
EDWARD RIVER COUNCIL

‘Our Region, Your Say’

Community Consultation Report – **Summary**

October 2021

SEFTONS



SEFTONS



**Edward
River**
COUNCIL

Acknowledgement of Country

Edward River Council and Seftons acknowledge the Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land and pay respect to Elders both past, present and future.

Edward River supports reconciliation by working consistently in partnership with its local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, always ensuring that the process is based on respect, trust and a spirit of openness.

Introduction

The 'Our Region, Your Say' community consultation program has resulted in the production of a comprehensive report prepared by Seftons, which will serve as the primary consultation source for the development of Edward River Council's 10-year Community Strategic Plan.

- 450 people shared what they value about the Edward River Council region.
- Their ideas to address challenges now and in the future are included in the report.
- Community feedback was recorded to identify priorities for the future, and to consider how Council, community, business, and political leaders can work together to ensure the region is a dynamic, prosperous and caring place to live, work and raise a family.

This document is a brief summary of the full report, and the complete report can be viewed at [Our Region, Your Say - Edward River \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au). Reading the full report is recommended as the complete report contains the detail of the community feedback and a much broader range of recommendations.



Key insights from the community feedback

The consultation process was designed to answer a range of questions regarding what the community values, its strengths and the opportunities for improvement.

In summary, the feedback made it clear that:

- Access to better health services is the critical issue that would improve life in the region for many residents, encourage them to stay and attract others
- Further education and training options are needed
- Improved road and footpath maintenance is required
- Kerbside recycling is a priority project
- Attracting businesses and visitors to the area through improved retail and dining options is important
- There is a strong emphasis on capitalising on agriculture i.e., value adding on the products grown in the region, as well as encouraging industrial business and manufacturing to the region.

COMMUNITY



45 Median age
(slight increase)



21% Couples with children
(slight decrease)



\$1082 Median income
(slight increase)

ECONOMY



\$510M Gross Regional Product



970 Number of businesses



4.9% Unemployment

EMPLOYMENT



10% Tertiary qualified



22% Trade qualification certification



Agriculture, fishing, forestry & retail Declining numbers of employees

ENVIRONMENT



888,381ha Land area



50% Better water use efficiency than the global average (for rice)



509ha Parks and reserves

The region's future and potential for growth

The community consultation highlighted first and foremost that it is time for the community to embrace its future – to build on its strengths, actively address needs and gaps and move forward with optimism. There is a consensus that leadership and collaboration can be the catalyst for growth.

Growth targets

The population of the Edward River Council area has remained relatively steady over the previous 20 years. An important question is the region's population trajectory and growth targets.

The community was asked:

- Should we try and grow our population at a very high rate and focus on large transformational projects such as downstream processing of agricultural commodities, aged care, education, or services; or
- Does the community want its region to grow more organically, with a focus on improving its current strengths and expanding existing agriculture, services, businesses, and infrastructure to attract new people?

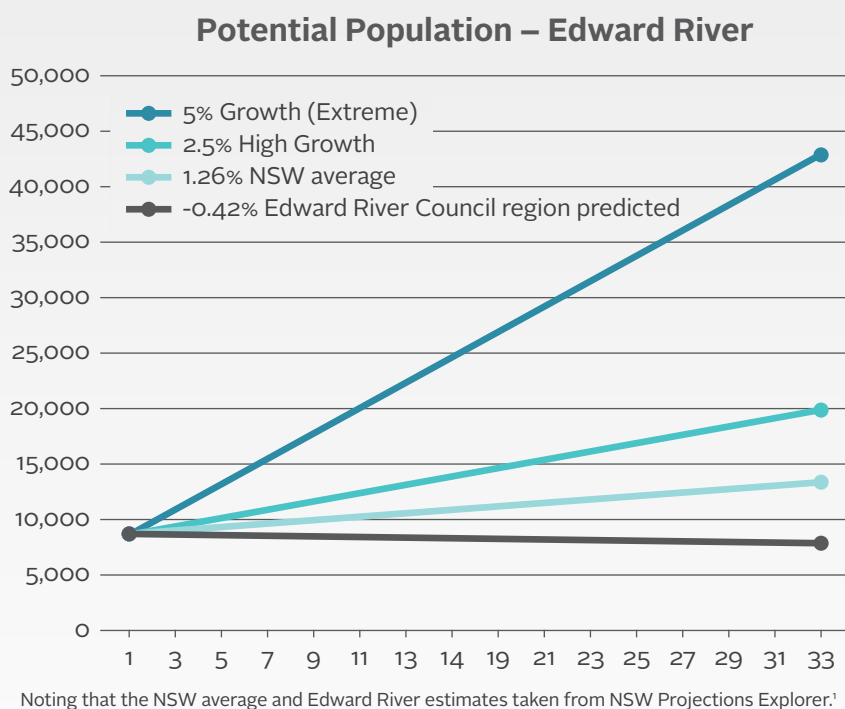


The graph below shows four population pathways for the Edward River Council region.

They are:

- the NSW Government's prediction for the Edward River Council region, this is based on several assumptions¹
- the NSW state average²
- two potential high growth scenarios – 2.5% and 5%. A growth rate of 2.5% is possible and is predicted for some parts of Sydney, for example the Liverpool region – an expanding community – has a predicted population growth rate of over 2.9%. The 5% target is an extreme example used for indicative purposes.

Population pathways



A larger community of 42,800 by 2050 (5% growth):
Requires a community and regional transformation to attract people, industries and investment.

A larger community of 19,800 by 2050 (2.5% growth):
Requires new industries and significant investment. This is aspirational, but recommend to aim for this growth.

A community of 13,300 by 2050 (1.26% NSW avg.):
More organic growth but will still require investment and a strategy. Should be achievable, but recommend to aim for 2.5% growth.

A community of 7800 by 2050 (-0.42%):
NSW Government prediction for Edward River Council region.

Source: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/population/> (click on Edward River Council for predictions and State averages).

¹ Demographic assumptions span three domains: fertility, mortality, and migration:

- how many babies are likely to be born (fertility)
- the age at which people are likely to die (mortality)
- how many people will be moving around inside NSW (intrastate migration)
- how many people will be moving in and out of NSW from other states (interstate migration), and
- how many people will be moving in and out of NSW from overseas (overseas migration).

Source: <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography/Population-projections/Projections>

² Ibid.

Vision, enablers and outcomes

The question of growth covers population, economy and the health and vibrancy of the community.

The vision:

Open and Active

“By 2050, the Edward River region will be bustling: open for business, open to new ideas and attracting new residents and open to new challenges.

We will be active and skilled with healthy people, a connected community, and a diverse growing economy. People will live in the region, and visit, to enjoy the beauty of the natural environment and the vibrancy of the towns and villages.”

Recommendation

Edward River Council should focus on four key enablers to deliver the vision of an open and active community as outlined in the diagram below.

All actions will be designed to help achieve the following outcomes:

- A healthy, socially connected, and resilient community
- A diverse economy that delivers ongoing benefits
- An active community that is 'heard' by political, business and community authorities
- A community that is connected to the world through technology and transport
- Vibrant and creative towns and villages supported by sustainable, quality infrastructure
- A place to visit for nature, food and fun.

These outcomes will only be achieved with a supporting foundation of leadership and collaboration.



Leadership and collaboration

It is critical that Edward River Council lead and collaborate, and that leadership comes from within the community.

- Edward River Council has demonstrated it is committed to actively pursuing strategies for a prosperous future.
- Communication with government, investors, service providers and potential new residents is critical for advocacy to succeed.
- Edward River Council needs to communicate and advocate alongside community leaders, groups and businesses and be united behind a shared long-term vision.



The importance of receiving a fair share of government funding

Edward River Council has recently secured significant state and federal government funding for a wide range of projects in the region. In the last four years more than \$31 million has been obtained for a huge range of significant local projects.

Continuing to secure both State and Federal Government funding is critical to growth and economic development. Edward River Council councillors will need to collaborate with local members of parliament to advocate for new projects as well as advocate directly to governments themselves.



Recommendations

The complete report includes a wide range of recommendations, and these can be viewed here [Our Region, Your Say - Edward River \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/our-region-your-say-edward-river).

These recommendations have been developed based on the feedback received from the community but are proposed without detailed knowledge of budgets or Council's access to funding. There will, no doubt, be the need for Council to prioritise actions based on resources and other considerations.

Some of the key recommendations include:

- **Agriculture:** Form an agriculture advisory group to assist with the implementation of the existing Agribusiness Master Plan and advise on other relevant opportunities and issues.
- **Business development:** Actively encourage new businesses to the region by identifying opportunities and gaps, and directly approaching those investors with business cases and providing specialised support for existing businesses to enable growth.
- **Infrastructure and services:** Introduce kerbside recycling, ensure road and footpath maintenance meets community expectations and continue to invest in the maintenance and improvement of community facilities.
- **Housing:** Encourage housing development by improving consultation on land releases, making more land available, speeding up approvals, review charges to make land release and approvals cheaper. This should include a focus on options for aged care plus more residential options in the CBD.
- **Tourism and business development:** Consider opportunities for the Deniliquin CBD and river frontage to better facilitate developments to revitalise the CBD and use the river frontage for dining, shopping and tourism.
- **Health:** Edward River Council to bring together and work with local health organisations to develop a unified health road map and action plan for the region.
- **Arts, culture and events:** Provide facilities for art displays and cultural classes, and assist with funding or other support for existing events and new initiatives.
- **First Nations:** Work with First Nations peoples and groups in the region to identify the best way to celebrate stories and Culture through events and activities as well as planning and policy.
- **Social connectivity:** Consult more broadly when developing plans, business cases and implementing new initiatives to ensure projects support and assist older people, people with disability and young people.
- **Education:** Consider further investigation into the feasibility of encouraging a university campus to be established Deniliquin and / or a small private high school to provide choice locally.
- **Industrial land precincts:** An overarching whole of region Council plan for business and industrial development is required drawing on existing plans, particularly for the land around the airport.

In addition, ongoing and further advocacy in conjunction with critical, subject matter experts in the community has been identified as essential. Key recommendations include:

- **Health:** Advocate to governments for better health services including access to more health professionals, and improved services at the hospital including paediatric and aged care specialists, plus allied health providers.
- **Telecommunications:** Continue to call for improved internet services and speeds in the region particularly in the villages and surrounding areas.
- **Education:** Continue with plans to work with the school community to develop a proposal for government to invest in the Deniliquin High School to upgrade the science labs, industrial arts/technology centre and hospitality room.
- **Training:** Working with local business, develop a clear rationale for the local TAFE offering more courses that are relevant to the jobs required in the region and commence discussions with TAFE on these proposals.
- **Airport:** Edward River Council to advocate to government to further upgrade the Deniliquin airport.
- **Housing:** Consider inviting the new Regional Housing Taskforce to the region and seek grant funding for critical housing infrastructure for employees in health, education and other essential government services.



How does it all come together?

As the Edward River Council moves towards a more dynamic, economically driven community with the goal of some 14,000 to 20,000 people by 2050, strong leadership will be required to manage the process and meet the goals

It is recommended the existing range of Council plans be consolidated into one overarching 'Open for Business' framework and plan which will have five-year and ten-year targets leading up to 2050, with specific milestones and budget allocations.

Sourcing ongoing State and Federal Government grants will be critical to assist Council to fulfil its vision and goals.

Tight fiscal management with a consolidation of expenditure will also be required to ensure all expenditure is directed towards achieving the overarching strategy.

A key to success will be ongoing and meaningful engagement with the community. Keeping the community informed, collaborating with the community, and drawing on the skills and expertise of key residents will benefit everyone. It will bring the community together working towards, and contributing to, a shared, long-term vision.

To read the Edward River Council
'Our Region, Your Say' Community
Consultation Report in full please go
to: [www.edwardriver.nsw.gov.au/
Council/Integrated-Planning-and-
Reporting/Our-Region-Your-Say](http://www.edwardriver.nsw.gov.au/Council/Integrated-Planning-and-Reporting/Our-Region-Your-Say)

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