fix transport connectivity in the RAMJO and some initiatives are already underway. There are two key issues; freight and public transport. The need for freight connectivity and infrastructure improvements seems to overshadow the need for improved public transport, possibly due to the significant economic benefits of improved freight connectivity for domestic and international markets.

Some of the issues for freight transport include;

- Whilst well connected with major highway corridors, many of the local roads that link to the highway corridors are unsealed and do not meet permit standards for B-Double or B-Triple freight trucks i.e. the last leg of the supply chain (or first leg as it is from farm gate) is compromised.
- Air – limited scheduling, limited loads and difficult to access, expensive and difficult to access
- Rail – single track configurations limit freight transport and cause blockages. Inflexible scheduling.
- Lack of freight and logistics interchanges that enable transitions of loads between large and small trucks.

The RAMROC (and REROC) developed a document detailing a long list of necessary freight infrastructure projects. This information, along with other sources, needs to be used to support strategic planning to prioritise investment. Planning needs to extend to consider by-pass requirements and ongoing costs.

Public transport issues are diverse across our RAMJO area. Some communities have a complete lack of public transport while others have varying degrees of access and issues with schedule connections. A concern here is that our communities are ageing and we are trying to keep our young people. We also have a high number of tourists and backpacker/itinerant workers and many people on low incomes. All these groups (the “transport disadvantaged”) would benefit from improved access to public transport.

Other issues - Councils struggle to finance transport projects due to the increased strain with reduced revenue and the scale and scope of the projects both for construction and maintenance. Additionally, planning will need to involve various partners both with the RAMJO and externally.

State and Regional Document Links

- State Priorities – “reducing road fatalities”
- NSW Government – A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- NSW Government – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 (Direction 17-21)
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 - 2019
- Regional Economic Development Plans – Albury, Western Murray, Western Riverina, Murray
- RAMROC Regional Freight Transport Plan (v 2018)
- MRT – Murray Region Destination Management Plan

RAMJO Opportunities

- Aim to improve both productivity and cost of freight by
 - further developing the RAMROC Freight Transport Plan into a genuine regional strategy that includes regional priority infrastructure projects and seek investment.
 - supporting fast train proposals.
 - Work with the Cross Border Commissioner to address relevant issues e.g. licencing, insurances, feeds, permits etc. With RDA Murray's "transport and logistics reference group". Transport NSW for a state-based freight transport plan.
- Identify public transport connectivity issues across the regions and address these
- Specifically consider the transport needs of our ageing population (specifically assessing access to regional health services)
- Work with the Roads and Maritime Services to address regional issues

PRIORITY 5 - Housing

Liveability? Nice place but there is nowhere to “live”.

The story

Our housing supply is not keeping up with demand and this is a real pressure point for supporting employment and population growth. Across the RAMJO we are in need a mix of affordable housing, both rentals and for purchase.

We have an ageing population, yet little to no down-sizing capability. We have itinerant workers and contractors, yet little to no rental properties. In fact, there are little to no rentals for attracting staff and service providers. *“The lack of rental properties is stifling population growth”*. In some cases, councils have purchased or built houses to enable the attraction of staff and health professionals.

Short term accommodation also needs an overhaul with very little being available outside the major centres.. Destination Riverina Murray refers to a need:

- to upgrade 3-3 ½ star models to 4-5 star
- for more diversity needed e.g. backpackers, 4-5 star hotels, serviced apartments, boutique, glamping, private rentals, eco-accommodation

Whilst councils have worked to open-up land for development, there is a lack of development investment.

Compounding this issue is the difficulty some more remote communities have to attract tradespeople for housing construction.

State and Regional Document Links

- Premiers Priorities – “making housing more affordable”
- State priorities – “increasing housing supply”
- NSW Government – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 (Directions 25-27)
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 - 2019
- MRT – Murray Region Destination Management Plan (Theme 7)
- Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan (Theme 8)

RAMJO Opportunities

- Boost marketing to developers
- Support improved town planning and housing strategies that provide more choice and affordable housing.
- Remove planning barriers
- Take a regional approach to planning housing for an ageing population e.g. considering all housing options, retirement villages, nursing homes etc.
- Invest in tourist parks to better accommodate families e.g. self-contained cabins and facilities

PRIORITY 6 – Health Services

How can we assist to better meet the changing health needs of our community?

The story

We know that health outcomes for rural Australians is poorer than for individuals living in the cities or regional centres and that outcomes are even worse for Indigenous populations. How can we change that for the residents of the RAMJO area?

The direction for NSW Health is to create self-reliant regions where people can get the best possible services close to home. This involves developing regional centres of excellence such as Albury Wodonga Health with the Cancer Centre and soon, the cardiac centre of excellence. Albury City is working with Wodonga to develop a health precinct that will support this concept. It also includes developing new models of care to take the pressure of major hospitals e.g. establishing systems and supports to utilise smaller hospitals for recovery and recuperation following treatment at a major centre

A major challenge facing the smaller communities in the RAMJO is maintaining health services in small communities and addressing the changing needs of the ageing population (e.g. supporting ageing in place) and the increase demand for mental health services both for young people and adults. Many communities have difficulties gaining and maintaining GP services, dental and allied health professionals. Most councils have purchased/built housing and/or medical clinics as an incentive to ensure local medical service provision. Success has also been shown with retaining doctors that have been training in the rural environment however gaps still exist.

Most of the conversations (and documents) focussed on health service provision rather than health promotion and prevention (despite lifestyle diseases being the major cause of death and illness). Councils have an enormous opportunity to address the social deterrents of health and the many protective factors through integrated actions, and many of them are doing so at the local level. It would be a shame not to consider if there were additional benefits by addressing these regionally.

A Premiers Priority is to reduce family violence reoffending. Advice of Women's Health North East is that the role of council is to encourage and enable women to take on senior roles as council management and executive, as councillors and as community group committee members. Women are currently grossly under-represented and these roles not only address this, they establish an immeasurable respect for women.

State and Regional Document Links

- NSW Premiers Priority "Improving service levels in hospitals"
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 – 2019, MLHD and MPHNS – Strategic Plan
- Regional Economic Development Plan - Albury

RAMJO Opportunities

- Work with the MLHD and MPHNS to ensure adequate health infrastructure and service provision for the region including the provision of adequate/targeted health training.
- Establish a Health Alliance to work collaboratively across 3 levels of government

PRIORITY 7 - Tourism and Visitors

What is the RAMJO role in optimising tourism in our region?

The story

With beautiful rivers and landscapes, arts and culture, plenty of sports and events and great food and wine, there are many of reasons to visit the RAMJO area. Development opportunities are worth exploring because robust tourism and visitation creates economically strong and vibrant communities.

Whilst interviewees noted Tourism and Visitor Economy wasn't their biggest area of concern they did agree that there are significant benefits to be gained by taking a regional approach.

Key strategies within the State and Regional Plans include;

- Improved planning,
- Infrastructure development e.g. River front development, walking/cycle tracks, art and cultural trails
- Branding/marketing
- Eco-tourism
- Agri-tourism
- Water based tourism
- Sport and recreation
- Festivals and events
- Accommodation

Some of these require cross border or cross region collaboration.

Through the development of the local CSPs, our communities stressed the importance of tourism, activating spaces and delivering events. We need to demonstrate how we are working toward the achievement of se community aspirations. Synergies should be explored for joined up planning and cost savings. A great example being the implementation of the Murray River Regional Experiences project through the collaboration of Albury City, Federation and Berrigan Shire councils.

State and Regional Document Links

- NSW Govt - A 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- NSW Government – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 (Direction 7)
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 - 2019
- MRT – Murray Region Destination Management Plan
- Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan
- Regional Economic Development Plans – Albury, Western Riverina, Murray (?)

RAMJO Opportunities

- Continue to work with Destination Riverina Murray and Murray Regional Tourism for joined up action

PRIORITY 8 – Environmental Sustainability

What can RAMJO do across the region to make a big impact on Environmental Sustainability?

The story

The communities of the RAMJO enjoy their country lifestyle and treasure their beautiful environment. Protecting it is high on the list of importance and is expressed in the individual Community Strategic Plans as one of the key themes. These cover a range of topics such as; reducing carbon footprints, increasing renewable energy, improved recycling and waste management, river protection, natural disaster management, climate change awareness, manage sewer and storm water, land use planning, sustainable farm practices and partnering with community and agencies to protect, preserve and appreciate natural landscapes and wildlife.

Whilst environmental sustainability was mentioned as a priority in the interviews, little explanation followed. We are therefore left to rely on considering potential synergies and opportunities for shared delivery of actions within the CSPs as a potential role for the RAMJO.

Further consideration should be given to Goal Two of the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036, a *“healthy environment with pristine water ways”*. The directions include:

- Manage and conserve water resources for the environment
- Manage land uses along key river corridors
- Protect and manage the region’s many environmental assets
- Increase resilience to natural hazards and climate change

State and Regional Document Links

- Premiers Priorities – “keeping our environment clean”
- NSW Government – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 (Directions 13-16)

RAMJO Opportunities

- Consider opportunities for collaborative thinking, planning and delivery of environmental sustainability strategies from within Community Strategic Plans and partnerships to deliver on the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 Goal Two (pages 31-37).

Note: Waste is addressed separately as is water and energy

PRIORITY 9 – Waste Management

How can we change waste from a problem into a solution?

The story

The previous RAMROC developed and has been implementing a regional waste management strategy since 2014. This strategy has included actions addressing six (6) themes:

1. Avoid and reduce waste generation
2. Increase recycling
3. Divert more waste from landfill
4. Manage problem wastes better
5. Reduce the incidence of litter
6. Reduce illegal dumping

Whilst much has been achieved, waste management remains a substantial cost to councils and weighs heavily on the environment. RAMJO members are keen to continue a joint approach to waste management and are seeking new innovative strategies moving forward.

One such new innovative strategy was noted under Priority 2: Energy of this Background Paper. That being the proposal from Tenterfield Council and the New England Joint Organisation to jointly submit for funding for a feasibility study to establish a “waste to energy” solution. This project would look to engage 80 councils from across NSW in the venture for genuine “super charged impact”.

State and Regional Document Links

- Premiers Priorities – “Keeping our environment clean”
- RAMROC Regional Waste Management Strategy 2014-2020
- Country Mayors Association NSW Meeting Minutes Friday 3 Aug 2018 – Waste to Energy, Discussion Paper, by Mr Terry Dodds, Chief Executive, Tenterfield Shire Council

RAMJO Opportunities

- Revise, update and implement the RAMROC Waste Management Strategy
- Support the “Waste to Energy” feasibility study proposal and subsequent recommendations.

PRIORITY 10 – Industry / Jobs / Employment Growth

How can the RAMJO supercharge our economy through industry, jobs and employment?

The story

The underlying issues for industry investment, job creation and employment vary across the RAMJO however the direction is the same; we need to grow.

Investment and population growth are diverse across the region with the regional centres and larger communities experiencing relatively good growth but the smaller communities experiencing almost no growth. This puts these smaller communities at risk on many levels.

Councils spoke of wanting to attract industries that are not impacted by seasonal conditions to support a more diverse and resilient economy. The REDs spoke of growing “value-adding” opportunities such as bringing processing to the region to compliment production. Growth areas include agriculture, manufacturing, health and aged care.

The councils also said that 20 new jobs can mean an increase of 60-80 people as they bring their families with them to the region.

Inevitably the conversations turn to education and traineeships etc. With solutions to skills gaps and employment involving a need for better relationship with schools and universities.

Some of the solutions to industry, jobs and employment growth may include stronger regional marketing strategies to industry, the removal or red tape, a reduction in costs and other enabling factors mentioned throughout the other 10 priorities. It is also important to consider stronger links with and the development of locally based education and training.

State and Regional Document Links

- Premiers Priorities – “Creating jobs”
- State Priorities – “Encouraging business investment”
- NSW Government – A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- NSW Government – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 (Directions 1-5)
- RDA Murray Regional Plan 2016 - 2019
- Regional Economic Development Plans – Albury, Western Murray, Western Riverina, Murray

RAMJO Opportunities

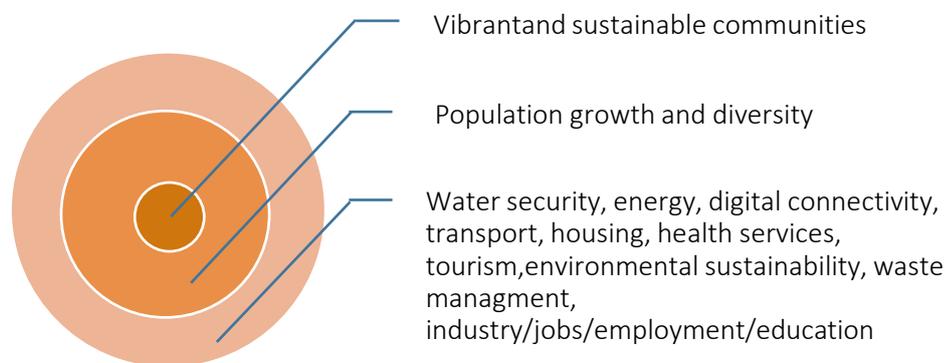
- Develop locally based training and career pathways in skills gaps across the region
- Develop a marketing strategy (with unified branding) for the region to attract industry investment and relocation
- Consider skilled migration strategies
- Support industry diversification through education, niche market exploration, a reduction in barriers to entry (including land zoning), and encouraging co-location
- Work with RDA Murray to support entrepreneurs establish innovative businesses and assist existing businesses and industries be sustainable and viable

PRIORITY 11 – Population Growth

We want to grow our population to improve our sustainability whilst maintaining our country lifestyle.

The story

Much of the story behind population growth requirements has been explored in the previous sections. It seems, population growth is the higher-level goal and the mechanisms for this to occur being the previously mentioned priorities e.g.



However, what's missing is an opportunity to consider refugee and migrant settlement strategies.

For this strategy to be implemented, communities not only need to address issues regarding the lack of housing and jobs but also a need for locally based settlement supports such as English education, driver education, job training and cultural supports.

Beyond this however is the need for a mindset change within government about population settlement ratios. That is, the current ratio is 85: 15 (City : Country). This ratio is then used for funding investment criteria and so forth. We need to shift the mindset to then shift the funding allocation. Imagine the difference a 60:40 split could make. Is this an advocacy role for the RAMJO?

Vibrant communities feature diversity and have a balanced spread of age groups. Our communities, like many across Australia and the world, are ageing. We must also consider strategies to both support the ageing population and to target our growth in other age groups.

State and Regional Document Links

- RDA Murray Regional Plan.

RAMJO Opportunities

- Advocating for greater supports and investment in refugee and migrant settlement for rural areas.
- Working with RDA Murray and RDA Riverina on skilled migration opportunities and supports.

SECONDARY FUNCTIONS

“There are lots of skills, expertise, resources, systems and capacity within the region. Let’s get better as sharing these.”

The following issues/opportunities reflect what would be considered secondary functions (supplementary or ancillary) of the Joint Organisation e.g.

- RAMJO service delivery to councils
- RAMJO service delivery to community
- Sharing resources across member councils
- Enhancing the capacity of member councils

These acknowledge that the JO is an incorporated association that is legislated under Local Government Act and can employ, tender, contract i.e. operate as a business. RAMJO could employ centralised expertise to share across the region.

This list below was drawn from the interviews as a starting point for discussion;

1. Workforce training and development – growing from within / traineeships, mentoring etc*
2. RAMJO taking on service provision for (duplicated) tasks or RAMJO being the vehicle to negotiate centres of excellence within individual councils (i.e. not taking jobs from councils but building professional teams instead of isolated workers, especially in smaller councils) for example:
 - a. Internal Auditing (now a requirement of all councils)
 - b. Collective tendering
 - c. Back of house operational roles e.g. IT, payroll, rate collection, administration, finance etc
 - d. Regional library services
 - e. Councillor induction and professional development training – OLG
3. Sharing systems and expertise across councils e.g. asset management, I.T., mentoring and brokerage, such as engineering
4. Shared interests projects (not just geographically based projects)
5. Supporting the use of integrating planning instruments and improving the consistency and quality of planning across the councils with systemised approaches, better community engagement etc.

A theme was on optimising the benefits gained from a blend of scale, capacity and capability.

Workforce * was considered a major limiting factor that underpins progress on all the primary priorities.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT – Preparing for our challenge ahead...

What have we missed

In the appendix is a table outlining a comparison of the priorities within the state and regional documents and how they fit with the current RAMJO list of priorities. Take a quick look at what's in and what's out. Did we miss something that the RAMJO should be acting on? Put on a "fresh thinking" hat.

Let's not bite off more than we can chew

One of the biggest risks to the potential success of the RAMJO is overload; allowing enthusiasm to outrun the capacity. There are many great projects already underway and everyone's dance cards seem to have a waiting list. The RAMJO will benefit most by focussing its functions on core, game changing activities, particularly in the first four years of establishment. It must also be smart about outsourcing specialised, short term roles/activities to support this focus. Whilst we will explore this in the workshop, please consider how you would prioritise the list of issues highlighted in this Background Paper and why?

Structuring our Priorities - Integrated Planning

Whilst we know that many of the priorities are interrelated, in the interest of continuing a commitment to integrated planning, it may be wise to use the key themes of Economy, Environment, Community and Governance/Leadership. The current priority list would look something like the following.

Economy	Environment	Community	Leadership / Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Energy – access, affordability and renewable• Transport Connectivity (especially freight, but also public• Digital Communication Connectivity• Housing – sufficient and an affordable mix• Tourism and Visitor Economy• Industry/Employment/Job growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water – access, affordability and sustainability• Environmental Sustainability• Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health Services - especially medical/dental/allied, mental health for both young people and farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workforce training and development• Brokerage services

Choosing our priorities and projects

It's imperative that the RAMJO is clear about its role. That is, what is in the sphere of control, influence or concern. Who is taking the lead and where are the gaps in priorities (talk) versus action.

YOUR WORKSHOP PREPARATION PAGE

 **Your Task:** Please complete the following section prior to the Workshop on Wednesday 5 September. Whilst you will not have to “hand it in”, you will need to share your responses as part of the first activity.

Issues / Priorities we haven't considered

Rank the RAMJO priorities (1 highest – 12 lowest)

Basic Criteria – regional benefits

Priority	Your Rank
1. Water Security – access, affordability and sustainability (specifically the negative impacts of the Murray Darling Basin Plan)	
2. Energy – access, affordability and renewable	
3. Digital Communication Connectivity	
4. Transport Connectivity (especially freight, but also public)	
5. Housing – sufficient and an affordable mix	
6. Health Services - especially medical/dental/allied, mental health for both young people and farmers (and extended to the lack of police services in rural communities)	
7. Tourism	
8. Environmental Sustainability	
9. Waste Management	
10. Industry/Employment/Job growth	
11. Population Growth	
12. Other (specify) :	
13. Other (specify) :	

What are your ideas for big ticket game changing legacy projects?

APPENDIX

Premiers, State and Regional Priorities – A Snapshot Comparison - what have we missed?

The following table highlights the links between the priorities/goals of the Premier, state and region and those identified by RAMJO members as listed in the previous pages.

Document	Addressed in RAMJO Priority List	Missing from Priority List
Premiers Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Jobs • Delivering Infrastructure • Keeping our environment clean • Making housing more affordable • Improving service levels in hospitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving public sector diversity • Improving education results • Improving government services • Protecting our kids • Reducing domestic violence reoffending • Reducing youth homelessness • Tackling childhood obesity
State Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging business investment • Boosting apprenticeships • Increasing housing supply • Better government digital services • Reducing road fatalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making it easier to start a business • Accelerating major project assessment • Protecting our credit rating • Delivering strong budgets • Improving road travel reliability • Transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme • Creating sustainable social housing • Improving Aboriginal education outcomes • Cutting wait times for planned surgeries • Increasing cultural participation • Ensure on-time running for public transport • Reducing violent crime • Reducing adult re-offending
NSW Govt – A 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW	Infrastructure	Business Environment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage existing infrastructure and other technologies in growth centres for a digitally connected future • Make regional travel faster and easier between regional centres and metro • Improve freight networks from regional NSW to global gateways to increase exports • Manage vital energy and water resources sustainably to ensure supply will meet long-term regional needs <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear skills pathways to jobs in regions • Boost regional NSW’s knowledge economy and excellence in innovation, particularly in agricultural technology, aged care, energy, aerospace, logistics, advanced manufacturing, and other areas linked to the future regions. <p>Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw in more domestic and international tourists in areas with tourism potential • Attract more domestic and international students to regional NSW <p>Business Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an attractive environment for businesses to establish and invest in regional NSW locations, consistent with regions economic endowments. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow vibrant places to live and work to encourage business and population growth
<p>NSW Govt – Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036</p>	<p>29 directions under the following 4 goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A growing and diverse economy • A healthy environment with pristine waterways • Efficient transport and infrastructure networks • Strong, connected and healthy communities 	
<p>RDA Murray Plan – 2016 – 2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The region has business and industries that are sustainable and viable • The region has supportive infrastructure that aligns with business and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community, business and industry sectors have the confidence, capacity and capability to deal with a complex and changing environment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A regional supported by integrated and relevant government policy and plans that align with the emerging needs of the community and business • 	
RDA Riverina Plan	Tba – is there one? I can only find an out of date one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Regional Economic Development Plan - Albury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and grow agribusiness and soft woods industries throughout the region • Grow the transport and logistics sector • Continue to develop the tourism sector and visitor economy • Grow the healthcare sector through the development of a health precinct in the region • Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled workers by improving liveability throughout the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalise on the region’s opportunity to be a special economic zone
Regional Economic Development Plan – Western-Murray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalise on value-adding opportunities in agriculture • Develop and diversity the tourism industry’s offerings and regional brand • Ensure the security of the regions water availability for key industry purposes • Provide opportunities and encourage growth for the emerging industries of mining and solar energy in the region • Encourage value-adding opportunities in the food processing and manufacturing industry 	
Regional Economic Development Plan – Western Riverina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and grow its agricultural and manufacturing “engines of growth” – emphasising better connection markets and greater supply chain integration • Invest in skills and the supply of key utilities critical to “engines of growth production processes, noting in particularly energy network constraints • Grow the Western Riverina population and labour pool to support greater output, specialisation and productivity: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

	through increasing housing supply and enhancing services and liveability	
Regional Economic Development Plan - Murray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tba – do not have a copy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
MRT – Murray Region Tourism Destination Management Plan	<p>NB – tourism wasn't discussed in any detail – therefore unable to determine what might be in or out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The river (develop and promote) • Nature based tourism (incl. cycling trails) • Sport and recreation • Food, drink and agribusiness (incl. farm gate and taste trails) • Arts, heritage and culture • Festivals, events and conferences • Accommodation • Infrastructure, transport and servicing (incl. telecommunication) 	
DRM-NSW: Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan	<p>NB – this wasn't discussed in any detail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Centre development • Nature based tourism • Rivers and waterways • Food and agritourism • Major touring routes • Sports and recreation • Festivals and events • Accommodation • Infrastructure and services 	
Murray Primary Health Network – Health Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples • Maternal and Infant Health • Young People • Older People • Population Health • Health Service Provision 	
Murrumbidgee Local Health District Strategic Plan 2016-2021	<p>(Tells us nothing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on wellness • Invest in our people • Together in partnership • Aspire to excellence 	

List of Reference Material Reviewed

Author	Title	Source / Web address
Local Plans		
11 RAMJO Councils	Community Strategic Plans	11 x Council websites
Albury City Council and Wodonga City Council	“Two Cities One Draft Community Strategic Plan 2017-2021”	http://alburywodonga.gov.au/plan
RAMROC	Strategic and Operational Plan 2017-2019	http://www.ramroc.org.au/projects/index.htm
RAMROC	“Regional Freight Transport Plan” (2018)	http://www.ramroc.org.au/projects/index.htm
RAMROC	“Regional Waste Strategy 2014-2020”	
Regional Plans		
Department of Premier and Cabinet	“Delivering for Riverina Murray”	https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/our-regions/riverina-murray/
Murray Regional Tourism	“Murray Region Tourism Destination Management Plan”	http://www.murrayregionaltourism.com.au/research-resources/strategies-plans/
Destination Riverina Murray NSW	“Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018” (2018)	https://riverinamurray.com.au/resources/
NSW Department of Planning and Environment	“Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036” (2016)	http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans/Riverina-Murray/Plan
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Centre for Economic and Regional Development – various authors	Regional Economic Development Strategies 2018-2022 (REDS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albury Wodonga • Western-Murray • Western Riverina • Murray 	Electronic copies provided https://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/programs-and-services/centre-for-economic-and-regional-development/projects/regional-economic-development-strategies/
Regional Development Australia	Murray (2016) “Regional Plan 2016 – 2019” Riverina Regional Plan (tbc)	https://www.rdamurray.org.au/index.php/ https://rdariverina.org.au/
NSW Government	NSW Government Submission on Australian Energy Market Operator’s Integrated System Plan	tbc
State Plans		
NSW Government	NSW State and Premiers Priorities	https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/
NSW Government	“A 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW” (July 2018)	https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/a-20-year-economic-vision-for-regional-nsw/
NSW Government Department of Industry	“Making it Happen in the Regions: Regional Development Framework”	https://static.nsw.gov.au/nsw-gov-au/1520212431/Making-it-Happen-in-the-Regions-Regional-Development-Framework.pdf

Understanding the “Region/s”

A quick snapshot of which Council areas are represented by various regional organisations / plans that affect the RAMJO. (Merged councils *)

“Regional” Organisation / Plan	In the RAMJO “Region”	Outside the RAMJO “Region”
RAMJO	Albury City Berrigan Shire Carrathool Shire Edward River* (Deniliquin & Conargo) Federation* (Corowa & Urana) Griffith Hay Shire Leeton Shire Murray River* (Murray and Wakool) Murrumbidgee* (Jerilderie & Murrumbidgee) Narrandera Shire	
Previous RAMROC	As above	Balranald Greater Hume Wentworth
RDA - Murray	Albury Berrigan Edward River Federation Murray River Murrumbidgee	Balranald Greater Hume Snowy Valleys * (Tumbarumba & Tumut) Wentworth
RDA - Riverina	Carrathool Shire Griffith Hay Shire Leeton Shire Murrumbidgee* (Jerilderie & Murrumbidgee)	West Wyalong Temora Coolamon Junee Wagga Wagga
Regional Economic Strategy - Albury Wodonga	Albury City Federation	Greater Hume Indigo Wodonga
Regional Economic Strategy – Wentworth Murray	Hay	Balranald Mildura Swan Hill Wentworth
Regional Economic Strategy -Western Riverina	Carrathool Griffith Leeton	nil

	Murrumbidgee Narrandera	
Regional Economic Strategy -Murray	Berrigan Edward River Murray River	Campaspe Gannawarra Moira
Murrumbidgee Local Health Service (MLHS) and the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN)	All RAMJO Councils +	Bland Coolamon Cootamundra-Gundagai Greater Hume Hilltops (Boorowa, Harden, Young) Junee Lachlan - Lake Cargelligo Snowy Valleys Temora Wagga Wagga West Wyalong
Destination Riverina Murray	All RAMJO Councils +	Bland Coolamon Cootamundra-Gundagai Greater Hume Junee Snowy Valleys Temora Wagga Wagga West Wyalong
Murray Regional Tourism (Cross Border)	Albury City Berrigan Shire Edward River* (Deniliquin & Conargo) Federation* (Corowa & Urana) Murray River* (Murray and Wakool)	Wodonga (Vic) Greater Hume Moira (Vic) Campaspe (Vic) Swan Hill (Vic) Gannawarra (Vic) Mildura (Vic) Wentworth

Bibliography

Corview. (2018). *Western Riverina Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018 - 2022*.

NSW Government. (July 2018). *A 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW*.