Shaping the future of our region

# SUPERCHARGE THE REGION that helps SUPERCHARGE THE STATE

- **1. ROADS AND TRANSPORT**
- 2. WATER AND WASTE
- **3. ENERGY AND CONNECTIVITY**

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- 4. COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT
- 5. REGIONALLY FOCUSSED POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS

A 2020 STATE ELECTION PLATFORM TO SUPERCHARGE THE NORTH WEST & QUEENSLAND POST COVID-19 AND LONG TERM

nwqroc.com.au

The North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils acknowledges the Traditional Owners as the original custodians of the land and water on which we rely and operate. We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past, present and future.

We acknowledge the continued cultural, social and spiritual connections with the lands, sky and waters, and recognise and value that the Traditional Owner groups have cared for and protected them for thousands of generations.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we remain committed to working in partnership with local Traditional Owners.

The North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils also acknowledges other First Nation Aboriginals and the Torres Strait Islander people, who reside in the North West Queensland Region.



### A POWERHOUSE REGION SEEKING REAL ACTION, REAL INVESTMENT AND REAL COLLABORATION TO HELP ALL QUEENSLANDERS UNITE AND RECOVER

North West Queensland is an economic powerhouse contributing to Queensland and Australia's prosperity through the North West Minerals Province, massive and productive agricultural holdings and a burgeoning and stunning outback tourism industry.

North West Queenslanders contribute \$176,000 per capita to the national economy compared to \$66,000 elsewhere in Queensland.

As a region we consistently deliver despite prolonged droughts, severe floods, high cost of living, inadequate and aging infrastructure, small population centres and global pandemics! That's because our communities are lifters and are committed to making North West Queensland a region attractive for people and businesses to live, work and invest.

As the eight councils that make up NWQROC, we understand the value of collaboration, we understand our communities and we understand the potential of this region to deliver for the rest of Queensland, especially as we unite and recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Whilst much good work has been done by all levels of government with respect to policies, plans and strategies, now is the time for regionally targeted action, immediate commitments to, and long term investment in region shaping projects.

Our Election Platform is focussed on just that – it's not asking to reinvent the wheel, or funding for unrealistic ideas and initiatives. It's about building on what already exists, what already has been done or what already has been identified.

#### We seek, and our communities expect regionally targeted action, not just words or promises.

North West Queensland truly is a powerhouse region worth investing in. We look forward to working with the parties contesting the 2020 State Election and sharing with our communities how each will commit to make this region, and in turn Queensland, even stronger.

Finally, this Platform also highlights our collaboration and the key election priorities we share as part of the 21 councils that form the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils.

**Cr Jack Bawden** Mayor Carpentaria Shire Council Chair NWQROC

**Cr Jane McNamara** Mayor Flinders Shire Council

**Cr Ernie Camp** Mayor Burke Shire Council

Cr Jason Ned Mayor Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council

Cr Greg Campbell Mayor Cloncurry Shire Council

**Cr Danielle Slade** Mayor Mount Isa City Council

Cr Philip Curr Mayor McKinlay Shire Council

Cr John Wharton AM Mayor Richmond Shire Council

### SUPERCHARGE OUR RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE, AQUACULTURE AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES AND CREATE JOBS BY:

Providing increased and long-term funding certainty for our roads network and management of Karumba Port.

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- Investing in key region shaping water projects and realistic waste management strategies.
- Addressing the high cost of energy and substandard connectivity options facing businesses and communities.
  - Supporting local and regionally based approaches to more productive land management and community liveability initiatives.
  - Sponsoring regionally based organisations and developing 'place based' policies, programs and funding arrangements to best serve the needs of North West Queensland.

North West Queensland might have a small population, but it punches above its weight in terms of economic output with the region contributing \$5.1B in gross regional product across key industries in mining, agriculture, construction and more recently tourism.



The NWQROC economy is a significant contributor to state and national economic and employment outcomes.



**Province** is one of the world's richest mineral producing areas with copper, lead, zinc, gold, silver, phosphate and rare earth potential.



The region's products have significant flow on benefits for other regions such as Townsville, Cairns and SEQ through processing, port and employment linkages.



Given the abundance of natural resources across the region, facilitating a stronger and more resilient NWQROC region will **enhance state and national growth outcomes**.



Opportunities exist to further develop the resources sector as well as in beef cattle (and processing), irrigated agriculture and horticulture, transport and logistics, riverine and marine economies, digital transformation, tourism attraction and renewable energies.

# Increased and long-term funding certainty for our roads network

#### What we seek:

- a. \$8.3 million additional Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) funding over four years for the North West Queensland Regional Roads and Transport Group (NWQRRTG) to continue infrastructure upgrades on the Local Roads of Regional Significance to ensure communities are better connected.
- b. Increased and consistent funding allocations to the 'North West District' under the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) to support critical supply chains across the region as well as local workforce sustainability, capability and capacity.
- c. A targeted program to fund immediate upgrades and progressive sealing of critical road links and strategic road corridors (such as those identified under the Inland Queensland Road Network Strategy) to support industry development and growth, road safety, and domestic tourism.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover.

The region's road network is the economic lifeblood of the North West, enriching both the state and the nation through outputs associated with the movement of heavy vehicles travelling to and from mine sites; triple road trains carrying cattle; b-doubles transporting goods and other produce; as well as service workers, residents and tourists crisscrossing the region.

Increased and sustained investment in our road network will help the region build on its existing strengths, help diversify the economy, support emerging industries, create meaningful work, and:

- · improve road safety for all road users and reduce the costs associated with road trauma and fatalities
- · increase flood immunity and minimise disruption to critical supply chains
- promote industry access to the network through improved freight connectivity and first and last mile access
- connect communities to essential services and reduce travel times
- · improve the sustainability and skill level of our local workforces and contractors
- support council planning and asset management practices.

In particular, the progressive sealing of the region's road network between towns and attractions will support the growth of the tourism sector in North West Queensland - both as an immediate response to the impacts of COVID-19 and long term. As is well documented, the tourism sector is a cornerstone of the Queensland economy and supports hundreds and thousands of jobs across the state.

1. Tan, F, Tsolakis, D 2013, Economy-wide and employment impacts of road construction and maintenance investment, Road & Transport Research: A Journal of Australian and New Zealand Research and Practice, Vol. 22, No. 4, Dec 2013: 56-69.

Research indicates a total impact multiplier of 3.8 to 4 jobs per million dollars invested in new road construction and 5.2 jobs per million dollars invested in road maintenance<sup>1</sup>.





- a. Funding for a feasibility study to assess the benefits and costs of transferring control of Karumba Port from Ports North to the Port of Townsville.
- b. The appointment of a Port of Townsville Board Director from the State's North West region.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover:

The Port of Karumba has a long history of serving remote gulf communities since the late 1800s. Currently managed by Ports North, the Port of Karumba has huge potential to support the ongoing development of Northern Australia and create long term job opportunities through:

- transshipment of commodities associated with the agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture industries
- its proximity and links to the North West Minerals Province a globally significant producer of copper, lead, zinc and silver, as well as phosphates and rare earths
- growth in the export of live cattle, food, and fibre products especially to South East Asia.

Given these opportunities, it is timely to evaluate the best management and operating model for the Port to ensure it can support industry development, export potential and job creation across the North West and Queensland into the future.

In addition, a Director on the Port of Townsville Board from the State's North West would be a tangible demonstration of the economic linkage with Townsville, and provide a voice at the table with a direct appreciation of the region's contribution to the port and the city.





- a. Commitment to and / or continued support to turn the following region shaping water projects into reality by:
  - · Creating a positive regulatory environment;
  - Developing a new approach to the granting of water licenses to ensure expediency and adequate economies of scale.
  - Providing adequate funding support.

#### 1. THE RICHMOND IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE PROJECT - RICHMOND SHIRE COUNCIL (\$210 MILLION)

This project will provide off-stream and on-farm storages on O'Connell Creek to support the development of 8,000 hectares of irrigated farmland between Richmond and Julia Creek.

As an initial step, Council is seeking the following from the State Government:

- i. Conditional water allocation for 100,000 ML per annum mean annual diversion
- ii. Approval pathway for development
- iii. Approval for Council to establish an Authority to operate the facility.

#### 2. THE CAVE HILL DAM - CLONCURRY SHIRE COUNCIL (\$460 MILLION) 1

The proposed 140,000 ML dam will provide secure affordable water to develop new irrigated agriculture, support new mining developments with enhanced viability through cheaper electricity from the CopperString 2.0 Project, and guarantee water security for urban and industrial users across the Cloncurry-Mount Isa region through increased storage capacity of 60 percent.

- 3. FLINDERS RIVER IRRIGATION PROJECTS FLINDERS SHIRE
  - 3.1 The 15 Mile Irrigated Agriculture Project Stage 2 Flinders Shire Council

Stage 2 of the Flinders Shire Water Strategy Plan includes the water harvesting of existing water allocations and an off-stream Water Bank for storage and distribution of water for the development of all projects within the Flinders Shire Agricultural area. This will provide increased capacity to expand horticultural and agricultural industries and support the continued development of Stage 1.

3.2 Hughenden Irrigation Project – HIPCo<sup>2</sup>

HIPCo also plans to create an 'off-stream' water storage facility adjacent to the Flinders River to support agricultural and horticultural industries in the area.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover:

Investing in major water projects will support growth in both traditional and emerging industries (high value irrigated cropping), increase productivity and enable the North West to contribute even more to state and national economies.

These projects require close collaboration between the State and Federal governments and are examples of initiatives needed to create industry diversification and jobs within Queensland's rural and remote North West.

Further, project materials are often sourced from local businesses and workers spend their wages in local communities providing benefits for businesses not directly involved in project construction. New infrastructure creates jobs, particularly during construction. Council estimates that the Richmond Agricultural Project will create approximately 770 full time jobs in the first three years of construction, approximately 650 full time jobs in supporting infrastructure works and 55 full time permanent jobs post construction.

<sup>1.</sup> https://www.cloncurry.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/1054/cave-hill-dam-prospectus 2. https://hipco.com.au/



a. Support for an independent review of the impacts of the State Government's Waste Disposal Levy on Mount Isa City Council and community.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover:

Due to COVID-19 many households and businesses face financial hardship. There are significant costs to Mount Isa residents and businesses to implement the waste disposal levy.

Council and the Mount Isa community are expecting to pay approximately:

- \$3,000,000 per year to the State in waste disposal levy payments
- \$1,250,000 per year in additional staff costs and general operations for Council.

And, implementation costs of approximately:

- \$2,400,000 in necessary new infrastructure and plant
- \$300,000 for staff, software and training to setup the Waste Levy at Mount Isa.

As a result of an arbitrary population threshold (10,000 population) Mount Isa is the only council in the North West region required to implement the State Government's Waste Disposal Levy.

An independent review is sought to find a more realistic approach to the imposition of the waste levy on the residents and businesses of Mount Isa which are facing higher operating costs as a result of the levy and putting local jobs at risk!



The 105% rebate does not cover the significant additional costs to implement and operate the waste disposal levy each year, or the new infrastructure costs Council is incurring.



- a. Additional funding and timely implementation of the commitments in the *Powering North Queensland Plan* (or similar).
- b. Continued State Government action to fast-track the CopperString 2.0 project to ensure it can commence construction in 2021.
- c. State Government commitment to integrate the North West Minerals Province into the National Electricity Market.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover.

Communities and businesses in North West Queensland continue to face poor transmission networks, unreliable and expensive power. Increased electricity costs not only impact directly on household and business power bills, but also makes water treatment, pumping and reticulation more expensive for end users. Likewise, the region's poor transmission network is hindering the potential to develop cleaner energy, industries and markets.

# Under the *Powering North Queensland Plan*, the State Government committed to invest \$386 million to strengthen and diversify North Queensland's energy supply, drive economic growth and support 5,000 jobs.

In short, we want more of this given such investment has the potential to generate long term economic growth, create sustainable jobs and develop clean energy technologies.

Likewise, extending the national electricity grid from Townsville to Mount Isa under the CopperString 2.0 project will result in lower energy costs and generate thousands of jobs for North West Queensland through development of the region's valuable minerals sector as well as unlock massive renewable energy resources across the region.

Also, access to the National Electricity Market puts the North West on an equal footing with other major mining and 'load' regions encouraging the processing and manufacturing sectors - the real value-adders that Queensland and Australia need in the medium and long term.

2. Queensland Premier and Minister for Trade, The Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, Media Statement "CopperString to power jobs and wealth creation for NQ", Tuesday 19 May 2020.

"The North West Minerals Province is where we have half a trillion dollars in the new economy minerals needed for batteries and renewables. The potential wider economic benefits from unlocked private investment are modelled at over 3,500 jobs in North Queensland and a \$79 billion economic uplift over 30 years<sup>2</sup>."





- a. Investment in existing funding programs such as Building our Regions to be bolstered, or for a dedicated stream of funding to be made available for telecommunications / digital connectivity projects in rural and remote communities.
- b. State Government support for the transparent identification of available fibre optic networks across the North West. This will facilitate local digital connectivity projects, improved competition and entrepreneurial opportunities through remote working.
- c. State Government action to ensure the significant fibre optic capacity associated with the CopperString 2.0 Project is used to maximise fast, reliable and affordable digital connectivity across the State's North West.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover.

Improved digital infrastructure supports economic development opportunities and job creation through access to e-commerce, e-health, on-line education and essential government and emergency services to individuals as well as businesses in towns and families on property.

We have been proactive and provided alternative digital connectivity solutions for our communities. For example, Richmond Shire Council's joint venture with Wi-Sky local entrepreneur Will Harrington has delivered 6.5km of fibre optic infrastructure around Richmond town enabling the whole community to connect to the internet – faster and cheaper. Burke Shire Council's fibre optic project connected Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council with access to high speed broadband internet, 4G mobile phone services and wi-fi hotspots.

Whilst we are doing all we can to investigate alternative solutions, commit our own funding and / or utilise every external funding opportunity available to us (such as the Building our Regions Program), we need increased and ongoing support from the State Government. Improved digital infrastructure has never been so important (economically and socially) in helping remote and regional communities recover and capitalise on the opportunities in a post COVID-19 world.

<sup>3.</sup> Australian Government 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review, "Getting it right out there", p2.



Where you live and work matters. Those regional businesses that have a fixed-line broadband service as well as reliable mobile coverage from one or more mobile network operators are in a strong position to take advantage of new digital applications and economic opportunities. For other regional, rural and remote businesses, however, the situation is not as conducive to maximising economic opportunities<sup>3</sup>.

Image: Samantha Campbell North Queensland Register



- a. Increased and sustained funding for the *Natural Resources Investment Program* (or similar) over four years to support the sustainable management of natural land and water resources.
- b. Increased and sustained funding for the *Queensland Feral Pest Initiative* for ongoing management of invasive plant and animals in effected regions.
- c. \$4 million additional funding per annum over four years to support the vital work of the Northern Gulf Regional Management Group and Southern Gulf NRM in supporting resilient, sustainable and profitable land management practices.
- d. Increased and sustained funding for the successful *Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program* to continue to care for land and sea country, provide jobs and training and engage future generations.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover.

Good land care and natural resource management is vital to Australia's global agricultural competitiveness. In the North West, we invest considerable funding from our own budgets to ensure the region's productive industries can co-exist and prosper alongside our unique and sensitive landscapes.

In 2018-19, the gross value of agricultural production in Queensland was \$12.9 billion, with approximately 300,000 Queenslanders employed across the whole food supply chain <sup>4</sup>

Both the Australian and State Government have acknowledged that the agriculture sector will be critical to the nation's economic recovery post-COVID-19. Investing in Landcare initiatives, our NRM bodies and programs such as the *Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program* is one way to support Queensland's agriculture industry, drive productivity and provide meaningful work in our North West Queensland region.

Landcare and NRM can generate an economic return in the order of 2-5 times the original investment. The scale of the economic return is also important, with Landcare contributing to individuals as well as regions (including Indigenous communities).



ABS 2020b, Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2018-19, cat. no. 7503.0 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

- a. A dedicated grant or expansion of the 'First Home Owner' grant for the purchase of <u>existing</u> housing stock to improve affordability, stimulate investment and attract and retain families and professionals in our rural and remote communities.
- b. A dedicated program to support local governments in rural and remote areas to construct new homes to provide housing stock for on-sale or rental.
- c. Continued support for *The National Partnership on Remote Housing* as a means to help 'close the gap' and improve the health, employment and education opportunities for our Indigenous communities.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover.

With higher home loan deposits now required as a consequence of the "Banking" Royal Commission, particularly in rural and remote areas, many young people, families and professionals in North West Queensland are finding it difficult to access finance to construct their first house. As a consequence, these individuals look to purchase existing houses, yet are ineligible for any state government support unless their case involves 'substantial' renovations<sup>5</sup>.

If local government in rural and remote areas are supported to construct new homes to on-sell or rent they will be stimulating the local construction sector and able to negotiate deposit and repayment arrangements or tenancies with more flexibility and relevance to their local communities. This will assist young couples and singles to establish a home where the housing market is unable to meet their needs.

Stimulating investment through a revised 'First Home Owner' grant for existing housing stock will help create jobs by supporting local tradies and more broadly, local businesses that supply the construction industry. Importantly, it will also help sustain our regional and remote communities in the later phases of post COVID-19 recovery.

<sup>5.</sup> A substantial renovation is when all, or most, of the structural or non-structural components of a building are removed or replaced. Most of the rooms in the building must have been affected, and the renovations must have affected the building as a whole for it to be considered a substantial renovation: www.qld.gov.au/housing/buying-owning-home/financial-help-concessions/ qld-first-home-grant/renovated-houses-first-home

<sup>6.</sup> Inquiry into service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Local Government Association of Queensland (June 2017)



Both federal and state governments have indicated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people living in remote communities are at greater risk from COVID-19.

Despite this fact, evidence shows that the demand for new houses listed on the housing register, as well as the reported levels of overcrowding, significantly underestimate the housing need within Indigenous communities. Queensland will need at least 1,800 to 2,000 new homes to meet current demand<sup>6</sup>.

Under *The National Partnership on Remote Housing*, Indigenous councils have the opportunity to act as principle contractors, maximising the amount of government funding that stays within their communities through the employment of local building crews and through the use of local service providers.

Continued support for *The National Partnership on Remote Housing* will be important to address the housing shortage in Indigenous communities; create locally based jobs and skills development and protect our most vulnerable community members as part of COVID-19 recovery measures.



a. Financial support for NWQROC projects and initiatives.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover.

Similar to the funding provided to Remote Area Boards (RABs) (currently \$150K per annum), we believe our ROC operations could achieve greater benefits for our communities if it was financially supported by the State given the role it plays in coordinating strategic policy initiatives, facilitating collaboration between levels of government and industry and helping achieve broad based community outcomes.

Whilst recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 will require state-wide measures and support, regionally led responses offer an opportunity to build and strengthen existing frame-works, partnerships and collaborative arrangements to maximise outcomes over both the short and long term.



North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils 2020 State Election Platform



Developing 'place based' policies, programs and funding arrangements to best serve the needs of North West Queensland

#### What we seek:

a. Dedicated funding to support the timely implementation of the priorities and actions outlined in the North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy and North West Queensland (COVID-19) Regional Recovery Strategy.

#### How this will help the North West and Queensland Recover:

Released in August 2019, following extensive consultation, the *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy* was developed as a key action as part of the Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province. It identifies a range of diversification opportunities to leverage the region's competitive advantages to support new industries and employment.

We believe this Strategy is a positive example of place-based policy. However, without adequate and timely funding we fear the Strategy will fail to achieve its objectives and lose the potential to generate tangible outcomes as part of COVID-19 response measures.

The North West Queensland (COVID-19) Regional Recovery Strategy is part of Queensland's broader Economic Recovery Strategy – Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs. Following consultation with councils and industry representative, it identifies the recovery priorities to be pursued and supported by the State Government over various recovery stages.

Central to this recovery will be the growth in jobs in key departments providing services to the North West, namely, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. The State Government should take the lead in reversing the fly-in fly-ou (FIFO) model of employment in rural and remote areas of Queensland.

7. http://inform.regionalaustralia.org.au/process/regional-development-processes/item/place-based-approaches-to-regional-development-global-trends-and-australian-implications.



The Regional Australia Institute indicates that placed-based thinking is being adopted in many places around the world and it could be applied with equal value both in metropolitan regions and regional Australia<sup>7</sup>.

# **ABOUT NWQROC**

The North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NWQROC) is the advocacy body for eight Mayors and their councils and communities of North West Queensland – representing Burke Shire, Carpentaria Shire, Cloncurry Shire, Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire, Flinders Shire, McKinlay Shire, Mount Isa City and Richmond Shire.

NWQROC plays a vital role in working with councils, industry, representative bodies and all levels of government to advocate for our region.

This is being done by shaping strategic plans, promoting our assets, attracting investment and ensuring sustainable development across our diverse communities – to make North West Queensland a region attractive for people and businesses to live, work and invest.

Further information about the NWQROC can be found at www.nwqroc.com.au

### **OUR REGION**

The North West Queensland region is situated in the north west corner of Queensland with the Northern Territory and northern coastline forming part of its border. Approximately 29,000 people (or 0.8 per cent of the Queensland population) reside in the region across an area that covers close to 306,000km<sup>2</sup>. This geography forms some of the most remote parts of Australia.

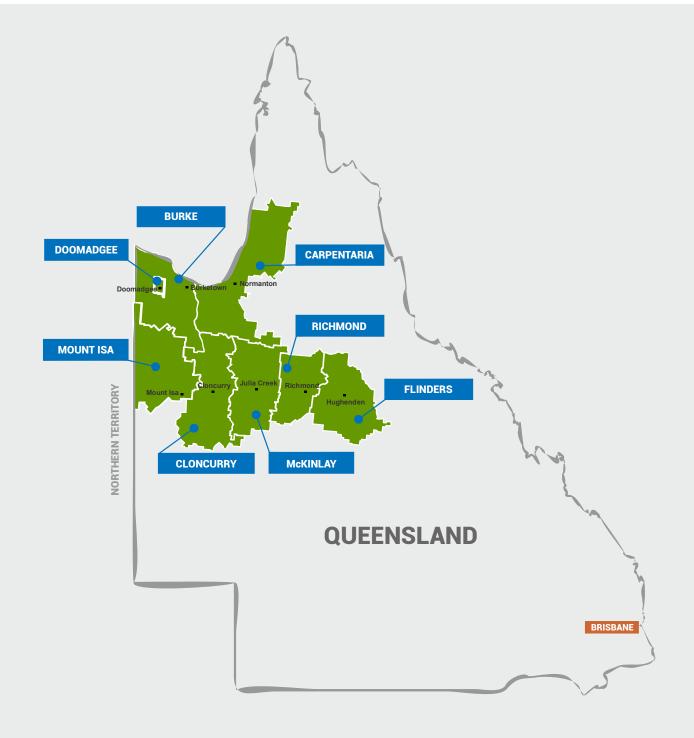
Despite this remoteness, North West Queensland punches above its weight in terms of economic output with the region contributing \$5.1 billion in gross regional product across key industries in mining, agriculture construction and more recently tourism.

In addition, the region's products have significant flow on benefits for other regions such as Townsville, Cairns and South East Queensland through processing, port and employment linkages.

The economic development potential of this region is immense, whether it be base and precious metals in the North West Minerals Province; livestock production and agriculture; transport infrastructure such as the Port of Karumba; and aquaculture in Carpentaria, the North West can continue to significantly contribute to Queensland's and Australia's growth and act as a key hub to supply the resources and agricultural needs of the Asia Pacific region.

Hardworking North West Queenslanders contribute \$176,000 per capita to the national economy compared to \$66,000 elsewhere in Queensland.

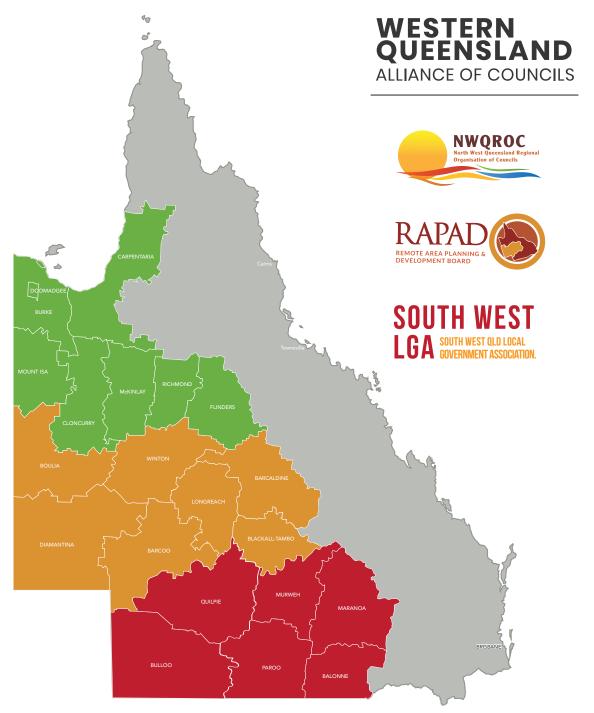
# **OUR REGION**



# **OUR REGION**

NWQROC forms part of the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils, which collectively with the Central Western Queensland Remoate Area Planning and Development Board and the South West Queensland Local Government Association aims to draw attention to the challenges, opportunities and contribution that Western Queensland makes to the State and Australia.

NWQROC supports the issues highlighted in the State Election Platform for the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils.



# A powerhouse of a region





**NWQROC COUNCILS** service an area covering 18% of Queensland and contribute significantly to local economies through annual expenditure and employment. Given the relatively small size of the resident communities across the region, ongoing infrastructure and service provision by NWQROC Councils is significantly reliant on external grant funding.





















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