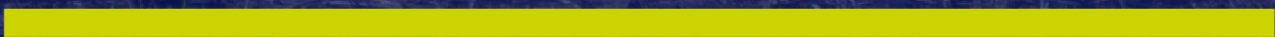




Regional
Development
Australia
O R A N A N S W



*Annual
Report
2017/2018*



ABOUT THE REGION



The Orana Region stretches across the central west and western regions of NSW, an area of more than 199,000 square kilometres, or 27% of the state. The Orana, meaning ‘Welcome’ in Wiradjuri is the largest and most diverse region in the State. It services a population of over 121,000 people encompassing 12 local government areas; Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Coonamble, Dubbo Region, Gilgandra, Mid-Western Region, Narromine, Walgett, Warren and Warrumbungles.



There are an estimate 50,646 families in the Orana Region and it draws 1.8 million visitors each year. Attractions include Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Macquarie Marshes, Warrumbungle National Park and the Wellington Caves.

Major industries include agriculture, mining, tourism, and construction. Mining interests include gold, silver, copper, zinc and rare earth minerals.

The Orana region has a GRP of \$8 B with each worker contributing \$161, 926.



With a vested interest in migration and addressing skills shortage RDA Orana aims to assist the community by encouraging innovation, investment and sustainable growth. The vision is to have a clear identity, a progressive society and a community that encourages opportunity, making the most of strength and diversity in the population across the sectors of industry and employment, health, education and recreational services.

JOHN WALKOM CHAIR

I have great pleasure in presenting this year's update on the Orana region. I have been Chair of the RDA Orana Committee since 2009 and was pleased to be reappointed as Chair this year. RDA Orana commenced operation under a new charter this year and I have seen positive changes within our region since then.

There has been huge investment in infrastructure to grow communities, with upward of \$7.9 billion being poured into projects over the next 5 years to boost the towns and cities of our region.

There has also been significant population growth in the regional centres, Dubbo Regional Council experienced the largest population growth of any local government area in Western NSW with an increase of 655 people. The Mid-Western Regional area also had an increase of 257 people. Despite declining in the other townships of the Orana, there is a lot of energy and enthusiasm being geared towards tackling that trend. One of those was the Bracing for Change report developed by RDA Orana focusing on local workforce shortfalls. It was developed with the future of the region in mind and it is an effort to evaluate the current state of the region and use this as a platform to make the most of the opportunities that present themselves.

Led by business and community representatives, RDA Orana is strongly focused on diversifying the economic base of the region, workforce planning and development, business investment, infrastructure, and whole of government planning and I look forward to working with the newly appointed committee in 2019.

RDA Orana has an active and facilitative role in the community and a clear focus on growing strong and confident regional economies that harness competitive advantages, seize on economic opportunity and attract investment.

Highlights

Over \$7.9 billion of investments have been identified in various sectors with the view of capitalising on opportunities and securing growth and stability for the region over the next 5 years. The projects we pursue now, the investigations we make and the collaborations we seek will all contribute to the ongoing strength and viability of Orana into the future.



Projects

RDA Orana has been working on the issue of the workforce for our region and through employer responses has identified that there are critical labour shortages holding back business growth. To address the critical skills shortage being experienced by business, RDA Orana has been in discussion with the Commonwealth Government and is preparing to lodge a proposal for a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA).



RDA Orana have been seeking advice and input of stakeholders into the proposal to have the RDA Orana geographic area being approved as a DAMA, a first for NSW and second for Australia. Full employment, an ageing population, declining participation rates, access to and availability of labour are all critical factors identified in employer feedback.

If the approval is successful RDA Orana intends to act as the Designated Area Representative (DAR) on behalf of the region.



Skilled Migration

RDA Orana sponsors applicants who possess skills needed in the region. Successful applicants and their dependents can live and work in specified regional areas of Australia for up to four years and meet requirements to apply for permanent residency. To be nominated by RDA Orana, applicants must be on the current Orana occupation list and meet the points-based nomination criteria.

RDA Orana can also assist regional employers wishing to sponsor skilled workers into positions which cannot be filled using the local labour market under the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme.

Most recently RDA Orana are currently in the process of submitting a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) to the Federal Government, the first of its kind in NSW to streamline visa application process making it easy for migrant employees and employers to fill vacant positions.

Partnerships

RDA Orana has positioned itself strongly with Federal, State and Local Governments and has had significant input into our regional policy and strategies to assist our communities. It has also worked hard to ensure the Orana is known not only at home, but abroad. These relationships will only continue to grow.

Drought

The Orana Region, along with the rest of NSW has been facing one of the worst droughts on record this year, significantly affecting the economic prosperity of our smaller regional communities where agriculture is the main industry. Both the NSW Government and the Australian Government have offered over \$2.5 billion worth of emergency drought relief funding.

Bracing for Change Report

In May this year RDA Orana produced the Orana Region Bracing For Change Report to gain a detailed understanding of the innovation, skills, labour, and training needs required by businesses in order to secure the prosperity of the Orana region. Through focus groups, interviews, and an online survey more than 190 business owners and managers across 12 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the region took part in the project during 2017.

Employers across 10 of the 12 LGAs in the Orana region identified the ability to attract and retain staff as one of their critical issues. In six LGAs, employers expressed concern about a declining population. Most raised issues surrounding the needs of the ageing population across the region and the ability of the current population and workforce to meet those growing needs.

Data analysis demonstrated that there are less people in the region available to work. The workforce population in the region is 42%, which is 11% lower than the national average of 53%. We also identified a project pipeline of over \$7.9 billion over the next 5 years, that will require a significant skilled workforce.



Snapshot 2018

Employment

Release of Bracing for Change report and DAMA application to fill workforce shortages in the region.

Planning

Support of government funding including the Building Better Regions Fund to drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities into the future.

Partnerships

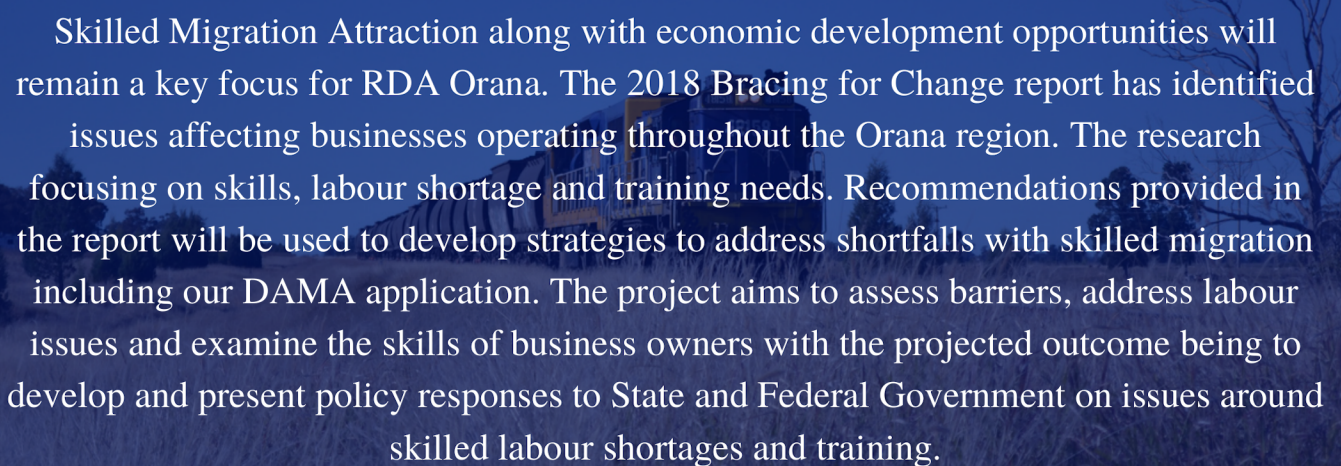
Continued Support from Federal, State and Local Governments, with extended funding and firm commitment for future growth and opportunity.

Business


Affiliation with regional companies continue to flourish, with communications and support lending themselves to ongoing partnerships

A man with a beard and a white t-shirt is leaning over a table, painting a large map of Australia. The map is on a white surface and is being painted with blue and green colors. The man is holding a paintbrush. The background shows a room with various art supplies and framed pictures on the wall.

Priorities

A large truck is parked in a field. The truck is white and has a large trailer. The field is dry and has some trees in the background. The sky is blue.

Skilled Migration Attraction along with economic development opportunities will remain a key focus for RDA Orana. The 2018 Bracing for Change report has identified issues affecting businesses operating throughout the Orana region. The research focusing on skills, labour shortage and training needs. Recommendations provided in the report will be used to develop strategies to address shortfalls with skilled migration including our DAMA application. The project aims to assess barriers, address labour issues and examine the skills of business owners with the projected outcome being to develop and present policy responses to State and Federal Government on issues around skilled labour shortages and training.

A man in a yellow high-visibility shirt is working in a workshop. He is holding a tool and looking at the camera. The workshop is filled with various tools and equipment.

Inland Rail and positioning our region to take advantage of this billion dollar project, also remains a key priority for the region. With the landmark project recently made one step closer, due to the \$300 million construction contracts signed for the first section of the 1,700 kilometre rail line. There is still an identified need for an organisation such as RDA Orana to work with local businesses, to ensure they are ready to take advantage of the many opportunities that this project will present, from construction, through to commissioning.