



BALONNE BULLOO  
MARANOA MURWEH  
PAROO QUILPIE

South West Queensland

The Cornerstone  
of Opportunities

# Strategic Plan

2021-2024

[www.swqroc.com.au](http://www.swqroc.com.au)

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# South West Queensland and our Regional Organisation of Councils

Bordering New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory - South West Queensland truly is the cornerstone of the State. Comprising approximately 320,000km<sup>2</sup> across the local government areas of Balonne, Bulloo, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo and Quilpie, more than 23,000 people call South West Queensland home.

South West Queensland has well established industries in oil, gas and agriculture. It also has massive untapped potential in emerging industries such as apiculture, goats and macropods, renewable energy, agtech and education, carbon farming and tourism.

These industries have the potential to create meaningful and long-term employment. The potential to help sustain our diverse towns and regional centres. The potential to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and the potential to re-shape where and how Queenslanders and Australians alike, choose to live, work and play.

To realise this potential, local government leaders in South West Queensland recognise the need to take a regional view, to combine resources and to engage in joint advocacy and representation in order to best serve the communities of South West Queensland.

The South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils Inc. (SWQROC) is designed to do just that. SWQROC is a not for profit local government based organisation that works for its member councils and with other levels of government, communities and relevant stakeholders to positively create and shape the future of the region.



# Our Region

## The Cornerstone of Opportunities



Local Government Areas:  
**Balonne, Bulloo, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo & Quilpie**



Federal Government Electorate:  
**Maranoa**  
State Government Electorate:  
**Warrego**



Home to the Cooper and Eromanga resource basins – **the largest onshore petroleum province in Australia.**



**Diverse economic opportunities** exist in oil, gas, gemstone (opal), beef, sheep, cropping and game meat processing.



SWQ generates **\$5.2 billion in royalties** which is shared across all Queenslanders.



SWQ generates over **\$2.5 billion in Gross Regional Product** each year.



**SWQ covers approximately 320,000km<sup>2</sup>**, across six local government areas, with more than 24,000 people.



The region's CSG industry is **critical to supplying gas markets** both inter-state and internationally.



The region includes the Mulga Lands and Channel Country bioregions and its river systems form **part of the important Murray-Darling Basin and Lake Eyre Basin water resource.**



The region offers **world class paleo-tourism experiences** with the Eromanga Natural History Museum being home to 'Cooper' - Australia's largest dinosaur.

## Our Vision

To be a respected professional and credible local government representative body that promotes and grows South West Queensland as the place to be - through strong connections, working together on shared challenges and leveraging our combined strengths.

## Our Purpose

Advance the development of South West Queensland by:

Advocating, championing and responding to key local government and regional/remote community issues.

Securing better regional funding, policy/program and legislative outcomes.

Facilitating networking, knowledge sharing and learning opportunities.

Leading and managing a well resourced and governed Regional Organisation of Councils.

Acting as an authoritative advisor and resource centre on local/regional issues in South West Queensland.

## Our Values and Commitments

Our values shape the way we do business. SWQROC is dedicated to:

- Leading in a proactive, collaborative, and accountable manner
- Being transparent and relationship focused
- Interacting with diplomacy and respect
- Communicating with intention and authenticity
- Continuously improving as a learning organisation

## As a ROC, we are committed to:

**WORKING WITH OUR TRADITIONAL OWNERS** who have walked upon and cared for our land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of our First Nations peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

**FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS** through our membership and joint work with other local government based organisations including the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC), the Darling Downs South West Council of Mayors (DDSWCOM) and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ). Through our combined efforts these partnerships will further draw attention to the challenges, opportunities and contribution that South West Queensland makes to the State and Australia.

**CONTRIBUTING TO STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES** is an important consideration for the SWQROC. Co-ordinating and collaborating on legislative, policy and program measures, where possible, between the three levels of government will deliver better outcomes for communities. As such the SWQROC will look for opportunities and view all its initiatives through a lens of how it can contribute to the current State Government's "Objectives for the Community" and the current Federal Government's *Our Plan for a Better Future for all Australians*, and *A Better Future for All Our Regions*.

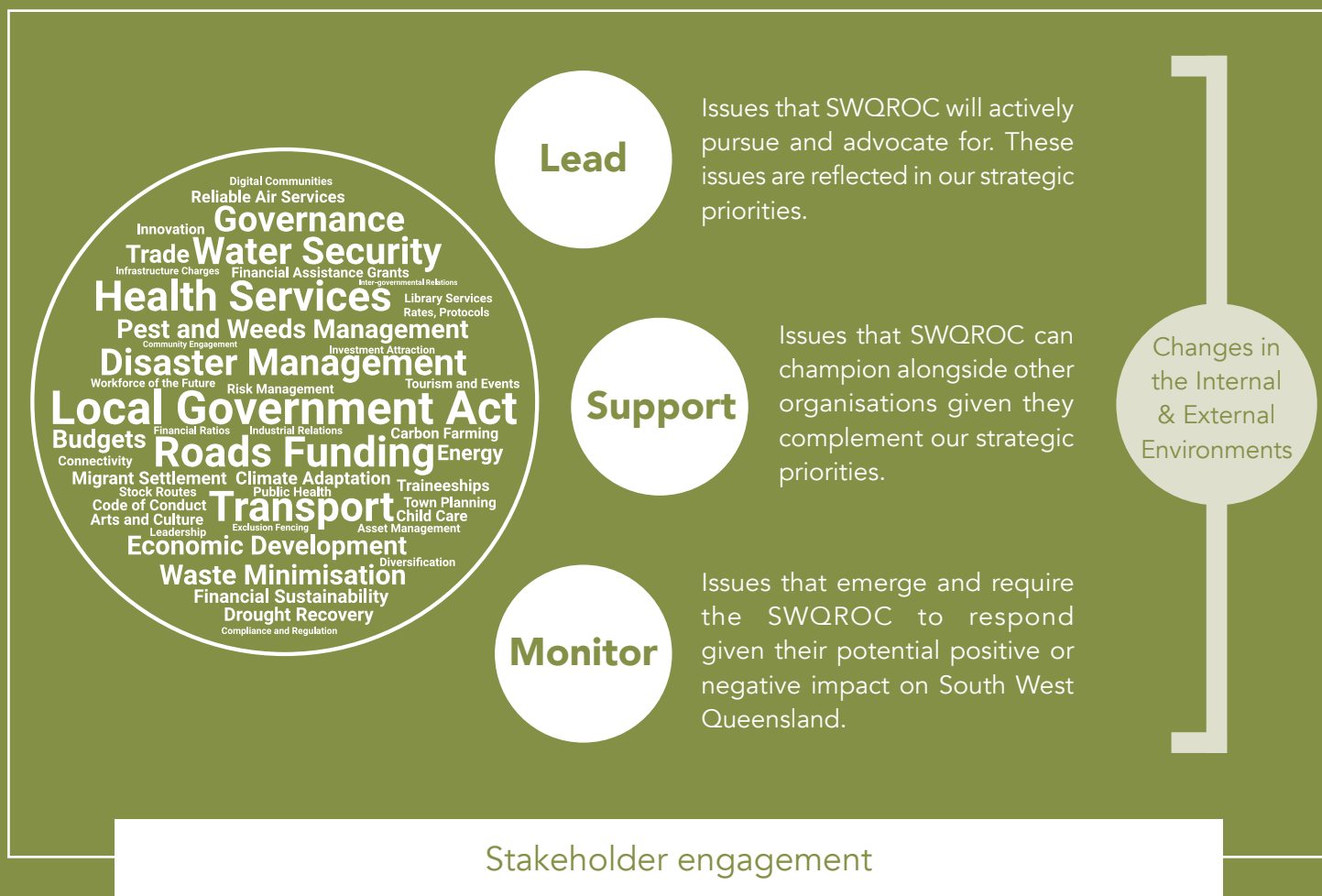
**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CREATING SHARED VALUE** with the aim of improving the conditions in which we live – advancing community health, education, employment, service access and participation; and helping to conserve our natural environments.

# SWQROC Strategy

## Our strategic approach

Good strategy is essentially about choice – about where an organisation will operate and with what focus. The SWQROC has adopted exactly this approach. As a local government based organisation, SWQROC could pursue and be captured by many competing priorities. Instead, the ROC leaders have purposely focussed on a concise set of priorities that will have the greatest impact, the furthest reach and the longest lasting effect to help advance the development of South West Queensland.

This does not mean however, that the SWQROC will not engage in other agendas – whether shared or emergent. Rather, our approach is based on assessing issues through a framework of where and when we need to ‘Lead’; when we need to ‘Support’; and when we need to ‘Monitor’ – as represented in the figure below.



## Our Strategic Priorities

-  **S**ecure and Simplified Funding and Governance Frameworks
-  **W**ater Security and Waste Minimisation Incentives
-  **Q**uality Community Services, Infrastructure and Program Outcomes
-  **R**oads, Air Services and Region Wide Economic Development
-  **O**pportunities for Improved Workforce Attraction and Retention
-  **C**onnected Communities

# 1



## Secure and Simplified Funding and Governance Frameworks

### Why is this important?

Due to a limited rates base, high capital and operating costs (compared to urban based councils) and other external pressures, member councils of SWQROC are heavily reliant on external funding sources from the State Government and Commonwealth Government to finance their operations. In some cases this reliance can be as high as 50 percent of operating revenue.

Additionally, whilst the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2009* are important to guide the operations of SWQROC member councils, in some cases the 'one size fits all' measures under the Act do not reflect the reality of operating conditions in regional and remote councils.

### Outcomes SWQROC will lead and advocate for:

- 1.1 New strategic funding models from both the State and Commonwealth Governments based on long term and steady state funding allocations, simple administration and eligibility criteria that supports planning and maintenance activities over 'shovel ready' capital projects.
- 1.2 Continuation of funding programs that directly support remote area councils and encourage regional collaboration, capability improvement and innovation in project delivery.
- 1.3 A contemporary Local Government Act that better supports the operations and outcomes for regional and remote councils through changes to key legislative and regulatory measures i.e., financial sustainability ratios and council meeting and decision making processes and arrangements.





## Water Security and Waste Minimisation Incentives

### Why is this important?

Successive Global Risks Reports (World Economic Forum) have identified the 'water crisis' (safety and security of supply) in the top five risks that the global community is confronting. The criticality of this problem is also reflected at the local level, with peak bodies and industry groups pointing out that the sustainability of many water and waste water infrastructure networks in regional and remote Queensland are fast approaching the end of their serviceable life or are unable to cope with new regulatory and compliance standards. This problem is acutely relevant to SWQROC members, who require immediate Government support to avoid a public health and economic development crisis.

Our communities' attitude towards waste is changing and as concepts such as 'circular economy' become better understood, there is now an opportunity to view waste as a valuable resource - where local solutions can divert waste away from landfill and result in initiatives which create jobs and economic growth.

### Outcomes SWQROC will lead and advocate for:

- 2.1 A dedicated water and wastewater infrastructure renewal program (or similar) for South West Queensland which supports and incentivises how SWQROC members can best address immediate infrastructure risks, build workforce capability and improve asset management practices into the future.
- 2.2 The establishment of regionally based waste re-cycling services to address the immediate priorities of stockpiles of scrap metal and tyres; and to potentially service other waste streams across South West Queensland.



## Quality Community Services, Infrastructure and Program Outcomes

### Why is this important?

Sustaining local populations and attracting new residents is a key priority for many local governments. This issue is especially important to the members of the SWQROC, who have experienced, in some cases, dramatic population decline and high levels of social disadvantage over recent decades. In a post COVID-19 world, many studies are pointing to trends of inter and intra state regional migration where individuals, families and businesses are looking to re-locate out of city centres. To capitalise on these opportunities and promote South West Queensland as 'the place to be' quality community services and infrastructure needs to be in place and easily accessible to all community members.

Further, Commonwealth and State Government Programs need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to deliver positive community outcomes and respond to any unintended consequences.

### Outcomes SWQROC will lead and advocate for:

- 3.1 A tri-partite government and business sector response to address the critical housing shortage in South West Queensland communities which is acting as a major barrier to both economic and social development.
- 3.2 Re-instatement and improved National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) resources (such as Local Area Coordinators) for the South West Queensland region.
- 3.3 A revised Carbon Farming Initiative (Program) that is able to adapt to local community circumstances to maximise its intended benefits and minimise any cumulative and unintended negative consequences.
- 3.4 Dedicated resources and targeted support to ensure councils can continue to meet their disaster management responsibilities and build a long term regionwide community culture of disaster management preparedness and resilience.



## Why is this important?

State and Commonwealth Governments rely on the productivity of regions to generate wealth for re-distribution across all communities – a point most notably highlighted through the COVID-19 crisis. South West Queensland contributes approximately \$3 billion to Gross State Product through its key industries of agriculture and resources. These industries rely significantly on the region's road network and air transport services (as 'economic enablers') to transport their products to market and workforces to/from and within the region. Whilst SWQROC firmly believe the region's economic contribution could be increased, the region currently suffers one of the lowest levels of road funding in the State. Further, the reliability and affordability of air route services to/from and within the region have been diminishing, acknowledging that COVID-19 triggered even further loss of these services. Coupled with greatly restricted services, some carriers have introduced changes to their resident fare structure, making it more costly for individuals and businesses to travel.

## Outcomes SWQROC will lead and advocate for:

- 4.1 Increased and stable funding allocations to the South West Transport and Main Roads District under the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP).
- 4.2 Increased Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) funding state-wide and proportionally for the South West Regional Roads and Transport Group.
- 4.3 A targeted program to fund immediate upgrades and progressive sealing of critical road links and strategic road corridors.
- 4.4 Improved reliability and affordability of State Government regulated air services as part of the review of new operator contracts, including assessing the economics of applying a maximum (capped) fare.

# 5



## Opportunities for Improved Workforce Attraction and Retention

### Why is this important?

Attracting and retaining a skilled labour force is a critical yet complex issue for communities in South West Queensland. This issue not only impacts on SWQROC member councils' ability to deliver services and meet statutory requirements, it impacts on the availability of social services (such as doctors), industry growth and the region's economic competitiveness and long term survival.

### Outcomes SWQROC will lead and advocate for:

- 5.1 A South West Queensland Local Government Workforce Strategy to address current skill shortages and prepare SWQROC member councils for future workforce skill requirements.
- 5.2 Continued 'skills' based and 'seasonal workers' Migration Programs, including more flexible visa pathways to facilitate the import of relevant labour skills when and where required in South West Queensland.
- 5.3 Increased and sustained investment in initiatives and programs (such as the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program) as a support mechanism to attract and settle new residents in South West Queensland communities.



### Why is this important?

The 2020 Australian Digital Inclusion Index reveals substantial differences between Australians living in rural and urban areas, with the gap between those that have access to digital services and those that have minimal access, increasing in Queensland. This is likely to be further exacerbated when the 3G network is shut down in mid-2024. Connection to fast and reliable broadband internet and mobile phone service is essential to supporting access to services (such as telehealth and education), social connections, entrepreneurial opportunities through remote working and economic development in South West Queensland. Whilst individual SWQROC members councils have been proactive in seeking solutions to provide high-speed, reliable digital connectivity outcomes for their communities, this approach is not sustainable in the long term given the scope of connectivity gaps and the level of capital investment required to fix it.

### Outcomes SWQROC will lead and advocate for:

6.1 A fully funded, actionable, long term Regional and Remote Communities Digital Connectivity Program (or similar) which provides a strategic framework to (among other things):

- Upgrade the core backhaul network to improve reliability and speed commensurate with service levels in urban centres, or at a minimum the NBN Statutory Infrastructure Provider (SIP) obligations of 25/5Mbps.
- Ensure no community is left behind or disadvantaged when the 3G network is retired.
- Provide access to satellite and wireless services to non-urban residents that have equivalent speed, reliability and price of fixed broadband and mobile internet services.
- Continue the maintenance and upgrading of existing residential telecommunications infrastructure.
- Identify and provide transparency over the availability of any existing fibre optic networks in regional and remote communities.
- Provide support for digital literacy initiatives at the local level.

# Governance

The SWQROC is an incorporated association which complies with the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981*.

It is governed by a Management Committee which consists of the following members:



CR SAMANTHA O'TOOLE  
Mayor, Balonne Shire Council  
and President & Chair



CR SHAUN RADNEDGE  
Mayor, Murweh Shire Council  
and Treasurer & Deputy Chair



CR JOHN (TRACTOR) FERGUSON  
Mayor, Bulloo Shire Council



CR TYSON GOLDER  
Mayor, Maranoa Regional  
Council



CR SUZETTE BERESFORD  
Mayor, Paroo Shire Council



CR STUART MACKENZIE  
Mayor, Quilpie Shire Council

The role of the Management Committee is to provide strategic leadership, engage in advocacy and oversight the effective governance, financial management and administration of the SWQROC.

The ROC also consists of a number of sub-committees to progress specific portfolio priorities or projects as required. Additionally, the SWQROC works alongside and / or supports other groups and organisations given the dual representation of Management Committee members. These relationships are represented in on the following page.

# Structure



# Review & Reporting

The review schedule for this Plan will be the midpoint in the local government election term in March 2022 and then again following the Local Government elections in March 2024. In between, consistent monitoring of the external environment will prompt whether this review schedule will need to change.

This Plan is supported by an Annual Action Plan and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy with each containing a series of key performance indicators. Tracking progress and reporting against these key performance indicators will occur every six months to the SWQROC Management Committee.



# Our Members

The SWQROC consists of six member councils.

An individual profile on each is presented at the end of this Plan.



## How to reach SWQROC

All enquiries related to the SWQROC can be sent to:  
[simone.talbot@swqroc.com.au](mailto:simone.talbot@swqroc.com.au) or via our website contact page.

Visit our website at: [www.swqroc.com.au](http://www.swqroc.com.au)





# BALONNE SHIRE

## Population

**4360**

## Traditional Owners

Kamilaroi, Kooma, Mandandanji, Gamilaraay, Gunggari, Yuwaalaray, Euahlayi, and Bigambul people

## Area

**31,150km<sup>2</sup>**

## Local businesses

**853**

## Transport networks



**Balonne, Barwon, Carnarvon, Castlereagh & Moonie highways**



**Bus Queensland**



**Rex Airlines**

services through to Brisbane & Toowoomba



**South Western Freight Network (Thallon)**



**Median house price**

**\$225,028** Old median: \$418,290



**Distance from admin centre to...**

**Brisbane 495km**

**Toowoomba (WTB) 356km**



## Towns

**St George  
Diranbandi  
Thallon  
Mungindi  
Bollon  
Hebel  
Nindigully**



## Health services

St George Hospital, Dirranbandi Multipurpose Health Service, Mungindi Multipurpose Health Service St George Medical Centre, Thallon Community Clinic, Bollon Community Clinic



## Major industries

Agriculture, forestry & fishing  
Health care  
Retail trade  
Education



Agriculture, forestry & fishing generated

**\$367 million**

in 2015/16



Agriculture accounts for

**54.7%**

of registered businesses



## Balonne tourism

**\$35 million**

in 2018/19



Culgoa Floodplain NP, Thrushton NP, Beardmore Dam, the Balonne River, Riversands Wines, Thallon painted silos & more!



## Major employment



Agriculture, forestry & fishing .....40.8%  
Health care .....10.7%  
Retail trade .....8.1%  
Education .....6.7%  
Public Admin ..... 6.2%

Source: <https://economy.id.com.au/murweh> - Feb 2021



# BULLOO SHIRE

## Population

325

## Traditional Owners

Kullilli people

## Area

73,880km<sup>2</sup>

## Local businesses

22

## Transport networks



Adventure Way, Warri Gate Road (to Silver City Highway, NSW)



**Rex Airlines**  
services through to Brisbane, Toowoomba & Mount Isa



**Median house price**  
**\$61,435**      Old median: \$418,290



**Distance from admin centre to...**  
**Brisbane 985km**      **Toowoomba (WTB) 846km**




**Health services**  
Thargomindah Community Clinic.



**Major industries**  
Agriculture, forestry & fishing  
Public Admin  
Mining  
Construction



Agriculture, forestry & fishing generated  
**\$68 million**  
in 2018/19




**Bulloo tourism**  
**\$1.3 million**  
in 2018/19



Lake Bindegolly NP, Currawinya NP, Bulloo River, Noccundra Waterhole, Thargomindah Hydro Power Plant, Burke & Wills Dig Tree, & more!



**Major employment** 

Agriculture, forestry & fishing .....	43.9%
Public Admin .....	25.3%
Mining .....	15.8%
Construction .....	6.0%
Accom & food .....	4.2%




Agriculture accounts for  
**31.8%**  
of registered businesses

Source: <https://economy.id.com.au/murweh> - Feb 2021



# MARANOA REGIONAL

**Population**  
12,665

**Traditional Owners**  
Mandandanji and  
Gunggari people

**Area**  
58,820km<sup>2</sup>

**Local businesses**  
2558

**Transport networks**



Canarvon & Warrego  
highways



Westlander train



Qantaslink & Rex Airlines  
services through to Brisbane



**Median house price**  
\$237,577 Old median: \$418,290



**Distance from admin centre to...**  
Brisbane 478km Toowoomba (WTB) 344km

**Towns**

Roma  
Mitchell  
Surat  
Injune  
Yuleba



 **Health services**  
Roma Hospital, multi-purpose health clinics at Injune, Mitchell and Surat, and a community clinic at Wallumbilla.


 **Major industries**  
Agriculture, forestry & fishing  
Health Care  
Mining  
Construction

 Agriculture, forestry & fishing generated  
**\$515 million**  
in 2018/19

 **Maranoa tourism**  
**\$80 million**  
in 2018/19

 Chesterton Range NP, Canarvon NP, Expedition NP, Thrushton NP, The Big Rig, Roma Saleyards, Mitchell Great Artesian Spa & more!



**Major employment** 

Agriculture, forestry & fishing .....	18.9%
Health care .....	10.6%
Mining .....	10.5%
Construction .....	10.1%
Education.....	9.2%



Agriculture accounts for  
**51.5%**  
of registered businesses

Source: <https://economy.id.com.au/murweh> - Feb 2021



# MURWEH SHIRE

## Population

4295

## Traditional Owners

Bidjara people

## Area

40,770km<sup>2</sup>

## Local businesses

600

## Transport networks



Landsborough, Warrego & Mitchell highways



Westlander train



Daily bus to Brisbane



Qantaslink & Rex Airlines services through to Brisbane



## Median house price

**\$125,059** Old median: \$418,290



## Distance from admin centre to...

Brisbane **743km**

Toowoomba (WTB) **610km**

## Towns

**Charleville**

**Augathella**

**Morven**

**Coladdi**




### Health services

Charleville Hospital, Charleville Royal Flying Doctor Service, Augathella Multi-Purpose Health Service, Morven Community Clinic & Charleville CWAATSICH Medical centre.



### Murweh tourism


**\$28.5 million** in 2018/19

Chesterton Range NP, Tregole NP, Morven Conservation Park, Charleville Cosmos Centre, WWII Secret Base, Charleville Bilby Experience, Royal Flying Doctor Service Base & more!




### Major industries

- Agriculture, forestry & fishing
- Health care
- Retail trade
- Education



### Major employment

- Agriculture, forestry & fishing .....25.6%
- Health care .....13.5%
- Retail trade .....9.5%
- Public Admin .....9.4%
- Education.....9.2%



### Agriculture, forestry & fishing generated

**\$97 million** in 2018/19



Agriculture accounts for **47.8%** of registered businesses

Source: <https://economy.id.com.au/murweh> - Feb 2021



# PAROO SHIRE



## Population

1562

## Traditional Owners

Kooma, Kunja, Kullilli, Mardgany & Budjiti people

## Area

47,700km<sup>2</sup>

## Local businesses

22

## Transport networks



Balonne & Mitchell highways



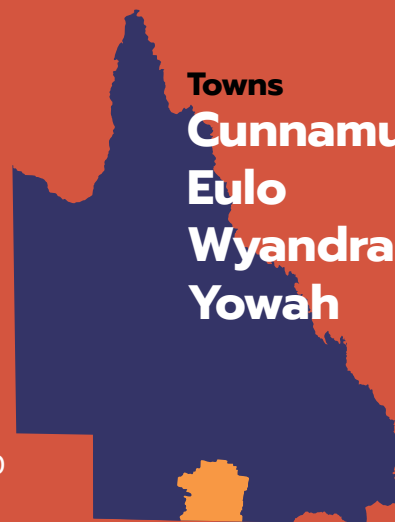
Rex Airlines services through to Brisbane



Median house price  
**\$58,422** Old median: \$418,290



Distance from admin centre to...  
**Brisbane 788km** **Toowoomba (WTB) 650km**



## Towns

Cunnamulla  
Eulo  
Wyandra  
Yowah



## Health services

Cunnamulla Hospital, Cunnamulla Medical Clinic, Eulo RFDS Clinic, Yowah RFDS Clinic and Royal Flying Doctor Service.



## Major industries

Agriculture, forestry & fishing  
Public Admin  
Healthcare  
Education



Agriculture, forestry & fishing generated

**\$44 million**

in 2018/19



Agriculture accounts for

**53.3%**

of registered businesses



## Paroo tourism

**\$9.4 million**

in 2018/19



Currawinya NP, Calgoa Floodplain NP, Yowah opal fields, Yowah artesian baths, Artesian mud baths, Powerhouse Museum Wyandra & more!



## Major employment

Agriculture, forestry & fishing .....41.3%  
Public Admin .....12.1%  
Healthcare .....9.4%  
Education .....7.8%  
Retail .....6.8%

Source: <https://economy.id.com.au/murweh> - Feb 2021



# QUILPIE SHIRE

## Population

778

## Traditional Owners

Mardigan, Boonthamurra, Bidjara, Kullilli and Wongkumara people

## Area

67,500km<sup>2</sup>

## Local businesses

138

## Transport networks



Cooper Dev. Rd, Diamantina Dev. Rd, Quilpie-Adavale Rd, Quilpie-Thargomindah Rd



**Rex Airlines**  
services through to Brisbane & Mount Isa



**Western Freight Network**  
(Quilpie)



**Median house price**  
**\$139,081**    Old median: \$418,290



## Distance from admin centre to...

**Brisbane 955km**

**Toowoomba (WTB) 820km**



### Health services

Quilpie Hospital, RFDS Community Clinic, Quilpie CWAATSICH and Quilpie Pharmacy

### Major industries

- Agriculture, forestry & fishing
- Public Admin
- Transport
- Education

### Agriculture, forestry & fishing generated

**\$63 million**  
in 2018/19

### Quilpie tourism

**\$5.3 million**  
in 2018/19

### Major employment

Agriculture, forestry & fishing	46.9%
Public Admin	11.8%
Transport	8.8%
Education	6.9%
Construction	6.7%

Agriculture accounts for **37%** of registered businesses

Hell Hole Gorge NP, Idalia NP, Mariala NP, Eromanga Natural History Museum, Baldy Top Lookout, The Lake (Quilpie) & more!

Source: <https://economy.id.com.au/murweh> - Feb 2021



**South West Queensland**

**The Cornerstone  
of Opportunities**