Rarely do any of us have the opportunity to influence what our community might look like in 30 years, yet, on this occasion every person in our community has had the opportunity to contribute and many have taken that opportunity.

This plan reflects the opinions, issues and solutions of the stakeholders in our region

Adopted 31 October 2013
# Table of Contents

## Section 1

1.0 A message from the Chair  

## Section 2

2.0 Executive Summary  
2.1 Our competitive advantage  
2.2 Our competitive disadvantage  
2.3 Our opportunities  
2.4 Our threat  

## Section 3

3.0 Our vision for the region  

## Section 4

4.0 The role of Regional Development Australia Far West  
4.1 The role of the committee in achieving our goals  
4.1.1 Our partnerships are important  
4.1.2 How will we measure our success  

## Section 5

5.0 Analysis of the region  
5.1 High speed broadband  
5.1.1 Accessing services is hindered with current broadband services  
5.1.2 Mobile telecommunication services add to the isolation  

Regional Development Australia Far West NSW  
Regional Plan 2013-2023
5.1.3 Retaining our young people

5.2 Education and training services

5.2.1 Long distances effect all aspects of life in the region

5.2.2 Training our own people is important

5.2.3 Work force development and pathways

5.3 Economic development and diversity

5.3.1 Mining

5.3.2 Supporting the mining industry in Far West NSW

5.3.3 Workforce development in the mining industry

5.3.4 Agriculture

5.3.5 Workforce development in the agriculture industry

5.4 Economic diversity

5.5 Tourism

5.5.1 Stronger collaboration between the arts and tourism sectors

5.5.2 Increasing and broadening tourist spending

5.5.3 Workforce development in the tourism industry

5.6 The creative industries

5.6.1 Film and commercial production in the outback

5.6.2 Growth is happening – Summer Vibes to Broken Hill Fringe

5.6.3 Indigenous creative industries

5.6.4 Workforce needs in the industry

5.7 Health

5.7.1 Unique issues inspire unique solutions

5.7.2 We need to take better care of ourselves

5.8 Transport

5.8.1 Our unsealed roads are disadvantaging the region

5.8.2 Rail services
5.8.3 Air services
5.8.4 Transport and tourism
5.9 Environmental
5.9.1 Uncertainty in water availability
5.10 Clean energy
5.11 Perception

Section 6
6.0 Regional priorities
6.1 Priorities for the next 12 months
6.2 Opportunities for the region – our long term goals

Section 7
7.0 RDA Far West activities / projects and initiatives

Annexure 1 – Section 8
8.0 About our region
8.1 Our geography
8.2 Our climate
8.3 Our water
8.4 Transport services
8.5 Our people at a glance
8.6 Employment
8.6.1 Employment sectors
8.6.2 Mining
8.6.3 Agribusiness
8.6.4 Tourism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.6.5</td>
<td>Creative industries</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.6</td>
<td>Employment by industry</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7.1</td>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7.2</td>
<td>School of the Air</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.1</td>
<td>Broken Hill Hospital</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.2</td>
<td>Community health</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Annexure 2 - Section 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultation and partnerships</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Regional consultation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Achieving our goals</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 1 – A message from the Chair

Regional Development Australia Far West NSW (RDAFW) is one of 56 RDA entities that exist across Australia. We are based in Broken Hill but we are responsible for representing RDA across far west NSW, the largest geographical and lowest populated region of NSW.

Our committee is an eclectic group of motivated and talented people, who are committed to better the socio-economic wellbeing of individuals and organisations in the RDAFW region.

Our staff all live, and have social and economic investment in the region. They are skilled in their positions, are committed, and motivated to support our committee in its policies and initiatives.

Our region poses great challenges, and offers many opportunities for RDAFW. Our charter is to provide leadership, resources and intellect to respond to these challenges and opportunities.

We have a high percentage of indigenous population and a high percentage of aged population, and the two Local Government Association’s (LGA) in our region are financially stressed. These factors put our services sectors under abnormal pressure.

On the other hand our major industries, the mining, tourism and the pastoral and agricultural sectors provide continuing economic strength to our regional community. Our region is still considered to be one of the most prospective areas of Australia for a range of minerals.

A key strategy to enable our mission is to engage with all other regional stakeholders, including;

- Broken Hill City Council, Central Darling Shire Council
- Major commercial businesses
- Business representative organisations
- NSW Government departments
- Federal Government departments
- Utilities providers
- Health, education and other service industries

We encourage feedback from these organisations and individuals in our region.

We see the activities of RDAFW as an important factor in achieving on-going improvement to the socio-economic environment of far west NSW. Our Regional Plan is designed to guide and drive our initiatives to this end.

I am pleased to commend our Regional Plan for 2013/14, and the committee and staff look forward to our challenge with great anticipation.
Section 2 – Executive summary

2.0 Executive Summary

The Far West Region encompasses the semi-arid lands of western NSW and shares borders with South Australia and Queensland. The region is known for the Barrier Ranges in the west and the Darling River which flows through western NSW to the Murray River at Wentworth.

The region comprises of 2 Local Government (LGA) areas, Broken Hill City and Central Darling Shire, and along with the unincorporated area of NSW covers an area of approx. 147,000 sq. km.

The region was first settled in the 1840’s with Broken Hill founded in 1883 following the discovery of silver and lead deposits and the formation of BHP. There is a strong mining industry, historically centered in Broken Hill, with strong new prospect for expansion within the region, however the steady decline of the industry and the modernisation of mining techniques has amplified the focus on other areas.

At its peak the mining industry supported a work force of 5,586. This reduced gradually at first, and then rapidly in recent years, through mine closures and extensive retrenchment programs. Though not the force and power of traditional times, the mining sector is still a major contributor to the far west’s economic prosperity and provider of jobs for local people. There is significant potential for mining expansion using modern techniques and opportunities to grow the service sector which will support expanded mining operations.

The far west has a strong economy based on mining, agriculture and tourism, however unemployment is much higher than the NSW average and many household incomes are relatively low. There is a need to diversify the economy within the region and support the smaller communities which characterise the region. Other sectors with the potential for growth
include tourism and creative arts, alternative energy and new methods of agricultural and horticultural production.

Quality local delivery of face to face training to support these emerging and growth industries is required to make sure local people have the skills to compete for, and fulfil new job opportunities and drive growth in the region.

The region’s population is ageing and specific strategies to maintain youth and grow their prospects locally need to be developed.

During the development of this Regional Plan the RDA Far West Committee have recognised the regions strengths and weaknesses as;

2.1 Our competitive advantage

The Far West region is uniquely placed and maintains a competitive advantage through;

- Significant mineral wealth
- A climate that allows early harvest of produce
- A climate that is ideal for development of renewable energy
- Central location from major capital cities, i.e. Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide
- Located close to the major markets of Adelaide in South Australia
- Unique natural resources
  - Iconic National Parks
  - Iconic history in mining and birth of the Australian industrial movement
  - Developing film industry infrastructure
- The residential hub of western NSW
- Potential for organic food production

2.2 Competitive disadvantage

In recognising the regions advantages we also recognise the competitive disadvantages as;

- High fuel prices and its impact on tourism and household budgets compounded by relatively long travel distances
- Local Government’s financial inability to maintain, renew and upgrade its assets to meet community expectations for infrastructure services into the future
- Higher than average unemployment rate
- Difficulty in attracting suitably qualified and experienced staff (in almost every sector) to the region
- Underinvestment by the State and Federal Governments
- Telecommunications & broadband access and speed are grossly inadequate
- Lack of a coordinated approach to support small business development
2.3 Our opportunities

Extensive consultation within the region has identified the opportunities for growth and diversification. We continue to explore how to develop new partnerships and strengthen existing relationships to capitalise on our potential. Specific opportunities with our region include:

- Growth of the airport as the major inland airport in regional NSW
- Development of a transport hub
- Expansion of the tourism industry to cater for both international and domestic based visitors
- Renewable energy – solar and wind
- Development of the film and arts sectors
- Development of the indigenous enterprise within the community
- Development of the aged care and retirement village industries
- Encouragement of young entrepreneurs

2.4 Our Threats

In recognising our opportunities and advantages we also recognise the threats, and the fact these threats need to be addressed through whole of community action to ensure the region moves forward in a sustainable and prosperous manner. Specific threats that should be considered in the region include:

- Lack of coordination between different levels of government in the provision of services
- Perceived high levels of crime/anti-social behaviour
- Continued reduction in financial support for services and infrastructure by both State and Federal Governments
- Ageing population
- Uncertainty regarding ongoing government arrangements for local water supply
- High electricity prices
- High Aboriginal unemployment
- Cyclic downturn in mining
- Reduced education opportunities
- Limited and expensive air services
- Unsealed roads reducing transport efficiency and tourism growth

A high percentage of replies to our recent community consultation and survey indicates our communities desire to be part of the solution.
RDA Far West will develop a two tiered approach to the organisations direction over the short to medium term, our short term everyday priorities are defined as; economic growth and diversification; education and training services; transport services; health services; the creative industries and attracting and retaining our young people.

In developing partnerships and driving the region forward RDA Far West will also focus on the region’s opportunities, threats, advantages and disadvantages as identified above.

RDA Far West will, through every opportunity, promote, support and drive strategies that help to address our threats and disadvantages.

Realisation of our opportunities will require extensive support from all levels of government and a whole of community approach. RDA Far West recognise they are not in a position to directly control the development, funding and progress of these opportunities, however the committee recognise the need to support and drive the realisation of the opportunities.

Realisation of our opportunities within the region is a long term approach to the continued and sustainable development of the region by the committee. We will work with all levels of government, all aspects of the community and local industries to support the partnerships and strategies that will drive our region’s growth, diversify our economies, ensure the education and career pathways for our young people and maintain our enviable lifestyle in the greatest part of the greatest country.
Our Vision for the Region

Far West NSW will be economically diverse, prosperous, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, innovative and creative.

Our goals are

- Support strategies that broaden the economic base of our region and develop sustainable growth
- Support strategies that strengthen the region’s infrastructure
- Support the development of creative industries
- Support strategies that retain our young people
- Work with all stakeholders to improve the quality of life, and
- Engage the community
Our long term vision for the region

RDA Far West will work with a variety of industries and stakeholders to develop strategies, partnerships, provide opportunities and improve the socio-economic environment of the region. We will provide support through funding applications to enhance the foundation of an economically diverse region. Our region will support quality educational outcomes for our children and promote and value a lifelong learning culture.

Through partnerships and development of a culture of inclusiveness our region will embrace opportunity, seek innovative and creative solutions and provide a rich experience for visitors.

We will value and protect our environment through strategies that build community pride and encourage commitment.

RDA Far West will work with all industry sectors to support expansion and diversification and position ourselves to attract new industries to the region.

We will work with key stakeholders to support the development of strategies to attract and retain young people in our region and provide quality training and attractive meaningful and fulfilling career pathways.

Through action and inclusive strategies RDA Far West will encourage and value community consultation, we will develop strategies with stakeholders to ensure greater access to RDA Far West and the service we provide.

By utilising our existing partnerships and developing new partnerships we will ensure greater consultation throughout the region and promote a culture that encourages and values community feedback.

We will use our existing networks and resources to support enhanced strategies to ensure community feelings, concerns and locally developed solutions are considered and valued by State and Commonwealth governments and other external organisations when developing plans and priorities for our region. We will work with, and lobby all levels of government to ensure greater promotion of government services within the region and promote whole of government activities to ensure stakeholders within the region are informed and empowered to seek their solutions.

We will work to develop a region we will always be proud to call home.
4.0 The role of Regional Development Australia Far West

Regional Development Australia – Far West NSW joined the Australia network of 56 Regional Development Australia Committees following the signing of the Commonwealth Operational Funding Contract in December 2009. This agreement outlined the 5 key objectives:

Commonwealth Government Objectives:
- Improved Community and Economic Development
- Improved Community Engagement and Consultation
- Improved Regional Planning
- Enhanced Whole of Government approach
- Promotion of Government Programs

State Government Objectives:
- Consultation and Engagement with the Community
- Regional Planning
- Whole of Government Activities
- Promotion of Government Programs
- Community and Economic Development

The role of the Regional Development Australia network is to enhance the economic growth and strengthen regional communities across Australia. The Commonwealth Government is committed to the framework.

4.1 The role of the committee in achieving our goals

The RDA Far West committee members are volunteers, members willingly give of their time and experiences to provide direction and leadership within both the organisation and the region. Our committee is made up of a diverse cross section of the community and includes members
with strong backgrounds and experience in small business development, business management, local government, health, primary producers, service providers and aspects of the tourism sectors.

The committee is focused on supporting all aspects of growth within the region and recognises the value of building effective partnerships between all levels of government, regional development agencies, industry and private sectors in addressing the strategic economic issues and priorities within the region as part of driving economic and community development initiatives, in addition to facilitating community leadership.

Key activities include supporting and coordinating regional planning by:

- Consulting and engaging with the community on economic, social and environmental issues, solutions and priorities;
- Liaising and consulting with Government and local communities about Government programs, services, grants and initiatives for regional development;
- Contributing to business and industry growth plans that drive strategic investment and employment within the region; and
- Supporting and developing strategies on environmental and social inclusion within the region.

Through extensive consultation RDA Far West have identified common concerns and issues across both the combined industry sectors and the general community within the region. We will work with all sectors of the community to support their development of specific solutions to their issues. Where solutions are not within the reach of our community we will use our influence to inform and make representation to, government and other agencies through direct consultation, contribution to issues papers and involvement of forums and planning groups.

The committee of RDA Far West will use their experience and involvement with other outside organisations to contribute to the development of solutions and growth within the region.

4.1.1 Our partnerships are important

RDA Far West have developed strong partnerships with key stakeholders within our region and state. These partnerships not only support our strategies to achieve our goals but support the strategies of other organisations to achieve their goals. RDA Far West will continue to work with all stakeholders within the region to promote and lead an inclusive culture, to develop inclusive communication strategies and promote a culture of working together for the sustainable development and growth of our region.
4.1.2 How will we measure our success?

Feedback and consultation with the community and industry has shaped our Regional Plan, our Regional Plan will shape our Business Plan. Our committee and staff are dedicated to achieve outcomes for the far west and regular review of the business plan, our stated goals and strategies and measures of success forms part of our commitment.

We will measure our success through;

- Regular review of our Business Plan
- Regular review of our Regional Plan
- Regular review of the strategies employed to achieve our goals
- Feedback through our website
- Feedback through our partners
- Feedback through consultation

We will report to both Commonwealth and State Governments on our progress in achieving our goals, but more importantly we will report to the far west region. We will publish reports on our outcomes and engage the community to ensure our goals and strategies remain relevant. We will release reports through local media outlets, published on our website / Facebook page and collaboration with our partners.
5.0 Analysis of the region

Far West NSW is unique. Our climate, location, heritage, contribution to mining and exports and population are all unique to the region. Even our time zone is unique within the State, with Broken Hill the only centre in the region aligned to South Australian time.

The far west region has historically been the mineral powerhouse of the State. It also contains some of the State’s most flourishing agricultural enterprises and large stretches of the world-famous outback. Bordering Queensland and South Australia, the far west region of NSW is the most sparsely populated in the State, with 18.4 per cent of its area, but only 0.4 per cent of the population.

In comparison our population is ageing faster than the rest of the state, whilst our overall population has seen a considerable decline over the past 20 years.

Like every region in Australia, our region has considerable strengths, our share of challenges, a long list of needs and considerable opportunities. To ensure our region is sustainable into the future and we leave a prosperous, vibrant and active legacy for our future generations RDA Far West in partnership with a variety of stakeholders within the region will support the development of strategies, programs and partnerships that position the region to take advantage of our specific advantages, address issues as identified within the region or support new and innovative development.
5.1 High Speed Broadband

High speed broadband has been identified as a major barrier to growth within the region. The younger demographic, and industry have overwhelming listed the lack of high speed broadband as a major barrier for the region. High speed broadband has been identified as essential to grow and provide best practice services in health and education service delivery, economic development, training pathways, business mentoring and support, tourism and access to government services.

Unfortunately, as with the rest of the community we are not in a position to address this major barrier. Countless studies have been completed across the world by people and groups with considerable more understanding, expertise and vision regarding the benefits of high speed broadband, especially in regional and rural areas, regardless our region is still not being provided with access to this technology as a priority. Our recent survey recorded a very high percent of respondents that believed the region was overlooked by State and Federal Governments, and our communities don’t feel equity across the nation or even the state. RDA Far West will continue to raise the issue, we will continue to communicate with our stakeholders and discuss training and development strategies to ensure maximum advantage when we do receive access.

Whilst centrally located between Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and even Brisbane we are certainly remote and it’s the remoteness to services, including health and education and training and a need to be part of the global community to expand and diversify our economy that mandate the requirement for high speed broadband in the region.

As shown in the figure below, access to Internet in the Far West Region is low compared with NSW overall. The number of broadband connections is almost half that of the average across NSW. There are more dial-up connections, however these are much slower and limit the potential use of the Internet. Improving Internet connections is crucial to the development of new industries in the region as they help reduce the “tyranny of distance”.

Internet connections - Far West and NSW (ABS)

![Internet connections chart]

Improved access to education and training services, improved access to health services, the diversification of our economy, marketplace competitiveness and increased tourism are all reliant and dominated by high speed broadband.

As identified in the Far West Digital Economy Strategy, the digital economy and high speed broadband will provide the foundations for Far West NSW to become a leading region in Australia (and the world) in:

- exporting core mining skills and mining expertise to a world-wide market
• developing unique rural creative industry services
• delivering remote education methodologies and processes
• delivering remote health methodologies and processes
• offering unique and iconic tourism experiences that encapsulate outback Australia

The Australian Bureau of Statistics report that income derived over the Internet soared by 52 per cent in the 2008-09 financial year to reach $123 billion (up $42 billion) as an additional 25,000 businesses began to receive orders over the Internet and the take up of broadband rose. But this is only the tip of the economic iceberg and greater growth is possible because only 27 per cent of all businesses use the Internet to generate business currently. In the Far West less than 30% of people have access to broadband at all and this could certainly not be considered high speed.

5.1.1 Accessing services is hindered with current broadband services

Another issue raised by stakeholders within the region is access to government services. RDA Far West is committed to working towards solutions to address this issue and strongly believe all sectors of our region should have equal, unhindered and respectful access to government services. Interestingly the reported reduction to access of services coincides with the removal of a number Government offices and services in the region.

RDA Far West are committed as part of our agreement with both the Commonwealth and State Governments to increasing access to government services and enhancing a whole of government approach. We will develop strategies to increase community knowledge of government services and access to them, we will work with all sectors of the community to support strategies that promote a coordinated, sustainable and inclusive approach to increasing access and understanding of government services.

Whilst access to services may still be available via other methods this also raises other issues within the region.

5.1.2 Mobile telecommunications services add to the isolation

Telecommunication within the region also adds a further burden to access of services. Mobile communication is limited within the region, with many areas receiving no mobile coverage at all. Mobile service providers are limited in the region and whilst access to a variety of providers may be the expectations of residents in the east of the state, residents in the far west have very few options, only one mobile provider has reasonable coverage within the region and even that is sparse in the outlying areas, again further impacting the issue of access and contributing to other issues within the region. Limited access to providers also adds to the cost burden for both industry and residents in the region, another burden that neither industry nor the residents of the region can afford.
5.1.3 Retaining our young people

The far west, like many regional centers in the country continues to see our young people move away from our city. High speed broadband has the potential to slow this drain, greater access to education and training opportunities afforded through high speed broadband could reduce the number of young people leaving the city to further their education and training. Access to high speed broadband will provide professional development opportunities and access to mentoring and relevant training and a global market, which in turn could have a positive impact on attracting and retaining professionals in the region.

5.2 Education and training services

There are 17 schools in the Far West RDA region: nine government primary schools (including School of the Air), two high schools, three central schools, two catholic primary schools and one special non-government school. The region is also serviced by two permanent Registered Training Organisations.

Students in the region are very well supported through pre-school, primary and their secondary school career. Schools and communities have high aspirations for our students but mental health and well-being issues remain concerns.

The Early Childhood Care and Education sector are currently working on strategies to address skill shortages, attraction and retention of staff and professional development of existing staff to ensure their current staff are highly skilled and develop in depth knowledge of the sector and early childhood education.

Primary schools in the region have developed extensive strategies to provide professional development for their staff. School leadership strategies have been implemented and the region is starting to see very positive outcomes.

At a secondary level, high and central schools in the region have varying Vocational Education programs and have developed strategies to ensure a cooperative approach to providing opportunities and pathways for our students. Both local high schools and outlying central schools have received major upgrades as a result of the Commonwealth Government’s Trade Training Centers program, with Broken Hill High School receiving an upgraded kitchen and metals facilities, Willyama High School receiving upgraded kitchen and timber facilities and the outlying schools receiving upgraded kitchen facilities.

Regionally there has been good take-up of School-Based Traineeships (SBATs) to date. According to figures from the Integrated Vocational Education and Training System database on June 2013, 30 school-based trainees were enrolled in the far west region. However, there is potential to further promote SBATs to families and the community. The need to increase the variety of industry areas participating has also been identified to ensure that what is on offer is
matched to students’ aspirations and identified career paths relevant to local employment opportunities.

Robinson College has recently begun an alternate education program for limited year 10 students with plans to increase their capacity to offer an alternate pathway for limited numbers of year 9 and 10 students in future years but the need for additional alternate pathways within the region remains.

The University of Sydney’s Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health has developed the Far West Re-Engineered Health Career Pipeline Model. This model aims to help students from a young age understand the work opportunities available in the health care sector via exposure through experience to deep immersion in relevant education and training from entry level to career professional. The model has demonstrated good outcomes and planning is currently underway to develop strategies that could replicate the success of this program across other industry sectors in the region.

5.2.1 Long distances effect all aspects of life in the region

The tyranny of distance continues to extract its toll on many aspects of life in the region and the education sector is no different. Attracting and retaining education professionals has always been challenging and ensuring quality accommodation is available for them remains a priority. Limited transport services both within the region and in and out of the region also impact on the education services within the region. Long distances and limited and comparatively expensive air services reduce the availability of training providers to access the region and reduce the capacity of the region to provide additional experiences for students and staff.

Whilst the majority of our students have opportunities and options within their secondary schooling they are still very restricted by comparison. Local face to face delivery options through external providers are limited. Our region is serviced by TAFE, Robinson College and Department of Education and Communities as permanent Registered Training Organisations and receive limited service by other private providers within the VET sector when requested.

Many of the approved HSC VET courses available to other students within the state are either not available for our students or are available by distance delivery models. Many of the options for students in our out-lying schools are only available with extensive travel commitments, often resulting in our students traveling 200 km’s into Broken Hill, studying and training for the day and travelling 200 km’s back home in the afternoon. This model of delivery has obvious disadvantages for our students and often is the only option for students in Wilcannia and Menindee. Given the fact that many of these students are not regular attendees at school, live in a culture of under education and low socio economic circumstances and often in a family with no licensed drivers and no means of transport this is not really an opportunity but more an exercise in showing them what’s not available for them.
5.2.2 Training our own people is important

For many years our communities have expressed concern over the declining level of training available within the region.

Considerable numbers of apprentices undertake block release training in South Australia, Victoria and other parts of New South Wales as access to trade training within the region is limited.

Travel commitments, duty of care, reduced time on the job and increased expenses of having apprentices undertake block release training have been cited as blockers to increased employment opportunities in several industry sectors in the region. Apprentices that don’t have a driver’s licence, for whatever reason, are further hindered, firstly to gain an apprenticeship without a licence considering the travel commitments to train and secondly to access the training.

5.2.3 Work force development and pathways

Whilst there are training courses available, the link between training and employment is tenuous. While some work has been undertaken to improve links between training and employment, this is still considered to be an ongoing challenge for the region.

In addressing the challenges, lessons can be learnt from some of the work that has been undertaken to date to improve the relationships between training and employment. For example, there was significant work done during 2011, particularly in partnership within the context of the Remote Service Delivery Local Implementation Plan. This is the main framework to help guide service delivery in Wilcannia, and has a particular focus on the need to have training which leads to employment outcomes.

Access to quality face to face delivery options are essential to support strategies to overcome workforce development issues in the region; to encourage local employers to increase apprenticeship opportunities; to reduce the financial burden, and to provide relevant fulfilling career pathways to retain our young people and ensure career development opportunities exist for post trade qualifications and training.

Access to high speed broadband will help to provide additional options for training in the region, however the need for quality face to face delivery options will always remain.

RDA Far West in partnership with NSW Department of Education and Communities will continue to support education and training pathways for our young people, through;

- Continued coordination and promotion of school based traineeships, investigation of completion rates of apprenticeships and traineeships within the region and the development of strategies to strengthen completion rates.
- Working with local industry and Registered Training Organisations to investigate options and opportunities to for quality face to face training options in our communities.
- Continued coordination and expansion of the local careers expo
- Continued employment of School Based Trainees
- Working closely with local high and central schools to develop and support extensive School To Work pathways
- Working with all service providers in the region to promote a coordinated approach

5.3 Economic development and diversity

The far west region’s economic performance has traditionally been closely tied to the mining/resources sector. The decline of this industry over the past 30 years, however, has increased the focus on other economic sectors, including agriculture and tourism. In recent times, the region has recorded positive tourism demand relative to state and national benchmarks. Some of these key sectors driving the regional economy including mining, agriculture and tourism are briefly discussed below.

5.3.1 Mining

Endowed with vast natural resources, the far west region has a strong mining and extractive industry presence. There are several major mining companies operating in the region including Perilya, Cristal Resources, CBH Resources, Havilah Resources, Exco Resources, Pinnacles and Uranium One. These companies mine a range of minerals including silver, zinc, lead, mineral sands, gold and uranium. In addition, the strong demand for resources is driving strong exploration.

5.3.2 Supporting the mining industry in Far West NSW

A key issue is to distinguish between the needs of the established mining companies and the exploration companies. The established companies are interested in support for projects that can improve operating efficiency and increase productivity such as developing the heavy vehicle by-pass. They also have concerns related to the overall economy and fiscal policy that could impact on profitability. Projects that can reduce costs are important as they provide these companies with more resilience to changes in commodity prices and exchange rates.

The exploration companies may have limited, if any, established incomes and may have a limited capital base. Increased information and certainty about the location and extent of ore deposits provides a basis for effective exploration and hence the ability to attract additional capital for attractive projects.

In addition, the regional support for mining offers scope for more certainty and cost containment in moving from exploration to development with relatively easy access to
exploration areas, limited if any opposition to mining activities and access to locally based contractors and employees in some cases.

The mining sector presents a solid base for employment and opportunities for employment growth during years of increased mining activity. For example, Carpentaria’s pre-feasibility study for its magnetite project suggests employment potential of 1,500 construction workers from late 2013 for 4 to 5 years, 1,500 operational workers for 5mtpa ore extraction with 10-15% tertiary qualified.

5.3.3 Workforce development in the mining industry

There is a broader opportunity to match employment and training opportunities in the mining sector to reduce the sector’s dependence on external workers and to increase employment opportunities for the region.

RDA Far West will support strategies that develop workforce development training in the region, including Indigenous employment and training programs, school based training programs that develop pathways to employment and comprehensive strategies that support local employment and training options for the entire region.

5.3.4 Agriculture

Agriculture is a well-established industry in the Far West Region. An abundance of land coupled with appropriate climatic conditions have played a central role in the region’s historical growth and development, including suitability for certain types of agriculture including horticulture (citrus, roses, table grapes), livestock (such as cattle, sheep and goats), as well as cotton, barley and wheat.

The agricultural sector accounts for approximately 11 per cent of the area’s Gross Regional Product, 6 per cent of its employment and 20 per cent of its exports.

Traditionally, agriculture was largely based around pastoral activities such as wool production, but with a significant growth in irrigation in recent years the sector has been developing cotton, malting grains, grapes and stone fruits. In non-irrigation areas, some pastoralists have diversified into goat and meat sheep production.

Due to the region’s hot, dry climate, high quality fruits such as grapes and peaches can be harvested many weeks before competing regions.

The region has developed strategies to utilise and maximise the climate with other sectors of the industry diversifying to include carob, pistachio and olives. Olive production has increased in recent years with several local organisations producing high quality oil.
5.3.5 Workforce development in the agriculture industry

Aspects of the industry have reported skill shortages and RDA Far West is supporting initial discussions to develop local strategies to address this issue. High speed broadband will provide opportunity for the region to not only export the product but also the unique production knowledge developed and refined for a semi-arid climate.

5.4 Economic diversity

The region’s economy is dependent on the mining sector to the extent that it is extremely susceptible to the cyclical nature of this sector. The impacts associated with this instability also affect the downstream sectors of the regional economy, implying a need to strengthen other industries and diversify the economy to improve economic and employment stability. The peaks in the mining sector encourage significant population growth, and conversely, the troughs lead to declining populations. Population growth places strain on existing infrastructure and services whilst a declining population increases the cost burden associated with maintenance of infrastructure intended for a larger population.

Other sectors (e.g. retail, tourism and agriculture) find it difficult to retain staff during mining booms, where employment opportunities in the mining sector are often offering higher salaries for a similar skill set. This is very disruptive for the local economy with a limited resource pool. Furthermore, when the mining sector contracts, the local economy is unlikely to adjust quickly enough to absorb those unemployed from the mining sector. This would lead to higher localised unemployment, or alternatively a population decline as the labor market seeks opportunities outside the region.

Increased activity in the mining sector may lead to improved employment opportunities close to Broken Hill. However towns located outside of the Broken Hill area may face difficulty in maintaining a workforce. Inclusive planning for future workforce development needs and a focus on barriers to employment in isolated smaller communities within the region will help to address this potential issue.

5.5 Tourism

Tourism has been one of the key growth industries and economic diversification strategies for the far west region in recent years. The region’s tourism market is largely dominated by retirees over the age of 50 with a large drive through caravan market. Tourist attractions in the region are mainly related to the mining history of Broken Hill, art galleries, indigenous culture, historical buildings and nature-based experiences with several National Parks located around the Menindee Lakes in the Central Darling LGA. Anecdotal evidence suggests that tourism services offered are of varying quality. Currently, approximately 35% of visitor nights are based in caravan parks or on camping grounds. These visitors are generally self-sufficient and therefore require minimal service.
In our recent survey almost all respondents made comment regarding tourism, all believed the industry was vitally important to the region’s economic growth and employment growth, but opinion was divided regarding how well the region promotes and manages tourism.

In an attempt to maximise the sustainable development of tourism in the region RDA Far West in partnership with Broken Hill City Council will develop a high level Tourism Task Force to investigate best practice models of tourism. The task force will consult with industry and develop a culture of inclusivity ensuring a whole of community approach. The task force will review and recommend a best practice governance model to guide the management, development and marketing of tourism in Far West NSW.

The Task Force is expected to report back to RDA Far West Committee and Broken Hill City Council management in 12 months.

5.5.1 **Stronger collaboration between the arts and tourism sectors**

To maximise the benefits of both the tourism and arts sectors, opportunities for collaboration are important.

There are already strong links between the arts and tourism sectors in the region. It is important that the creative arts sector is well positioned to take advantage of any growth in the tourism sector. Similarly, creative arts products and galleries are tourist attractions in their own right. As such, measures to develop and market this sector will also lead to growth in the tourism sector.

The 2007 ‘Quality of Light, Quality of Life’ survey indicated that local consumption is the largest share of the market in the arts sector. Whilst this may imply that the local market is very strong, it also suggests that the visitor market is not as strong as it could be. This presents an opportunity to increase revenue for artists from other markets. An increase in sales may eventuate as a by-product of broader initiatives to increase tourism numbers (and diversity), or directly through a range of commercial and marketing initiatives that increase exposure of this artwork to the market.

5.5.2 **Increasing and broaden tourist spending**

Anecdotal evidence from the consultation process and supported by the tourism statistics, suggested that ‘grey nomads’ make up a significant share of the region’s visitors. While these visitors were recognised as being important to the region, the lack of diversity in the tourist market was identified as a challenge, as it was believed that these visitors were reasonably self-sufficient and therefore tended to spend less on accommodation and food, particularly outside of Broken Hill.

A significant portion of current tourist spending is based in Broken Hill. There are opportunities to extend this spending beyond Broken Hill to other parts of the region. For example, the
Menindee Lakes are a popular tourist destination for paddling, sailing, boating, swimming, fishing and bird watching. There is limited visitation data available for the Menindee Lakes, however ‘it has been conservatively estimated that the Menindee Lakes recorded 20,000 visitors in 2010’ (AEC, 2011) when water to the site increased after the drought broke.

There is an opportunity to raise visitor numbers to the lakes by promoting the already recognised environmental and cultural heritage value of the Menindee Lakes to larger domestic and international market, and providing more tourist activities and facilities.

This opportunity extends to promoting and sharing the rich Indigenous heritage associated with the region.

There are a range of tourism related initiatives underway or being considered, often in isolation from each other. The Tourism Task Force will promote the opportunity to develop a common strategy for the region to ensure that relationships between initiatives and locations (e.g. timing and marketing opportunities etc.) are formed where possible, and that benefits can extend to the broader region.

5.5.3 Workforce development in the tourism industry

To grow the tourism industry and provide employment pathways for local people the region will need to consider the future workforce requirements. Qualifications in tourism have been offered to local HSC students under the schools Vocational Education and Training programs for many years with minimal take up suggesting the industry is not viewed as a viable career pathway by local students. Strategies will need to be developed to address this perception if the region is to grow the industry whilst creating employment pathways for local people and providing high quality experiences and best practice service.

5.6 The creative industries

The Far West Region community has significant talent and interest in creative arts, including visual arts, environmental arts, music and film. A survey undertaken in 2007 (Quality of Light, Quality of Life – produced by West Darling Arts and the then Far West Regional Development Board) indicated that the average annual income received by the region’s artists from their creative practices was higher than the national figure for professional artists (by 32%). This suggests that the sector is relatively successful, and that there are opportunities for continued growth.

There are currently over 100 visual artists and 30 commercial galleries in Broken Hill and the surrounding region. Two of the most well-known galleries include the Pro Hart Gallery and the Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery.

Silverton’s economy is built on arts and tourism and over the years has been home to a variety artist including, Albert Woodroffe and John Dynon.
The Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery hosts two annual art prizes – The Far West Emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Prize (established in 2008) which aims to promote emerging Indigenous artists from the Broken Hill region; and the Outback Open Art Prize. These two awards place Broken Hill on the ‘arts calendar’ whilst providing emerging artists with opportunities to showcase their work.

5.6.1 Film and commercial production in the outback

Broken Hill and the surrounds has been a destination for film and other media productions since the 1970s. The area has been marketed for production based on the following:

- Its remote and urban landscapes and the weather whilst having the convenience of a studio located in the region, with production and storage
- Access, including, road, rail, and direct flights to Sydney and Adelaide, however Improved air access to the region is critical to grow this sector
- Community resources and support
- Ability to accommodate a large crew in the region

There has been in excess of 300 film productions in the area since 1982, with some 25% of these being from overseas production companies. The number of productions has grown significantly over the past 10 years with some 50% growth in commercials, 350% in documentaries (although starting from a small base) and 25% increase in feature films (although again from a small base).

To build on the region’s appeal to the film sector, the Broken Hill City Council has developed a plan to convert a disused power plant into a film studio precinct. Stage 1 has been completed and includes the 5th largest studio in Australia (2,230m²). The studio was designed in collaboration with the filming industry. The film sector encompasses other art practices beyond film, utilising the same technologies, including video art and digital art. The cost of leasing the film studio is competitive with other Australian film studios, and the intention is for this sector to grow accordingly, drawing on its cost advantage as well as local expertise and photogenic built and natural landscapes.

‘Film Broken Hill’ has been established to provide information and referral service to the film industry interested in outback locations. The service assists with identifying suitable locations, technicians, facilities and businesses. This is a joint initiative of the Department of Trade, Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services, the Broken Hill City Council and local freelance technicians.

5.6.2 Growth is happening – Summer Vibes to Broken Hill Fringe

The Broken Hill Fringe is a project of the Patton Village Community & Business Association (PVCBA). The Committee was formed in 2010 and its first major initiative was undertaken over the summer of 2012. The Summer Vibes Festival – a 9 week community festival produced a
collection of films and other community activities in Patton Park in South Broken Hill. At the conclusion of that event it became clear to the Association that the focus of the event should be extended to include the whole region. Based on the success of the first event, support was provided by Regional Development Australia Far West to support a part-time Project Manager position to assist in developing it into an inclusive, community-based regional event.

The event in 2013 will be a 10 day inclusive community-based regional arts and cultural festival encompassing the Silver City Cup Race meeting. It will umbrella more than 30 events over the visual and performing arts. It has worked to include as wide a variety of discrete sections of the community as possible and while there is much work to be done, there has been a significant degree of progress expressed in the program of events. The event will serve to highlight the talent in our community and provide opportunities for artists to showcase their work.

The Broken Hill Fringe has developed a relationship with the Sydney Fringe as its first regional hub and in this first year will have the opportunity to showcase the regional event in the last two pages of the 50,000 Sydney Fringe official programs – promoting both the event and the region. Medium to longer-term further opportunities will be explored that will benefit both events.

Significant work has also been undertaken to develop partnerships with other groups in the city including the Silver City Race Club; the Aero Club, Penrose Park Trust, Art Exchange, Theatre 44, Broken Hill Community Foundation, Broken Hill City Council, media partners, local event management companies, caterers and others to the benefit of all groups.

The main focus and ongoing work of the PVCBA through this event is to increase the profile of the region and encourage increased visitation to the region in order to create economic benefits for the whole community - and through the participation of as many sectors of the community as possible in the event – develop greater social cohesion.

5.6.3 Indigenous creative arts

There are many established and emerging Aboriginal artists in the region. Measures that realise, enhance and promote this talent are developing to improve employment outcomes for the Indigenous community. The region is very remote, with artists dispersed over a large area. This makes it difficult for independent Indigenous artists to sell their work.

The lack of a coordinated commercial framework and approach to showcasing local aboriginal artists’ work means the full potential of the sector is not realised. Indigenous artists are also more exposed to commercial exploitation. Without measures to address this, the long-term commercial viability of the sector is at risk.

Regional Development Australia Far West is currently working with local aboriginal groups, key stakeholders and Commonwealth and State authorities to establish a Centre of Excellence for
Indigenous Creative Arts. The concept would provide a gallery and retail outlet for local indigenous arts, supported education and training pathways, a studio and workshop area and café in stage 1.

Initial discussions have also identified other possibilities for the centre including a base for indigenous tourism in the region.

5.6.4 Workforce needs in the industry

The arts and recreation services industry is currently quite small in employment terms with only some 1.4% of total employment in 2011. However, it is a growing sector that is estimated to grow to some 1.7% of total employment by 2021. It also offers sustainable employment that is unlikely to be affected by downturns in the mining or agricultural industries.

The creative arts industry is also related to, and complementary with tourism, offering opportunities for cross development and promotion.

5.7 Health services

The region is serviced by a number of health professionals in both the public and private sector, however the Far West Medicare Local Needs Assessment reports that the far west population is disadvantaged relative to NSW in terms of number of socio-economic indicators. The 2006 SEIFA IRSD score for far west indicated it was the most disadvantaged region in the State.

GP ratios in most communities within the region are close to 1:1000, approx. 10% higher than the NSW state average. Even with this ratio waiting times to see a GP are still excessive.

Recruitment and retention of health professionals remains problematic and GP retention grants whilst helpful do not provide sufficient incentive to keep GP’s in isolated areas. The high burden of disease and the complexity of patient conditions also increase the workload of GP’s. In addition limited specialist services further add to this burden. Rehabilitation programs are also constrained by a continuing shortage of allied health professionals, particularly physiotherapists and exercise physiologists.

Our recent survey highlighted the concerns of the region around health services and the majority of concerns related to specific accessibility issues relate to;

- long delays in access to specialist medical services
- long delays in accessing GP services
- general difficulty in accessing mental health services, particularly for children and adolescents.
- cost and barriers to accessing privately provided dental services
- extreme distance and cost of accessing health services away from the city
Access to general practice is constrained by the ability of GP’s to take on additional patients, but limited access to bulk billing; limits to after-hours availability; and for older people and people with disabilities mobility issues add to the concerns of local residents.

The remote communities serviced from Broken Hill (Wilcannia, Menindee, Ivanhoe, White Cliffs and Tibooburra) are provided with primary health care services on a visiting basis however service gaps still exists.

In Wilcannia identified gaps include; mental health services to address grief and trauma for children and adults; access to dedicated chronic care services for non-aboriginal people and sexual health services for men.

In Menindee local access to dental services and physiotherapy services, continuity in GP services and a resident worker for primary prevention of chronic conditions were identified as gaps. Similar issues are likely to exist in Ivanhoe, White Cliffs and Tibooburra.

**5.7.1 Unique issues inspire unique solutions**

The tyranny of distance and isolation have, over the years ensured the region considered, developed and sustained innovative and practical solutions to service delivery. In Broken Hill and the outlying communities the Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health, The University of Sydney (UDRH) initiative of student led allied health services provided in schools and residential aged care facilities are highly valued and extremely successful. This model is an asset to our region and provides professional and educational support to medical, nursing and allied health students and junior doctors. The program including the service and learning model provide a supported learning experience for students and help to entice them back to our region after graduation.
The Department currently places over 500 health science students annually in the region for approximately 2000 student weeks. In response to the growing complexities, opportunities and challenges confronting rural and remote communities the Department has broadened its student and academic engagement in the region to include Business, Architecture, Agricultural Sciences, Education and Law faculties to support regional entities in addressing inequity associated with the social determinants of health (social, educational, economic, and environmental factors). The Department is exploring integrated education opportunities that will link existing education providers and visiting academic and university student groups. This contributes to the broader strategic vision of creating an inter-professional service learning campus in Broken Hill.

Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation provide a range of interventions and health management programs including; lifestyle risk factors, chronic disease management, maternal and child health and community health programs and the Royal Flying Doctor Services the outlying communities with GP – led outreach clinics.

5.7.2 We need to take better care of ourselves

Type 2 diabetes is 26% higher in our region than the average Australian rate and data suggest aboriginal people are admitted to hospital for diabetes at an age which is 20 – 30 years younger than non-aboriginal people. Coronary heart disease whilst only 1% higher than the Australian average rate, results in hospitalisation rates 33% - 106% higher than for the rest of NSW.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) results for NSW indicated 48% of Aboriginal people (15+ years) were current smokers, while 22% were ex-smokers (ABS 2009b). In comparison the total NSW population from the National Health Survey 2007–08 had 22% as current smokers, and 32% were ex-smokers (ABS 2009c). Studies of the burden of
disease in the population attribute 17% of the difference in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to smoking.

5.8  Transport

The Far West region is 147,000 square kilometers making it larger than Hungary, Iceland and Austria.

Transport, both within the region and in and out of the region has been highlighted as another barrier to sustainable economic development and growth.

Our recent survey indicates people in the region believe transport services to be critical if we are to diversify and grow our economy, build tourism and develop best practice service models.

5.8.1  Our unsealed roads are disadvantaging the region

The Central Darling Shire Council has estimated that approximately 93% of the roads within the Shire remain unsealed. State highways account for most of the sealed road percentage. Two unsealed roads which stakeholders claimed cause the most significant economic impact are:

- Almost 120km of the Silver City Highway between Broken Hill and Tibooburra (in the Unincorporated Area of NSW)
- The Menindee-Pooncarie Rd (123km dirt road between the townships of Menindee and Pooncarie), 70km within the Central Darling Shire and 53km in Wentworth Shire of which 12km has now been sealed.
Unsealed roads increase travel time, impacting a range of uses and markets, including the tourism sector, agriculture transport (e.g. freight for fruit growers as well as sheep/cattle/goats) and general community access.

The poor state of the Menindee-Pooncarie road means that return trip from Menindee to Mildura requires an overnight trip. This is a potential barrier to service provision to Menindee, as well as being a costly burden to businesses with suppliers/clients in Mildura.

A 2006 economic study into the sealing of the Menindee-Pooncarie road found that fruit growers experience high transport costs associated with the use of longer routes to avoid unsealed roads as they bruise their product. However, it has been suggested by some growers that processes have adjusted, with fruit picking now occurring earlier in the season to avoid damage during travel.

Unsealed roads are also vulnerable to closure during wet weather, which may cause lengthy detours or delays.

A number of industry and community representatives suggested that the current road upgrade/development methodology is too dependent on population size, with benefits significantly based on savings in travel time and vehicle operating costs. This disadvantages regions with low populations and population density. It was suggested that an evaluation that took greater account of the amount and value of the goods and services that use the road (or other transport links) and the cost savings and productivity benefits from development / upgrade could lead to different decisions.

In addition, the increased risk of vehicle accidents on unsealed roads for tourist, residents and industry must be recognised.

5.8.2 Rail Services

The Far West Region is located on the transcontinental rail line that connects Perth and Sydney providing rail access throughout the east west corridor of Australia. The network forms part of the Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd (ARTC) network. Opportunities to develop a transport hub in the region have been identified and would provide the opportunity to improve utilisation of the rail system.

5.8.3 Air Services

There is strong demand for air services to and from Broken Hill with the mining and business sector driving demand for air services to the region. The region also has demand from tourists for air services though capacity constraints and high prices are restricting air travel by tourists.
The demand for passenger aviation travel to and from Broken Hill is strong with over 63,000 passengers travelling through the airport in 2010-11 on 2,846 flights. The number of passengers has more than doubled since 2001-02 at a growth rate of more than 8% per annum.

**Revenue Passengers, Broken Hill Airport**

Note: Includes both inbound and outbound passengers.

Source: BITRE

The existing airport facility is constrained in the carriers it can accommodate. Runway, taxiway and apron are currently rated at PCN 15, adequate for aircraft up to 30 tonne gross weight, but not adequate for larger craft commonly used by major carriers such as 737 or A320 aircraft. While the runway is long and wide enough, it does not have the required pavement classification or PCN rating (SRA 2007).

Current services provided are limited and the prices offered by the current service provider (REX) are considered to be uncompetitive, presenting a barrier for more frequent travel (tourism as well as corporate travel).

The current airport facility is not large enough to provide for X-ray security or segregation of arrivals and departures. All passengers departing Broken Hill are considered as ‘non sterile passengers’ and must be screened on arrival at Adelaide and Sydney prior to entering the sterile departure areas. If the airport services are increased, it is likely that enhanced security facilities will be required.

### 5.8.4 Transport and tourism

Improved transport services are an important consideration to grow the tourism market in the region. Extremely long distances from major centres (approx. 1200 km’s from Sydney, 900 km’s from Melbourne, 500 km’s from Adelaide and 1600 km’s from Brisbane) restrict growth in the tourism market for families.

Driving times, high animal populations and high fuel prices have an impact on attracting a younger and additional tourism market to the region.

Increased air travel options that will need to be considered to grow the region including:

- Direct flights to and from additional major centre’s
- Greater consideration of connecting flights (air travel from Broken Hill to Brisbane requires an overnight stay in Sydney or Adelaide)
- Capacity for larger aircraft
- Competitive pricing

5.9 Environmental

5.9.1 Uncertainty in water availability

Climate change impacts are expected to increase the variability of water supplies in the region. Government policy (including the Murray Darling Basin Plan) also introduces uncertainty about future availability of supply.

In addition to direct impacts on the agriculture sector, uncertainty in water availability also impacts the tourism sector. Current facilities around the Menindee Lakes target tourism during the wetter period (e.g. boating, fishing, bird watching, kayaking etc.). When the lakes are dry, as they were for almost a decade, there is a sharp decline in visitor numbers. Year-round tourism activities and attractions for all climate conditions would be needed to reduce the peaks and troughs in the visitor numbers.

5.10 Clean energy

The approval of the first step in the proposed Silverton Wind Farm was a significant opportunity for the region. This project is currently on hold, however the Government’s introduction of a carbon pricing scheme will provide further incentives for the development of renewable energy. This may present new employment opportunities for the region to offset any adverse impacts that the scheme may have on investments in the mining sector.

There may also be carbon sequestration opportunities. The development of farm wood lots has been identified as an opportunity in the region. However, any plantation or similar development may be constrained by water shortages. Work has been done in NSW and in Victoria and Western Australia in relation to growing trees in low rainfall areas.

In August 2013 Federal Minister for Climate Change, Mark Butler announced construction will start in January on the largest solar power station in the southern hemisphere. This project is 15 times larger than any other solar power station in Australia and represents a big step forward towards making the region. The project will be built across two sites in Western NSW, Nyngan and Broken Hill and will cover a combined area four times the size of the Sydney CBD.

5.11 Perception

There is a perception risk that when the region is benefiting from private investment in the mining sector, it does not need any additional government support. However, a boom in the mining sector does not necessarily translate to improved income and expenditure across the region. For example: Mining developments are not always in the incorporated area. As such, employment and broader economic benefits do not always translate to ‘rates income’ for the
councils (e.g. Broken Hill City Council) responsible for infrastructure maintenance. Council rates are currently pegged, which means they cannot be used to offset the economic impacts during a downturn in the mining sector.

Stakeholders indicated that in the past, mining companies used to invest more in community infrastructure. This has changed in recent years, with mining companies less likely to re-invest in community infrastructure. This has increased the community dependence on government funded infrastructure. Large reductions in the number of apprentices employed and trained by local mining companies also impacts on the remainder of the region. Employers struggle to employ and train adequate apprentices knowing they cannot compete with salaries offered by mining companies in the boom periods.
6.0 Regional priorities

RDA Far West priorities have been directed by the industries and the residents in our region, we will work with a variety of stakeholders to achieve our priorities.

As part of the process we will regularly review both the priorities and the strategies employed to achieve them. We will make adjustments as required and develop additional priorities and strategies to address issues or exploit opportunities as they arise.

During our recent consultation and in consideration of the Commonwealth, State and Local Government priorities RDA Far West has developed a set of priorities around our core goals to direct our focus in the short to medium time frame.

Through the development of this Regional Plan a comprehensive analysis of the region has identified our advantages, threats and opportunities. RDA Far West recognise the strength of the region and have adopted a set of long term priorities in an attempt to realise the opportunities in the region and support the development of comprehensive strategies to address the issues. We recognise these priorities are not within our control and will require extensive support from all levels of Government, a whole of community approach locally and strong regional leaders. We also recognise these priorities as long term goals for our region that are not easily obtained and require extensive funding and expertise, however they are our Region’s opportunities and the RDA Far West committee are dedicated to raising awareness and driving solutions where ever possible.

As outlined in this plan the region has identified issues that are either barriers to growth, barriers to basic access or hinderers in the quality of life in our region. RDA Far West can’t fix the world, and we are not going to try, however we have developed plans to help address our
local issues, we may get some of it wrong and some of our strategies may not work, but we are committed to the region and through regular review and community engagement we will learn from what does work, develop new strategies and keep trying.

6.1 Priorities for the next 12 months

Our six core goals, the objectives of both state and federal governments, the priorities and strategies of a variety of regional plans and the information obtained through our consultation process has led to the priorities of RDA Far West.

The short / medium term priority areas for focus for RDA Far West are;

- Promote and foster economic growth and diversification
- Improve education and training services
- Improve Transport services (working with stakeholders in the sector)
- Improve Health services (working with stakeholders in the sector)
- Promote and foster development of our creative industries
- Implement strategies for attracting and retaining our young people

6.2 Opportunities for the region – our long term goals

Our 7 long term goals as identified through our Regional Plan as opportunities for our region’s sustainable growth are identified below. However RDA Far West recognise these goals as beyond our scope of control but not beyond our scope of influence. RDA Far West will promote these opportunities, encourage the development of strategies to realise them and encourage and support proposals to advance our region.

- Growth of the airport as the major inland airport in regional NSW. As the heart of the outback, a popular and growing tourism destination, a growing creative industries destination and a wealth of mining expertise Broken Hill is perfectly suited to grow the airport into a major regional hub.
- Development of a transport hub. The development of a road – rail intermodal hub has been identified as having potential to improve the efficiency and productivity of the transport network in the Far West Region.
- Expansion of the tourism industry to cater for both international and domestic based visitors. Uniquely placed in the domestic tourism market, considerable potential exist for the region to consolidate the industry and expand the regions visitor economy.
- Renewable energy - solar and wind. The far west has been identified as not only suitable but desirable for the development of renewable energy
• Film and arts production. The region is synonymous with film and commercial production. The creative arts are a sustainable growth industry within the region and Broken Hill City Council have completed stage 1 of the film studio precinct development
• Development of indigenous enterprises within the community. Our indigenous population has increased over the years yet the proportion of indigenous enterprise in the region has not kept pace, significant opportunity exists within the region for the development of Indigenous Enterprise
• Encouragement of young entrepreneurs. As with every region in the country our young people seek greater opportunities to develop their careers and aspirations, encouragement, support and mentoring of our young entrepreneurs offers great potential within the Far West.
7.0 RDA Far West activities / projects and initiatives

This document sets out the objectives and strategies RDA Far West will employ in the short to medium term to support our goals. However we don’t have a crystal ball and we don’t know what will happen next year or next week. We believe that whilst our goals will remain constant in the medium term our strategies to achieve those goals may change and our priorities may be very different in 12 months.

Our committee and staff are committed to the plan / do / review approach and our strategies will be constantly reviewed through consultation with stakeholders in the region to ensure we are supporting strategies, organisations and individuals to achieve our goals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome One: Consultation and Engagement with the Regional Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1 Stakeholders database maintained | • Maintain accurate database of key stakeholders within the region  
• Develop and maintain accurate database of industry stakeholders within the region |
| 2 Communication Strategy | • Systematic and regular review of communications strategy to;  
  o Ensure communication with all stakeholders  
  o Identify alternate / additional strategies  
  o Review existing strategies |
| 3 Representation to Government on inequities in the region | • Inequities are identified  
• Inequities are documented and forwarded to relevant agencies  
• Promotion of opportunity to comment on discussion papers via website  
• RDA Far West website is maintained and promoted to ensure opportunities for comment are realised |
| 4 Social Justice / inclusion | • Assist other stakeholders in developing / implementing strategies to address gaps in service delivery  
• Continue to work with University Department Rural Health to develop strategies to encourage social inclusion in the region |
| **Outcome 2: Informed Regional Planning** | |
| 5 A holistic, Coordinated, structured and sustainable approach to Regional tourism | • Advance partnerships with key stakeholders to develop a high level task force to review and recommend a best practice governance model to guide the management, development and marketing or tourism in far west NSW |
| **Outcome 3: Enhanced Whole-of-Government Approach** | |
| 6 Skilled Migration Scheme | • Regional Certifying body for Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme visa |
| 7 Promotion of regular stakeholder feedback | • Ensure information about Commonwealth and State Government activities is available on the RDA Far West website  
• Promote the opportunity for regional stakeholders to comment on discussion papers |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8   | Increased communication with all levels of Government and their agencies | • Develop strategies to position RDA Far West to be informed of Government programs, agencies and services  
• Ensure RDA Far West staff / members are available to meet with agencies and personnel during visits to the region |
| 9   | Facilitate alliances across three levels of Government to assist in increasing the regions commercial opportunity | • Provide information to community and Government on economic, social and environmental issues and opportunities.  
• Assist in facilitating a whole of government approach to regional solutions.  
• Participate in regional networks and forums.  
• Promote and support government services within the region  
• Regional issues / opportunities are documented and forwarded to relevant agencies |
| 10  | Economic growth and diversification | • Support innovative business practices and market opportunities  
• Develop strategies, partnerships and mechanisms to provide mentoring and business training / support programs utilising local resources and expertise  
• Continue to support and work with Broken Hill Community Foundation to provide initial support for small business startup, diversification or expansion  
• Consult with key stakeholders to identify ongoing skills shortages and gaps in training provision  
• Consult with key stakeholders to identify possible future skills shortages and gaps in training  
• Support other stakeholders to implement strategies to address skill shortages and training gaps  
• Promote the potential of the Digital Economy as the Basis for Economic and Regional Development  
• Production of the Annual Economic Update outlining investment and prospects in the region  
• Promotion and Coordination of School Based Traineeships |
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11 | Access to High Speed Broadband | • Continue to raise access to High Speed Broadband as a major barrier to growth, improved access to health and education services  
• Encourage business to become “NBN ready”  
• Continue to host the digital economy website |
| 12 | Support Business attraction and investment | • Production of the Annual Economic Update outlining investment and prospects in the region  
• Assist in research and data gathering initiatives to support regional investment.  
• Ongoing consultation with industry regarding barriers to growth  
• Work with industry sectors, government agencies and service providers to develop strategies to overcome barriers as identified |
| 13 | Support the development of Indigenous owned and operated businesses | • Provide a leading role and support the development of indigenous businesses in conjunction with all tiers of Government  
• Identify and showcase successful business cases and discuss success factors. Include information on funding programs and Government initiatives  
• Work with local providers and indigenous groups to provide specific training / mentoring opportunities |
| 14 | Retain our young people | • Advance partnerships with young people and relevant stakeholders to determine strategies that retain our young people.  
• Ensure the voice of young people is heard and considered, through  
  • Consultation with SRC committees  
  • Community survey  
  • Promotion and information flow using social media  
  • Building stronger community / school links  
• Grow partnerships to provide mentoring and support services to apprentices and trainees within the region  
• Promotion and coordination of School Based Traineeships  
• Coordination of Careers Expo for secondary students within the region  
• Promote the positive life style of far west NSW  
• Support and where possible enhance local School to Work programs  
• Work with local stakeholders to strengthen the link between training and employment |
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support existing strategies of regional exposure to young people, ie beyond the line program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15 | Coordinated approach to Service Delivery within the region | • Attend and contribute to Regional Leaders Network Group  
• Support the development of strategies that cultivate a culture of “whole of community”  
• Develop partnerships and provide opportunity for Non-Government Organisation cooperation |
| 16 | Education | • Support strategies that provide alternate pathways of education and training for young people  
• Support strategies that provide increased quality education and training options for the region  
• Promotion and coordination of School Based Traineeships  
• Coordination and growth of Careers Expo  
• Through membership of existing school / community partnership groups, contribute knowledge, support and promote programs that support developmentally vulnerable or miss-engaged students  
• Work with local industry to support strategies that provide specific training opportunities suitable for the region  
• Work with local stakeholders to enhance School To work programs in the region |
| 17 | Renewable Energy | • Support the development of the alternate energy industry |
| 18 | Support the development and improvement of regional infrastructure | • Promotion of Regional Development Australia Funding process  
• Broker and foster strategic partnerships to ensure funding options for infrastructure development are considered  
• Work with key stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to funding applications  
• Support regional funding applications through provision of a Community Grant Writer |
| 19 | Child Care and Early Education | • Support the establishment of a regional Early Childhood Education and Care project  
• Facilitate industry roundtables of all stakeholders to share information and develop strategies to address challenges arising from Workforce changes  
• Support strategies for existing workers in the industry to gain formal qualifications and / or upgrade their skills in line with the National Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Education and Care  
• Support strategies to attract entry level employees into the child care and education sector |
<p>| 20 | Environment | • Advocacy through Regional Development Advisory Council (RDAC), NSW 2021 Plan |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21</th>
<th>Creative industries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Support business case development for Government funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support environmental change management strategies through;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• partnerships with other NSW RDA’s in the Clean Energy Future Program and the Carbon Farming Initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work with key stakeholders to encourage and support the development of clean energy production in the region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop partnerships to support the expansion and diversification of the creative industries in the region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide a led role to investigate and develop Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Creative Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.0 About our region

8.1 Our Geography

The Far West NSW region covers some 147,000 square kilometres and is relatively isolated from major capital cities.

The total population stands at roughly 23,000. The Far West is the most sparsely populated region in New South Wales, accounting for 18.4 per cent of the land mass, but only 0.3 per cent of the population. Almost nine in every ten people live in the city of Broken Hill, with the remainder living mostly in the Central Darling Shire or Tibooburra in the surrounding Unincorporated Area.

Broken Hill, which has been called the 'Oasis of the West, 'Silver City' and the 'Capital of the Outback', is over 1100 Km west of Sydney and surrounded by semi-desert, made famous in films including 'Mad Max' and ‘Priscilla Queen of the Desert’. However, the town still manages to surprise the unsuspecting visitor with its colorful park and garden displays.

Like many outback towns, Broken Hill was built on precious metals and once had the world’s richest deposits of lead, zinc and silver. Although now depleted somewhat, mining (particularly zinc and lead) still yields around two million tonnes annually.
Sheep farming is now becoming one of the principle industries in the area and there are considerably more sheep than people - almost 2 million Merino Sheep. Likewise tourism is becoming a major contributor to the local economy.

### 8.2 Our Climate

Our region has a hot desert climate. Winter in Broken Hill is cool and dry, while summers are highly variable — mostly hot and dry. The average maximum during the summer months (November to March) is about 32 °C with an average of 25% humidity, although occasional rainfall and cooler weather occur. Dust storms were a common problem but in the late 1930s the people of Broken Hill, led by Mr. Keast of the Zinc Corporation mine, created green reserves to surround the town thus protecting it from the worst of the storms.

**Climate data for Broken Hill**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average high °C</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average low °C</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precipitation mm</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>253.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Australian Bureau of Meteorology

### 8.3 Our Water

The 1,570 kilometer Darling River twists through the region from its southern Queensland catchment area to join the River Murray at Wentworth in south-western New South Wales.

At Menindee, the river flows through Lake Wetherill, one of the four main lakes in the Menindee Lakes Storage Scheme. The other significant lakes are Pamamaroo, Menindee and Cawndilla. This system was constructed from a series of natural depressions throughout the period 1949 to 1968, to capture water which could be used to augment the River Murray; meet stock, domestic and irrigation needs along the lower Darling River; provide for urban and mining needs in Broken Hill;
supply local communities and provide a resource for flood mitigation. The sequence of lakes has become an important recreational area for the region.

Irrigation has allowed the region’s agribusiness to diversify into various crops to supplement the more traditional activities surrounding wool production. Water supply for the city of Broken Hill is generally drawn from the Darling River and pumped over 120 kilometres of land considered among the most arid in NSW.

However, there are three other sources of water:

- Stephens Creek Reservoir, 17 kilometres from the city, with a capacity of 19,000 megalitres,
- Umberumberka Reservoir, 27.5 kilometres from the city, with a capacity of 8,000 megalitres, and
- Imperial Lake, constructed on the outskirts of the city for mining use and now held as an emergency water supply, with 600 megalitres.

The reservoirs store water from rainfall over the local catchment area and Stephens Creek also acts as a terminal storage for water from the Menindee Lakes Scheme before it is pumped to a treatment plant in Broken Hill. A $40m water treatment was completed during 2010 and provides high quality water to the town.

### 8.4 Transport Infrastructure

Far West NSW is linked to other regions by the following transport infrastructure and networks:

- Sealed highways link to Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne
- A network of unsealed roads – including the connection between Menindee to Pooncarie and the Silver City Highway between Broken Hill and Tibooburra.
- Passenger rail infrastructure – Forms part of the transcontinental railway connecting Perth and Sydney (stopping at Menindee, Broken Hill and Ivanhoe within the region). The Indian Pacific stops at Broken Hill twice weekly in each direction between Sydney and Perth. Countrylink service once weekly in each direction between Broken Hill and Sydney.
- Rail freight - Traditionally the major method of transporting mining exports from the region. A direct rail line connects Broken Hill with Port Pirie on South Australia’s Spencer Gulf. Pacific National also operates a freight service three times per week between the Cristal Separation Plant in Broken Hill and Port Adelaide.
- Broken Hill Airport – The Airport is owned and operated by Broken Hill City Council and is also a major base for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Regional Express (REX) Airlines is currently the only daily operator, with daily connections to Sydney, Adelaide and Mildura.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broken Hill</th>
<th>Central Darling Shire</th>
<th>NSW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19,125</td>
<td>2,108</td>
<td>6.9 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,165</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>3,408,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,612</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>3,508,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median Age</strong></td>
<td><strong>Median Age</strong></td>
<td><strong>Median Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Families</strong></td>
<td><strong>Families</strong></td>
<td><strong>Families</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,931</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>1,829,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average children per family</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average children per family</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average children per family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Private Dwellings</strong></td>
<td><strong>All Private Dwellings</strong></td>
<td><strong>All Private dwellings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,695</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>2,864,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average people Per household</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average people Per household</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average people Per household</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NSW**

**People**

- 6.9 m
- Male: 3,408,878
- Female: 3,508,780
- Median Age: 40.8

**Broken Hill**

- Median Weekly Household Income: $798
- Median Monthly Mortgage: $953
- Median Weekly Rent: $150

**Central Darling Shire**

- Median Weekly Household Income
- Median Monthly Mortgage: $549
- Median Weekly Rent: $91

**NSW**

- Median Weekly Household Income: $1,237
- Median Monthly Mortgage: $1,993
- Median Weekly Rent: $300
8.5 Our People at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Post school Qualifications</th>
<th>Access to internet at home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broken Hill</td>
<td>19125</td>
<td>9393</td>
<td>9732</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Darling Shire</td>
<td>2108</td>
<td>1118</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>21976</td>
<td>10930</td>
<td>11046</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the past 50 years the far west has experienced dramatic population declines which have been directly linked to changes within the mining industry and to drought. According to ABS data the population declined 1.6 per cent between June 2005 and June 2009, with the Broken Hill Statistical Local Area (SLA) recording the largest decline in the state. In a national context, the far west RDA region falls within an area that over the 10 years to 2010 suffered the greatest population decline of any area of the country.

Aboriginal people make up a significant percentage of the region’s population. Some 10.3% of the total far west population identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander during the 2011 Census, compared to 2.1 per cent state wide. The proportion is lower in Broken Hill and the Unincorporated New South Wales Local Government Area, but much higher in Central Darling Shire, where the proportion is 32 per cent. In Wilcannia, the Indigenous population is two-thirds (67%) of the community, while in Menindee, it is almost half (46.4%) of the community.

Within the far west region the aboriginal population has been growing while the non-aboriginal population has been declining. In 2011 the New South Wales Government Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs reported that in the last 15 years the aboriginal population of Broken Hill increased by 50.5 per cent, while the non-Aboriginal population fell by 5.9 per cent; and the aboriginal population of Wilcannia increased by 14.4 per cent while the non-Aboriginal population fell by 6.5 per cent.

ABS 2011 data indicated residents of the far west region aged 15 to 24 years represented 12.3 per cent of the region’s population, compared to 14.1 per cent nationally; those aged over 65 years made up 19.5 per cent of the region’s population, significantly higher than the national average of 13.5 per cent. The average job seeker age in the far west region, according to DEEWR in 2012, is 34 years which is younger than the national average age of 36 years.
8.6 Employment

Unemployment rates 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March 2012</th>
<th>June 2012</th>
<th>September 2012</th>
<th>December 2012</th>
<th>Total Labour Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broken Hill</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Darling</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>1006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated NSW</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.8m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(small area labour markets, December 2012, DEEWR)

Median Average income (ABS data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median Weekly Income</th>
<th>Broken Hill</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>$ 417.00</td>
<td>$ 561.00</td>
<td>$ 577.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>$ 994.00</td>
<td>$ 1477.00</td>
<td>$ 1481.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>$ 789.00</td>
<td>$ 1237.00</td>
<td>$ 1234.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.6.1 Employment Sectors

Employment in Broken Hill has traditionally relied on mining and services for the mining industry. In the area surrounding Broken Hill, employment has long been found in the pastoral (wool production) sector or in agricultural activity near Menindee. While these traditional industries still underpin the economy, the region has responded to changing circumstances to begin a diversification process. Tourism has become an important contributor, alongside emerging industries in goat and meat sheep production and a more intensive approach to horticulture – diversifying into cotton, malting grains, grapes, olive oil, carob and stone fruit. The region remains susceptible to the cycles of mining, and diversification seeks to broaden the type of employment available to residents.
8.6.2 Mining

Mining operations centered on silver, lead and zinc, operate in the city, and there are a number of other operations in various stages of development – both locally and in nearby South Australia. The region remains highly prospective, attracting strong interest from exploration companies. Mineral sands are also being mined about 200km south of Broken Hill and processed in a mineral separation plant located in the city.

8.6.3 Agribusiness

In recent years agribusiness has matched mining employment at 10%, contributing 11% of the region’s Gross Regional Product and 20% of its exports.

8.6.4 Tourism

Apart from direct employment in tourism-focused business, the pervasive nature of this industry means that increased visitation provides job outcomes in a number of sectors – including retail. Far west NSW forms part of the Outback NSW Tourism Region – including Balranald, Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Walgett and Wentworth.

8.6.5 Creative Industries

The natural features and quality of light in the region attracts many artists and filmmakers. The region’s reputation as an artistic colony and excellent production location continues to provide significant opportunities in creative industries, particularly art and film. Digital forms are now being targeted.
### 8.6.6 Employment by industry in the region

**EMPLOYED BY INDUSTRY (Census 2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mining (%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing (%)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water &amp; Waste Services (%)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction (%)</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade (%)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade (%)</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation &amp; Food Services (%)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing (%)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Media &amp; Telecommunications (%)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial &amp; Insurance Services (%)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental, Hiring, &amp; Real Estate Services (%)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Scientific &amp; Technical Services (%)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative &amp; Support Services (%)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration &amp; Safety (%)</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Training (%)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance (%)</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Recreation Services (%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services (%)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employed (no.)</td>
<td>8,234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.7 Education

There are 17 schools in the Far West RDA region: nine government primary schools (including School of the Air), two high schools, three central schools, two Catholic primary schools and one special non-government school.

Regionally there has been good take-up of School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) to date. According to figures from the Integrated Vocational Education and Training System database on June 2013, 30 school-based trainees are enrolled in the far west region. However, there is potential to further promote SBATs to families and the community and to increase the variety of industry areas to ensure that what is on offer is matched to students’ interests and identified career paths and relevant to local employment opportunities.

The University of Sydney’s Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health has developed the Far West Re-engineered Health Career Pipeline Model. This model aims to help students from a young age understand the work opportunities available in the health care sector via exposure through experience to deep immersion in relevant education and training from entry level to career professional.

In the 2011 Census, 42.6 per cent of the total population in the far west region aged 15 years and over reported having post-school qualifications, compared with a national average of 52.5 per cent and a New South Wales state average of 54.5 per cent. The vast majority of these qualifications were at certificate level or were inadequately described.

There are opportunities to increase the higher education qualification levels within the far west region and to improve the options to live and study in the region. Major higher educational facilities in the region include TAFE Western; Robinson College; and the Fowlers Gap Arid Zone Research Station, a teaching and research facility of the University of New South Wales.

8.7.1 Higher Education

There is opportunity for tertiary education to broaden in the region. Student placements are currently offered in Broken Hill and surrounding areas through a partnership of the University of Sydney’s Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health (BHUDRH) and the Population Health Division of the Far West Local Health District. Community consultation has identified a need for greater access to tertiary education in the region with students currently required to leave home at the end of year 12 to complete tertiary education in a face to face setting. The region is currently serviced by;

- TAFE Western Institute
Regional Development Australia Far West NSW
Regional Plan 2013 - 2023

- Robinson Community College
- Other Private Registered Organisations as required if available

### 8.7.2 School of the Air

School of the Air is a Distance Education Centre located in Broken Hill, but catering predominately for geographically isolated students within a radius of approximately 300 km from the city. The school was established in 1956 and now caters for 117 students (2% Indigenous).

### 8.8 Health

Health services in Broken Hill, Central Darling Shire and the Unincorporated Area form part of Far West Local Health District (FWLHD), formerly known as the Greater Western Area Health Service (GWAHS). The region is supported through Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Far West Local Health District, Far West Medi Care Local, University Department of Rural Health

#### 8.8.1 Centre for remote health

An 88-bed hospital is located in Broken Hill, with:

- 32-bed Medical Ward supported by visiting medical registrars;
- 25-bed Surgical Ward catering for elective and emergency surgery supported by a number of visiting specialists;
- 5-bed Intensive Care/Coronary Unit (including one ventilated bed);
- 8-bed Accident & Emergency Unit providing a general practice service as well as emergency care; and
- A Maternity/Obstetrics service, and the recent addition of
- 10 bed sub-acute Mental Health ward
- 10 bed sub-acute Rehabilitation ward

Health services in the region are also supported through

- Menindee Health Service
- Wilcannia Health Services
- Ivanhoe Health Service
- White Cliffs Health Service

#### 8.8.2 Community Health
This includes women’s health, sexual health, community midwife, genetic counselling, child and family services (including school health) and chronic diseases, with outreach clinics for some services held in outlying communities on a regular basis.

- District Nurse
- Pediatrics
- Diabetes Centre
- Aboriginal Health
- Mental Health
9.0  Stakeholder consultation and partnerships

How are we sure we have our goals correct

Stakeholders in our region have overwhelming informed us they believe our goals and vision for the region are not only still relevant, but in fact more relevant than in previous years. Whilst their priorities vary accordingly with their personal circumstances and the environment in which they live, over 90% of the respondents believed our core goals and vision for our region are the goals and vision that not only support the development of strategies to overcome specific issues and encourage growth but reflect their own feelings and vision for our region.

9.1  Regional Consultation

During the development of this plan considerable consultation has taken place throughout the region. Industry specific surveys were forwarded electronically to over 400 local businesses, including multi-national mining companies, national franchises, local businesses, trade service providers and education, training and health providers.
An additional 10,500 community surveys were posted to residents within the region, including Broken Hill, Menindee, Wilcannia, Ivanhoe and primary producers in the unincorporated area.

Personal consultation with key regional stakeholders has also been integral to the development of this plan. To ensure our young people were heard, consultation with Student Representative Councils in local High schools provided a valuable and exciting insight.

Extensive media coverage including the chance to win an iPad mini ensured the community were aware of the opportunity to have their say and express the important issues to them. It important for our community to have this opportunity and their opinions and comments have proved invaluable in developing strategies to meet our goals.

During our recent community consultation our community identified the 15 most important matters in our region, in order as ;

- Health Services
- Education Services
- High Speed broadband
- Economic Development
- Employment and Training opportunities
- Crime Prevention
- Aged Care
- Quality of Life
- Water Security
- Infrastructure Development
- Tourism
- Transport Services
- Environmental Sustainability
- Access to Government Services
- Customer Service Standards

They have also identified their level of satisfaction with current services, in order of most satisfied to least, as ;

- Aged Care
- Quality of Life
- Education Services
- Access to Government Services
- Environment Sustainability
- Water Security
- Health Services
- Transport Services
- Customer Service standards
- Crime Prevention
- Infrastructure Development
- High Speed Broadband
- Employment and Training services
- Economic Development
9.2 Achieving our goals

Our goals are underpinned by specific strategies, however we also recognise the importance of flexibility and ensuring the organisation retains the ability to react to local situations as and when the situation arises. Our region is unique for so many reasons and the specific circumstances of the region including a decreasing population, an increasing aged population, increasing indigenous population and the fluid environment of mining mandate RDA Far West to increasingly becoming involved in projects and strategies that have not traditionally been core business.

Our entire committee and staff are dedicated to achieving our goals, we will work with all sectors of the community and industry to develop and support strategies that drive our region forward.

Our committee and staff were either born in the region or long term residents, this is not just a task for us to achieve. We live here, we are raising our families here and we are committed to ensure their future and the long term sustainable future of our region.

Our Regional Plan will outlay the broad goals we will work to achieve and our Business Plan will focus on the specific strategies we will employ to achieve those goals.

We will report to both Commonwealth and State Governments on our progress to achieving our goals but more importantly we will report to the far west region.

Committed to continuous improvement

To ensure we react to the regions needs and our processes are effective RDA Far West is committed to the plan, do, review cycle. We are committed to getting it right and constant review and feedback from the communities in our region will direct our journey.
10.0 Resources

Results from our regional consultation have contributed to the direction of RDA Far West. Also integral to the development of this plan were the range of plans, studies and discussion papers previously completed on the region. During this process we considered the following documents:

- Regional Development Australia Regional Plan 2012 - 2022
- Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan, Far West NSW, 2012-2014 DEEWR
- Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2010-2014 Western NSW
- Far West Local District Health Service Plan
- Broken Hill City Council Community Strategic Plan
- Broken Hill City Council Airport Master Plan 2010
- Broken Hill Strategic Tourism Plan 2010-2020
- Central Darling Shire Strategic Plan
- Central Darling Shire Social Plan
- NSW Government 2012 Far West Regional Action Plan
- NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan
- Regional Development in the Far West NSW Region – SKM Report, 2011
- Murray Darling Basin Plan
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council Strategic Plan
- Far West Medicare Local Needs Assessment
- Remote Service Delivery Local Implementation Plan
Considerable information, statistics and data were also obtained from a variety of websites and sources including

- Australian Bureau of Statistics