



**Edward  
River**  
COUNCIL

## **Advocacy Strategy**





Advocacy

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# ADVOCACY STRATEGY



## › Introduction

Edward River Council was proclaimed on 12 May 2016, following the amalgamation of the former Conargo Shire Council and Deniliquin Council into one strong, cohesive and dynamic organisation.

Edward River Council provides services and support to a community of approximately 9,000 permanent residents across a region covering 8,881 square kilometres, including the town of Deniliquin and the six rural villages of Blighty, Booroorban, Conargo, Mayrung, Pretty Pine and Wanganella.

Over the past six months Council have been undertaking a significant amount of consultation with our community as part of developing the suite of Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. Through this consultation and as now represented in the Edward River 2030 Community Strategic Plan, there were several issues and opportunities identified that are outside the control of Council.

To work towards addressing these issues and accessing these opportunities Council have developed this Advocacy Strategy that will be utilised to work with State and Federal Governments to achieve beneficial outcomes for our community.

The areas of particular interest to our community are:

- Health
- Education
- Water
- Road Safety
- Mobile telecom blackspots
- Economic Development

Each of these areas are covered off in this Strategy with the aim of distilling each of these areas down into an actionable project that Council and the community believe would be beneficial to the Edward River Local Government Area and the Murray region as a whole.

Council look forward to working with the NSW Government and Federal Government to achieve some great outcomes for our community.

## › Economic Development - Deniliquin Airport Expansion

### What is Council requesting?

Council are seeking \$20 million in funding, \$10 million from the Federal Government and \$10 million from the NSW State Government for the construction of a new 2 km by 45 metre runway at the Deniliquin airport to allow for the export of local produce.

### Why?

Regional Australia and the farming sector are transitioning to a new period of trade that will be led by customers seeking fresh high-quality food and other services such as training and tourism. Regions that have vision and provide the enablers to service new markets in Australia, China, Southeast Asia and the Middle East are likely to attract investment. A modern regional airport can act as a catalyst for services that we can identify today – but also prepare a region for services of the future.

Given the future direction of food production, creating a new and longer runway at the Deniliquin Airport will lead to increased commercial activity and unlock investment opportunities that are attracted to the prospect of fresh air freight.

A business case has been completed for the project that demonstrates the creation of the new runway to allow freight-dedicated B737's to export from Deniliquin to the Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport and on to Asia will be the catalyst to drive investment and jobs in the region.

### Anticipated cost

The total project cost is anticipated to be \$20 million, this is made up of:

- Runway construction - \$15.5 million
- Support infrastructure - \$4.5 million

The project will achieve the establishment of the following enabling infrastructure:

- Creation of a 2 km long by 45-metre-wide runway capable of landing B737's
- Development of associated supporting infrastructure including;
  - Upgrade of Saleyard's Road, Deniliquin
  - Creation and extension of Wright Brothers Drive – Creation of additional entry point to airport and opening up access to stage 1 of the Business Park development
  - Upgrade of the electrical capacity of the site to cater for the expanded runway and future development of the business park

- Pre-provisioning work of water and sewer for the Business Park development
- Fencing upgrade and CCTV around the site to meet the needs of the increased site usage and required security
- Upgrade of the airport admin/arrival and departure lounge
- Unlocking land at the Deniliquin Airport to be developed into a Business Park

The Business Case projects the following job creation:

- Creation of 2-4 additional FTE staffing and supporting the airport
- Creation of 73 FTE jobs during the construction process
- Creation of 40 FTE in the undercover vegetable growing industry
- Creation of 40 FTE in the Sheep-Beef cattle farming industry
- Creation of 20 FTE in the Dairy cattle farming industry

## Supporting Strategies

Edward River 2030 Community Strategic Plan

Murray Regional Tourism Destination Management Plan

Murray Region Regional Economic Development Strategy

Deniliquin Airport Expansion Business Case

## › Health – Investment in Deniliquin Hospital

### What is Council requesting?

Investment in the Deniliquin Hospital to upgrade the main entrance and relocate and upgrade the emergency entrance and department.

### Why?

Through the development of the Edward River Council Community Strategic Plan the importance of effective health services was raised as a key community priority. The Deniliquin Hospital is a facility that is appreciated by the local community and is well utilised.

Currently the main entrance to the Deniliquin Hospital acts as both the entrance for all patients and all visitors. This includes any patients that are being taken to the hospital to access the emergency department.

This is a poor outcome for both visitors and patients and reduces the professionalism and confidentiality with which the hospital can operate. There are many instances where patients being taken to the emergency department must be wheeled through a publicly accessible foyer and waiting area prior to being able to access the urgent services they require.

Through upgrading the main entrance to the hospital and relocating the emergency entrance this issue can be resolved and provide a far improved health service to the region.

### Options and Anticipated cost

The proposed option to resolve this issue is to upgrade the existing entrance area and relocate the emergency entrance to a new location. It is expected that this project would cost \$1 million to \$1.5 million to complete.

### Regional Benefits

The Deniliquin Hospital services not just Deniliquin and the Edward River Local Government area, but services a broader catchment area of 20,000-30,000 people. The need to ensure that patients being transported to the hospital, in particular in emergency situations, are able to access the services required promptly and privately is of utmost importance. This proposed upgrade will ensure that the hospital meets this requirement and continues to service and support the community for many years to come.

### Supporting Strategies

Edward River 2030 Community Strategic Plan



## › Education – Upgrading the Deniliquin High School

### What is Council requesting?

Investment in the Deniliquin High School to upgrade the science labs, industrial arts/technology centre and the hospitality room.

### Why?

The Deniliquin High School is a great asset to Deniliquin and the broader region. It currently has over 500 students enrolled and achieves great academic results.

Unfortunately, the school has received limited capital investment over the past 20 years and as a result the school infrastructure isn't competitive against more modern schools located in Moama, Echuca and Ballarat. This has resulted in the number of students attending the High School decreasing from 700 to approx. 510 over several years. This outflow of students to other schools and locations directly impacts on the local Deniliquin economy and community. There have been numerous examples of families leaving the region to take their children to more modern school facilities.

The facilities most in need of upgrade at the Deniliquin High School are the science labs, industrial arts/technology area and the hospitality room. These facilities are all in need of significant investment, if this investment is not delivered then the ability for the school to comply with regulations required for delivering science and industrial arts will be unlikely. The ability for the school to teach these courses is critical as so much of the local employment opportunities within Deniliquin and the broader region are related to agriculture, science and hands-on trades like welding and metal work. The inability to undertake these classes at High School will severely restrict students from being able to undertake the classes that most directly relate to

their ability to get a job locally. The flow-on effects from young people having to leave the region they grow up in to find a job are significant both on the local community and economy.

### Anticipated cost

The expected costs are:

- Science Lab - \$1 million
- Industrial arts/technology - \$1 million
- Hospitality - \$1 million

This \$3 million investment will ensure that the schools poorest facilities are improved and many of the classes that most align with local job opportunities will be maintained and improved upon. Improving the facilities at the School will greatly improve the School's ability to increase enrolments and ensure local kids are getting a local education.

### Supporting Strategies

Edward River 2030 Community Strategic Plan

Deniliquin High School - School Plan

Department of Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022

## › Water – Murray Darling Basin Plan

### What is Council requesting?

Council are advocating for the following:

- There should be no further productive water acquisition through buy-backs from the Southern Basin, the impacts on our communities are far too great
- Greater detail is needed on the benefits, uses, and regulation of environmental water
- All regions across the Murray Darling Basin should have the same standard of compliance, metering, and measurement as the systems currently implemented in the Murray system
- The impacts not just on the agricultural sector, but the flow-on impacts to all other sectors have been significant and the current approach to assessing and understanding these impacts has been poor. This must be improved so we can achieve the triple bottom line outcomes originally envisaged.
- Water is the key economic driver of our region and we have already made a significant contribution to water recovery, we believe no further water should be removed

### Why?

In February 2018 the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) released the Southern Basin Community profiles. Within the Edward River Council Local Government Area, a community profile was completed for Deniliquin. This report found that between 2001 and 2016 the following has taken place:

- Population decreased by 12.2%
- Total workforce decreased by 26.4% (747 FTE)
- Agricultural workforce decreased by 73.1% (791 FTE)
- Agricultural manufacturing workforce increased by 74.7% (70 FTE)
- Non-agricultural private workforce decreased by 16.7% (624 FTE)
- Government services workforces increased by 18.5% (94 FTE)

(Deniliquin Township Community Profile, 2018)

Similar numbers to the Deniliquin Township community profile are seen right across the Southern Basin and Murray-Riverina region. Council acknowledges that across the period of 2001 to 2016 there have been many significant changes to the economic structure of rural and regional communities. In particular, the significant changes being seen in the agricultural sector and the restructuring of this workforce make a contribution to the reduction in population and workforce.

Regardless of these broader impacts, any further reduction in productive water from our region will have significant negative impacts on our entire community, this is not something we can ever support and allow to happen.

### Supporting Strategies

Edward River 2030 Community Strategic Plan

MDBA Community Profiles - Deniliquin Township Community Profile

Basin Plan Socio-economic impacts – Murray Valley – RMCG for the Murray Group

## › Road safety – Truck Stop

### What is Council requesting?

Funding for the development of a truck stop within the Edward River Council Local Government Area. The proposed truck stop would include toilets, showers and be suitable for trucks to stop overnight.

### Why?

The South West region of NSW has seen an increase in road toll from 27 in 2016 to 46 in 2017, this is an increase of 40% which is the largest increase in the State by approx. 25%. Specifically, within the Edward River Local Government area there have been several fatalities related to trucking incidents.

The growth of cotton farming and horticulture and the sustained farming of rice mean that the number of trucks that pass-through Deniliquin and the Edward River region is continuing to increase.

Council have held a forum with a number of local and regional trucking companies and they all agreed that the key risk in the Edward River region is the lack of suitable truck stop facilities. As a result, trucks don't feel comfortable stopping and while not breaking any legislative requirements, are forced to continue driving when they might otherwise wish to stop.

The development of a truck stop will also help to support the local economy by providing a safe place for trucks to park and access local shops and facilities.

The preferred site for this development is at the Deniliquin Saleyards located at Saleyards Road, Deniliquin. The Saleyards is a site that is strategically located and easily accessible by trucks, already has a large amount of hardstand for parking on and is the site of the Deniliquin truck wash. Discussion with trucking companies has confirmed that this is the preferred location.

### Anticipated cost

Located at the Deniliquin Saleyards, the estimated cost is \$500,000. This includes the development and upgrade of:

- Reinforce hardstand area for truck parking
- Upgrade of existing Toilets
- Upgrade of Showers
- Signage
- Upgrade of truck wash (location dependent)
- Upgrade of road access

### Supporting Strategies

Edward River 2030 Community Strategic Plan

# › Mobile telecoms – Blackspot Improvement Program

## What is Council requesting?

Further investment from the Federal and NSW State Governments in removing Mobile Blackspots across regional NSW.

## Why?

The Edward River region agricultural sector produces in excess of \$250 million worth of regional exports annually. This is a significant contributor to the local, regional, State and National economies. In order for these exports to continue to grow and flourish it's critical that improved mobile coverage is provided across the Edward River Local Government area and the broader Murray and Riverina Region.

Increasingly to improve efficiency and effectiveness of farming operations requires the ability to connect to mobile networks. This is due to the growing role that technology is having on farming operations.

Without investment in this critical infrastructure it is likely that the agricultural sector right across regional NSW could become inefficient and uncompetitive against other States and Countries who have access to improved mobile networks. As a result of this improved technology they will be able to enhance efficiency and reduce the competitiveness of NSW agriculture

## Anticipated cost

Council are seeking the NSW Government to establish a suitable funding program for enhancing mobile communications across regional NSW. Council are aware that through the 'Regional Growth Fund' there is a 'Connecting Country Communities' funding program. To date there has been no progress on the delivery of this funding program. Council are requesting that the NSW Government provide suitable funding to this program and commence a process for Councils across regional NSW to be able to apply.

## Supporting Strategies

Edward River 2030 Community Strategic Plan

Edward River Economic Development Strategy

Murray Region Regional Economic Development Strategy



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