

**North West  
Minerals Province**



# A Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province

SUPPORTING STRONG AND PROSPEROUS REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

## **2017–2019 BIENNIAL REVIEW**



**Queensland  
Government**

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## Minister's foreword

I am proud to release *A Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province – Biennial Review 2017–2019* (the biennial review). Since its release in mid-2017, the \$39 million blueprint for the North West Minerals Province has engaged all levels of government, businesses and communities to guide the region's transition to a more sustainable and prosperous future.

It shows that we are delivering on the Palaszczuk Government's commitment to diversify the North West's economy and create jobs. Already we are seeing more interest in the new agricultural opportunities identified by the blueprint as investors recognise the region's potential for high value crops and increased beef production.

There has been substantial progress, with the blueprint helping to leverage a further \$260 million in Queensland Government investment, positioning the region to take full advantage of new opportunities arising as Queensland unites and recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the blueprint's three strategic priorities, we are facilitating resource sector investment to unlock the region's world-class minerals endowment.

Vital industries such as tourism have been hit hard by COVID-19 and the valuable insights into visitation patterns and preferences gained through the blueprint will help operators to capitalise on new and expanded visitor markets as travel resumes.

Through this blueprint we are setting the foundation for long term job creation and business investment to drive economic development planning, business competitiveness and community priorities.

Over the next two years we will continue our work with businesses and communities to deliver the integrated services that enhance livability and prepare the region's workforce for new opportunities as part of a more diversified economy.

Strong partnerships will help us all succeed and I thank community members, implementation partners and the North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee. I look forward to working with you as we continue to deliver on our commitments through the blueprint.

**The Honourable Kate Jones MP**  
**Minister for State Development,**  
**Tourism and Innovation**



Image: Shutterstock

# Introduction and context

The Department of State Development, Tourism and Innovation (DSDTI) is leading the whole-of-government implementation of *A Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province* (the blueprint).

Released in 2017 and supported by \$39 million, the blueprint focuses a suite of actions around 10 local government areas (see figure 1). These actions are structured across three strategic priorities:

1. facilitating continued resources sector development
2. diversifying the regional economy and creating employment opportunities
3. working with businesses and communities to deliver integrated and appropriate services.

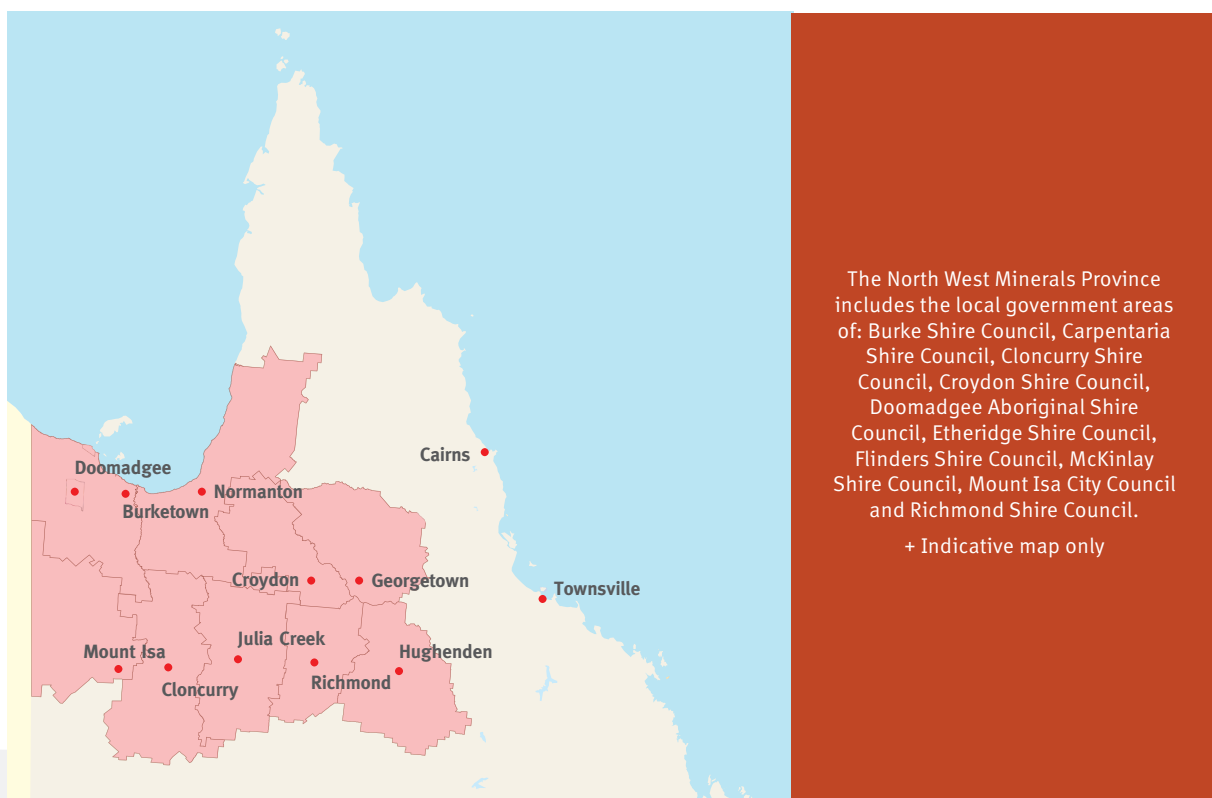
At the halfway point of a four-year implementation period, the blueprint is delivering the

government's vision of strong and prosperous industries, businesses and communities in the North West Minerals Province.

This document highlights the significant work progressed across each of the blueprint's strategic priorities as well other actions undertaken by government to support the province. The blueprint aligns with the state government's priorities for advancing Queensland and provides a strong foundation to galvanise integrated and ongoing partnerships with commonwealth, state and local governments, business, industry and communities.

Significant consultation has occurred with key stakeholders throughout the blueprint's implementation. Consultation identified a number of regional challenges that require further investigation. These investigations will inform the focus and priorities for the remaining two years of the blueprint's implementation.

Figure 1: *A Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province* geographic area



# Queensland Government investment

Since 2017 the Queensland Government has identified and invested in a number of strategic initiatives that reinforce the blueprint's implementation. Total new funding for the region during this period exceeds \$260 million across transport, energy, tourism, community and economic development.

## Priority investments

### Transport

The Queensland Government has committed \$110 million over four years to improve the North West Minerals Province supply chain right through to the Port of Townsville. This targeted supply chain strategy particularly supports mining and exploration activities, and efficient freight movement.

This investment includes \$80 million over four years for the Mount Isa Line Incentive Scheme to reduce rail access costs to improve the competitiveness of the Mount Isa line and drive a shift from road to rail.

The strategy includes in-principle support for the development of a new common user multi modal container terminal at the Port of Townsville. This terminal will improve the efficiency of freight movement across the network. The strategy includes a contribution of \$30 million to the terminal, with the Port of Townsville providing a further \$18 million.

### Energy

An energy package worth up to \$132 million will support the connection of Genex's Kidston hydro-electric project to the national energy market via a 186 kilometre transmission line. The Queensland Government's contribution is subject to agreement on final conditions with Genex to ensure value for money for taxpayers and the timely delivery of the Kidston project to support jobs in North Queensland.

In addition, \$1.18 million has been invested to progress feasibility studies on the CopperString 2.0 proposal.

### Economic diversification

Economic diversification of the region is being supported through direct funding and competitive grant programs.

Support for priority sectors is being delivered through grant programs including:

- Building our Regions – approximately \$9 million in funding has been allocated to North West local governments over four rounds
- Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program – approximately \$5.4 million in funding over two rounds has advanced local government projects in North West Queensland
- Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund – approximately \$2.04 million in funding to North West Queensland local governments
- Outback Tourism Events Fund – supporting 12 events across North West Queensland in 2019–2020



- Jobs and Regional Growth Fund – one project supported
- Works for Queensland program 2017–2019 – approximately \$27.98 million in funding across North West Queensland local governments to support key infrastructure projects.

Many of these projects, particularly those in agriculture and tourism, directly support the objectives of the blueprint's *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy* (NWQEDS). A detailed breakdown of projects funded through grant programs is available in Appendix 1.

## Case study – Richmond agricultural precinct

The Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program (MIPP) is a \$30 million infrastructure planning program that supports the development of a robust project pipeline by enabling projects to be matured from conceptually good ideas into solid proposals. This program is supporting economic diversification in the region with over \$1 million in funding for the Richmond Shire Council to support detailed investigations into establishing an irrigated agricultural precinct.

The Richmond agricultural precinct is a proposal to create 8000 hectares of irrigated cropping land in the shire. Richmond Shire's success with small-scale irrigated cropping has provided a pilot to understand opportunities for suitable crop types and market niches. Sustainable water capture, storage and irrigated farming have the potential to support economic diversification in the region, supporting employment growth, infrastructure and funding additional commercial operations.

Detailed investigations to support the agricultural precinct include identification of suitable land, design of water storage, irrigation facilities and supporting infrastructure. Richmond Shire Council estimates the project has the potential to create up to 384 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs during the precinct's three-year construction phase, with 230 FTE ongoing operational jobs.

This work is further supported in the NWQEDS. It identifies agriculture as a key opportunity to strengthen the regional economy. The strategy sets a forward program of cropping trials to support regional transformation.

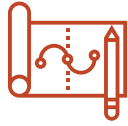
## Remote Area Boards

Remote Area Boards (RABs) are driving economic priorities forward through development activities. RABs are recognised as playing a strong enabling role in delivering economic projects and collaborating on strategic priorities in remote areas. The North West Minerals Province encompasses the areas of two RABs: Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Zone (MITEZ) and Gulf Savannah Development (GSD). Between 2016 and 2019, \$1 million in funding was allocated to MITEZ and GSD to advance approved projects.

## Disaster relief

In response to the 2019 monsoon trough, over \$91 million in recovery grants were distributed by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority. These grants assisted over 2170 primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.

# Progress highlights



**95% OF BLUEPRINT**  
actions complete or on track



Facilitated **26 WORKSHOPS**  
to build entrepreneurial capacity



The blueprint's Youth Employment Program has helped to place **50 INDIGENOUS** candidates into work



**24** projects supported through the **\$3.6 MILLION** collaborative exploration initiative



**8 MINING PROPONENTS** assisted with local and regional supply chain opportunities



**OVER 100 STAKEHOLDERS** contributed to the direction of the blueprint at the North West Futures Forum in Mount Isa



Partnerships with **5 LEADING RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS** and the CSIRO to derive new mineral exploration and extraction techniques



**10 LOCAL ACTION PLANS** under development to support North West Queensland communities



**3 TRANSFORMATIVE CROPS** identified for agriculture in North West Queensland



**5 REGIONAL MEETINGS** of the North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee

## \$33.3 million North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy



**\$14.5 MILLION** towards a drone testing facility at Cloncurry



**\$14.1 MILLION** to deliver a New Economy Minerals package



**\$1.77 MILLION** to support tourism development



**\$1.28 MILLION** towards agricultural diversification



**\$1.65 MILLION** to drive economic development, business competitiveness and strong communities

# Regional confidence



## 15 MILE IRRIGATED AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Investment: \$47 million  
 Jobs: 5 during construction, 77 initial development and 165 full production  
 Status: Approved July 2019  
 Expected completion 2020



## KIDSTON PUMPED STORAGE HYDRO PROJECT

Investment: \$330 million  
 Jobs: 370 during construction (over 3.5 years), 9 operational  
 Status: Approved April 2019  
 Expected completion 2022

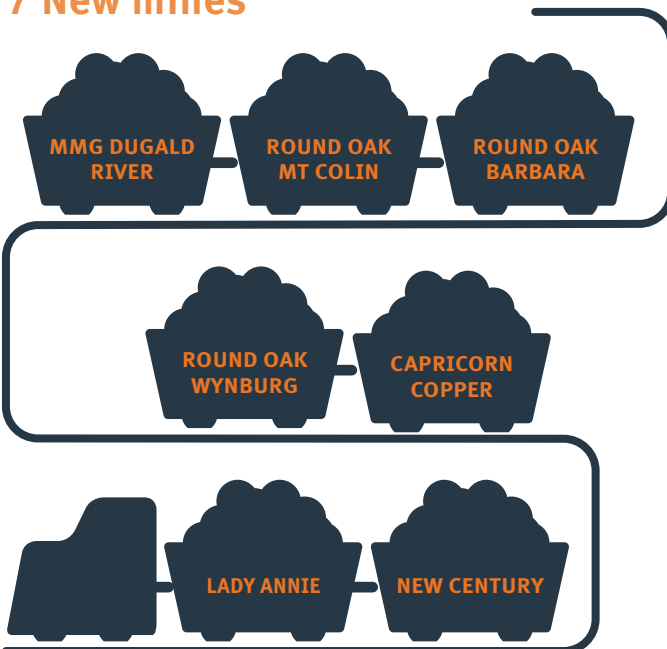


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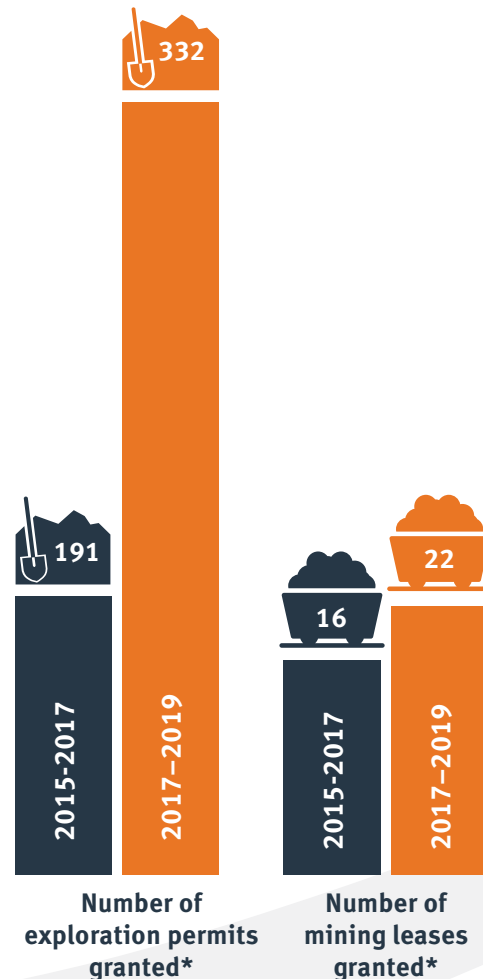
Investment: \$1.5 billion  
 Jobs: Up to 400 during construction, 30 operational  
 Status: Environmental impact statement active  
 Expected completion 2024

All projects are declared/approved by the Coordinator General under the provisions of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*. Total investment and estimated job figures provided by project proponents.

## 7 New mines



- Total capex of at least \$1.2 billion
- Approximately 1330 jobs during construction
- Approximately 1105 operational jobs



\* Approximately figures for the blueprint's 10 local government areas in addition to Diamantina, Boulia and Winton Shires as per the Strategic Resources Exploration Program (SPREP). Figures do not include permit/ lease renewals.




# Progress snapshot

The following tables summarise the significant progress made in delivering blueprint actions across the three strategic priorities.

## Strategic priority 1: Facilitating continued resources sector development








Key deliverable	Status	Lead
Deliver minerals and natural gas geoscience exploration programs, develop new geoscience data systems and promote the region's investment potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pre-competitive geoscientific data</li> <li>• Establish a Minerals Collaborative Exploration Program</li> <li>• Develop new geological databases</li> <li>• Initiate gas exploration in proximity to the province</li> <li>• Promote the investment potential of the province</li> </ul>		DNRME
Clarify and streamline approvals processes for explorers		DNRME
Investigate opportunities to re-process waste materials from tailings		DSDTI
Facilitate current projects in the investment pipeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide targeted support for resources projects</li> <li>• Leverage common user infrastructure opportunities</li> </ul>		DSDTI
Support applied research and development in the province		DNRME

### Key

-  complete or on track
-  underway, behind schedule
-  critical issue

<b>DAF</b>	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
<b>DATSIP</b>	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
<b>DCDSS</b>	Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors
<b>DNRME</b>	Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
<b>DSDTI</b>	Department of State Development, Tourism and Innovation
<b>DTMR</b>	Department of Transport and Main Roads

## Strategic priority 2: Diversifying the regional economy and creating employment opportunities

Key deliverable	Status	Lead
Develop a regional economic diversification strategy for North West Queensland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an infrastructure audit</li> <li>Scope opportunities for increasing agricultural production</li> <li>Investigate tourism opportunities</li> <li>Improve the digital presence of regional start-ups and established businesses</li> </ul>		DSDTI
Support key enabling infrastructure		DTMR
Continue to support the development of the Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline		DSDTI
Support opportunities to leverage agriculture research projects		DAF
Build entrepreneurial capacity for existing and emerging sectors		DSDTI
Optimise employment opportunities—facilitate access to training and development opportunities		DSDTI
Prioritise youth employment		DCDSS and DATSIP

## Strategic priority 3: Working with businesses and communities to deliver integrated and appropriate services

Key deliverable	Status	Lead
Establish a new regionally based strategic blueprint implementation team		DSDTI
Convene a North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee		DSDTI
Host a North West Futures Forum		DSDTI
Develop a North West community strategy		DCDSS
Continue to improve integrated regional service delivery		DSDTI and DCDSS



Image: DSDTI

# Progress timeline

## 2017

### July

Launch of *A Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Mineral Province*

### August

Hyperspectral core logging service trial completed in Mount Isa

### November

State government election

### December

Collaborative Exploration Initiative round 1

## 2018

### January

Regionally based implementation team established

### March

North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting in Mount Isa

### May

North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting in Cloncurry  
New Code and Conduct template for negotiating land access released

### August

North West Futures Forum and launch of *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Directions Statement*

### October

North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting in Burketown

### November

Mining equipment, technology and services (METS) Comminution forum convened in Mount Isa

### December

Collaborative Exploration Initiative round 2

## 2019

### February

Monsoon trough

### March

Release of Mine Tailings Report  
Completion of the Common User Infrastructure Audit

### April

North West Queensland Digital Visitor Survey completed

### May

MineX mining expo held in Mount Isa  
*Draft North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy* released for public consultation

### June

North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting in Mount Isa  
Release of *North West Agricultural Strategy*

### August

*North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy* released

### November

North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting in Richmond  
Release of the *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy Implementation Plan 2019–2021*

### December

Collaborative Exploration Initiative round 3



Image: DNRME



# Strategic priorities

## Strategic priority 1: Facilitating continued resources sector development

Strategic priority 1 reflects and supports the regional strengths of the resources industry and seeks to 'facilitate continued resources sector development'. The blueprint committed \$30.9 million to deliver these medium-term actions. Advances in global manufacturing, energy generation, transport and construction industries will continue to drive demand for the North West Mineral Province's resource endowment.

While resource sector development in the North West Minerals Province slowed for a number of years, the work occurring through the blueprint is helping to stimulate a new phase of exploration and investment. The program of delivery has substantially progressed in the first two years of operation, supporting the outcomes of the strategic priority.

A detailed description of deliverables under each action is outlined below.

We are delivering minerals and natural gas geoscience exploration programs, new geoscience data systems and promoting the region's investment potential.

Through the Geological Survey of Queensland (GSQ) we are delivering a four-year, \$27.12 million Strategic Resources Exploration Program aimed at helping industry realise the prospectivity of the province.

### Improve pre-competitive geoscientific data

The Strategic Resources Exploration Program supports a number of transformative initiatives designed to enable industry exploration success. These include:

- Advancing the concept of data-driven exploration, wherein the entire ecosystem of geoscience and exploration data collection, management and use is being modernised to enable industry exploration success.
- Central to data driven exploration is modernisation of Queensland's geoscience data curation system. This is underway and due to be completed by December 2020. Currently in a pilot phase, the new system will provide Queensland with a world-leading data repository enabling modern data analytics such as machine learning and artificial intelligence applications to advance exploration. This supports industry to develop data skills and exploration capability.
- In collaboration with the Bryan Research Centre of The University of Queensland (UQ) we are developing world-leading 'deposit atlases'. For the first time, key information relating to deposits in the North West is provided in a digital form, helping to ensure that past investment in research and exploration is put to work helping make new discoveries. This ground-breaking work has been well received by explorers at workshops delivered in Brisbane, Mount Isa and Townsville.
- The development and publication of a geochemistry toolkit and deposit atlases that provide industry with a greater understanding of the chemical composition and characteristics of specific ore bodies in the North West. This information assists industry to develop improved sampling methods and analytic techniques for deeper deposits in both outcropping and covered areas. The development of the full suite of deposits atlases will continue to 2021.

- Industry now has a greater understanding of the highly prospective areas east of Mount Isa and Cloncurry. GSQ has completed and released three radiometric and magnetic surveys that provide a new source of geophysical and geochemical data at deeper depths. These include:
  - Cloncurry South airborne radiometric and magnetic survey
  - Cloncurry North airborne radiometric and magnetic survey
  - Gregory/Lawn Hill air assisted gravity survey.

The data released has been well received, with 500 downloads of the Cloncurry North survey data in the first two weeks of release, helping to support industry's exploration efforts and focus capital and resources where there are the greatest chances of success.

Over the next two years, additional exploration will be completed through the:

- Central Isa airborne radiometric and magnetic survey
- Western Succession Airborne electromagnetic survey
- Cloncurry Extension Magnetotelluric survey.

New geological databases have improved the way industry accesses data, enabling large complex datasets to be shared in a consistent format, facilitating a more targeted approach to on-ground exploration.

### **Establish a Minerals Collaborative Exploration Initiative**

Rounds 1 and 2 of the \$3.6 million Collaborative Exploration Initiative (CEI) have supported 24 projects in the province. This directly supports explorers to work in new frontiers, using novel techniques. The program has been highly successful both in terms of actual discovery and exploration sector maturation. This initiative is limited to explorers in the province.

### **Case study – Collaborative Exploration Initiative**

The CEI has contributed to the discovery and delineation of major new deposits such as Aeon Metals' Walford Creek copper-cobalt resource. The deposit ranks among Australia's largest cobalt resources and is well positioned to help meet growing global demand for this 'battery mineral'.

The value of CEI grants in supporting exploration sector maturation is evidenced by recent market movements by recipient companies such as Hammer Metals and Red Metals. The former has entered commercial agreements to add their key prospects in the province to Canadian company Global Energy Metals Corporation's cobalt portfolio. Red Metals has entered into a cooperative exploration agreement with Oz Minerals, with the CEI funding support creating commercial leverage to help enable collaborative works of this nature.

## Develop new geological databases

A steady stream of new data acquisition projects, primarily geophysics and geochemistry, are providing explorers with an enhanced range of new, high-quality datasets. Explorers are particularly interested in the expanding coverage of the breakthrough technology of Magnetotellurics (MT) geophysics which is enabling vision of deposits under deep cover. GSQ is recognised for its leadership in moving the MT geophysics field from an emergent technology into what is becoming a routine but highly valued tool and data set.

The completion of a six-month hyperspectral core logging services trial in Mount Isa with Australian company Corescan was well received by industry. This trial applies advanced analytical capability to maximise the value of exploration samples. The logging program was supplemented by workshops delivered by leading experts in the field of hyperspectral data analysis, to develop industry's skills in the use and interpretation of data.

These data modernisation actions will put Queensland in a world-leading position in the way geoscience and exploration data is managed and used.

## Initiate gas exploration in proximity to the province

Preliminary gas exploration in the South Nicholson Basin, Isa Super Basin and Georgina Basin is well progressed. Work to support gas exploration has included:

- a 2D seismic program across the South Nicholson Basin
- surveying the basin depth and extent.

## Promote the investment potential of the province

In association with other Australian jurisdictions, a regular program of investment promotion and attraction activities in key North Asian destinations (China, Japan and Korea in particular) and North America (Canada) is being undertaken. The programs, which host customers, investors and explorers with support from trade and investment agencies, highlight the competitive advantages of investing in Queensland. These advantages include:

- world-class mineral endowment and programs of government support to help enable industry success in its exploration and development
- the strength of the infrastructure network
- credentials as a reliable supplier, which is becoming of critical importance as resource security becomes an increasing concern for many customers
- capability of the Queensland and Australian research and development sector in aiding industry success
- strength of Queensland's regulatory framework which is helping to establish the state as an ethical supply destination for minerals and energy.

The transformation of government-led exploration and geoscience in Queensland is being recognised internationally, as evidenced by:

- Anglo American Minerals acquisition of approximately 11,000 square kilometres of exploration area in the province
- Rio Tinto, Oz Minerals, South 32 and other major explorers re-entry to Queensland seeking large-scale base metals prospects.

This transformation is being delivered through wide engagement, both locally and internationally, with minerals industry proponents, offering case management support services, and working to connect international investors with Queensland project proponents. Examples include:

- support for METS through a number of events including:
  - the Comminution Forum which attracted 45 delegates to Mount Isa on 14 November 2018. This event provided for knowledge transfer and led to a number of companies networking and identifying opportunities to work together
  - MineX 2019, one of the largest mining expos in eastern Australia, attracting both national and international exhibitors to Mount Isa. The event was held over three days from 30 May through to 1 June 2019 and included an industry breakfast with over 74 participants who heard presentations on advancements in mining and Industry 4.0.

### **Clarify and streamline approvals processes for explorers**

A new standardised Code and Conduct template has been developed for use by land holders and resource companies during the negotiation of land access agreements. Developed in close consultation with land owners and industry, this updated template addresses explorer and land owner concerns regarding the delays and costs associated with protracted negotiations.

### **Investigate opportunities to re-process waste materials from tailings**

An investigation into opportunities to re-process waste materials from mine tailings has been completed and shared with industry. The investigation looked at low grade mineral ores left behind in former or long-established mines and assessed their viability in terms of new opportunities for development.

## **Case study – New Century Zinc Mine**

The recommencement of operations at Century Zinc Mine (Lawn Hill) is an excellent example of the potential for secondary prospectivity in the North West Minerals Province.

The project was facilitated through the Resources Regional Development Framework that enabled the deferral of royalty payments for up to three years. The project includes over 260 construction and 240 operational jobs, recommissioning associated infrastructure and supporting the continued dredging of Karumba Port.

### **Facilitate current projects in the pipeline**

Through targeted support for key resource projects including Multicom, MMG and Centrex, we have assisted proponents to identify relevant decision makers, stakeholders, and potential investment partners in each stage of the project development process. This support has reduced the time between business case and approvals, helping to bring projects to development earlier. Facilitation assistance extends to identifying local suppliers and integrating them into new supply chains.

### **Leverage common user infrastructure opportunities**

A Common User Infrastructure Audit was completed and the findings are under consideration. We are working with proponents to identify common user infrastructure opportunities to minimise the high capital costs associated with the establishment of large-scale resource and agricultural operations in remote areas of the province.

### **Support applied research and development in the province**

By applying the combined capabilities of leading research institutions we are continuing to derive new insights into exploration and extraction technologies. Projects completed or in place that focus on the province are being undertaken by:

- The University of Queensland
- James Cook University
- Queensland University of Technology
- University of Adelaide
- University of Tasmania
- CSIRO Minerals
- CSIRO Data61.

Workshops that support industry development continue to be well attended and included:

- Knowledge Transfer workshops – Brisbane, Mount Isa and Townsville, 2018–19, with sessions to continue during the remaining two years of the blueprint
- Data-driven exploration – transforming resources exploration and appraisal in Queensland – Brisbane, 2018
- Data and Research Innovations for Exploration workshop – Mount Isa, 2019
- Digging Deeper industry engagement events – Brisbane, ongoing.



## Strategic priority 2: Diversifying the regional economy and creating employment opportunities

Diversifying the regional economy and adjusting to global changes is critical to securing the province's long-term prosperity. Through strategic priority 2 of the blueprint, \$5.5 million was allocated to actions that will help to broaden and strengthen the province's economic base so that local communities remain strong, sustainable and less vulnerable to external factors such as global commodity prices and fluctuating resources investment.

While mining and mineral processing remains the mainstay of the province's economy, substantial work has occurred through the blueprint to identify new diversification opportunities in other sectors such as agriculture, tourism and more widely across business and industry. Through the actions of strategic priority 2, the blueprint is helping to drive long-term step change across the province's economy.

A detailed description of deliverables under each action is outlined below.

### Deliver a regional economic diversification strategy for North West Queensland

A key action of strategic priority 2, the *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy (NWQEDS)* was released in 2019. This strategy identifies four key sectors: resources, agriculture, tourism, and business and industry. These sectors offer significant potential in terms of improving the resilience and sustainability of the North West's economy over the long-term. Informed through extensive community and stakeholder consultation, development of the strategy has seen the following documents released:

- *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Directions Statement* – released August 2018. This document outlined early diversification opportunities and helped to guide consultation at the North West Futures Forum.
- *Draft North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy* – released May to July 2019 for stakeholder consultation. Feedback on the draft informed the final diversification strategy and its funding priorities.
- *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy* – released August 2019 with an initial funding commitment of \$1.25 million.
- *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy Implementation Plan 2019–2021* – released November 2019 and supported by \$33.3 million in funding.

The NWQEDS outlines an agreed set of regional priorities. It provides a framework through which to leverage other government support programs, such as Building our Regions and the Jobs and Regional Growth Fund, to progress key projects.

### Complete an infrastructure audit

We have undertaken an audit of existing physical infrastructure in the province to facilitate economic diversification opportunities. The assessment focused on water storage, energy, communications technology, transport and mineral processing infrastructure and was undertaken as a component of the Common User Infrastructure Audit.

## Scope opportunities for increasing agricultural production

The *North West Agricultural Strategy and Implementation Plan* was developed in close consultation with key regional stakeholders and supply chain partners. The strategy focuses on opportunities to enhance agricultural production and employment in North West Queensland and identified:

- the top 20 agricultural commodity and product-based opportunities, based on the region's competitive advantages, production capabilities and market demands. From these, three transformative opportunities were assessed in detail – sesame, mung bean and shea nut.
- interrelated 'horizons' to support future development, diversification and growth in the region's agricultural sector and associated supply. These are:
  - growing the region's existing cattle production sector
  - supporting emerging agricultural projects and products
  - developing new dryland and irrigated agricultural options and products not traditionally grown in North West Queensland.
- that with targeted investment and effort alignment, North West Queensland has the potential to create up to \$1.35 billion in new agricultural growth, with up to 4800 new jobs.

In order to realise the opportunities, create change and unlock the region's potential, there is a critical need for stakeholders, investors and all levels of government to come together and work collaboratively. Key initiatives being progressed through the NWQEDS Implementation Plan include:

- targeted investment in new catalytic projects that take the analysis from the *North West Agricultural Strategy* and use the momentum and interest created to progress fodder production and cropping trials, enhance enabling supply chain infrastructure and leverage supporting research and development effort
- establishment of the Agricultural Development and Investment Group, currently chaired and facilitated by DNRME, to oversee project facilitation and coordination.

These projects will build understanding of intensified farming systems nuanced to the unique and variable environment of the North West, build technical capability and ultimately drive investor confidence.

Our partnership with the Northern and Central Queensland Agricultural Supply Chain Alliance, currently chaired and facilitated by the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA), is helping to 'de-risk' agricultural development opportunities to support diversification and growth across northern Australia, including of North West Queensland.

Complementing this effort is a range of allied research and development project investments in the North West investigating:

- fodder production trials to value add to the region's extensive grazing sector
- dryland and irrigated cropping trials (pulse/grain and broadacre)
- agricultural supply chain improvements and efficiencies
- investor identification and attraction mechanisms, both domestic and international.



## Investigate tourism opportunities

The completion of the *North West Queensland Digital Visitor Survey* has provided regional insights into the number of tourists, their profiles and visitation patterns. The survey outlines valuable, regionally specific data that is being used to support the development of the tourism industry, including marketing material and the sourcing of project funds.

The survey identified a number of opportunities which were incorporated into the NWQEDS and its implementation plan.

## Improve the digital presence and productivity of regional start-ups and established businesses

We delivered nine innovation and two digital capability workshops throughout the region. This activity is ongoing.

## Support key enabling infrastructure

Building on the vision of the blueprint we are delivering significant investment to support the region. Key highlights include:

- \$50 million in additional funding to the Mount Isa rail line committed as part of the 2017 budget, taking the total investment in the line to \$380 million. Repairs and maintenance support the long-term suitability of the rail line, reduce road maintenance costs, and potentially reduce road related fatalities on the Mount Isa Freight Network
- \$10 million (joint contribution from the State and Commonwealth Governments) to preserve the Townsville Eastern Access Rail Corridor (TEARC).

## Case study – Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline

We provided facilitation services to Jemena to support the development of the Northern Gas Pipeline. The 622 kilometre pipeline includes 141 kilometres in Queensland between Mount Isa and the Queensland–Northern Territory border. This project supported local suppliers with 107 contracts for Queensland-based companies, 17 of these going to Indigenous companies. A total of 431 Queenslanders were employed during construction, with 129 jobs awarded to Mount Isa locals and 115 jobs awarded to Indigenous workers. Training programs included two apprenticeships that were awarded to Mount Isa based Indigenous trainees.

The pipeline provides ongoing benefits including reliable supply of competitively priced gas. This is critical to the viability of our manufacturing industries. The training provided by Jemena has resulted in a more skilled workforce.



## **Build entrepreneurial capacity for existing and emerging sectors**

We assisted eight mining proponents with local and regional supply chain opportunities. We also delivered 26 workshops in the region during 2018–19. These workshops targeted business operators and local governments and attracted a total of 104 people reflecting a 99 per cent attendance rate.

Session topics included:

- workplace health and safety (five sessions)
- mentoring for growth (two sessions)
- innovation (nine sessions)
- digital capability (two sessions)
- DNRME resource information (two sessions)
- AusIndustry workshop
- capability and top 10 tips (four sessions)
- MineX 2019.

Of the businesses who attended workshops, 26 successfully secured works with mining companies.

We are supporting proponents by mapping grant programs to help identify potential funding streams. Proponents also receive advice on their funding applications helping to improve their eligibility and success.

## **Optimise employment opportunities—facilitate access to training and development opportunities**

We are supporting access to training and development opportunities by working with the North West Queensland Regional Employment Network. This group shares information and ideas and plans collaborative events and activities. We are also working in partnership with local registered training organisations, resource and mining companies and other employers to improve the workforce through investment in skills development.

Service mapping is also underway to identify overlaps and to help identify opportunities for new or more targeted services to meet the region's future workforce needs.

## Prioritise youth employment

Through targeted support and a range of coordinated services, including one-on-one assistance to Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, service mapping across all agencies, and career expos, the regionally-based strategic blueprint implementation team has achieved positive outcomes for youth employment. Achievements included:

- 1126 students engaged through the youth employment programs
- 86 students assisted with job applications and interview skills via the Youth Employment Program
- 42 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully gained employment through the Youth Employment Program, up from 20 students in the first year of augmented resources
- three targeted exhibitions – the Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Doomadgee careers expos
- two targeted programs – Meet the Graduate program and Youth Employment program. The Meet the Graduate program attracted 21 exhibitors from industries including mining companies, national and local transport companies, locally based business, Australian Defence Recruiting and tertiary education institutions. The event attracted positive feedback from exhibitors and students.

In 2018, the Youth Navigator (a member of the strategic blueprint implementation team) undertook regular visits with schools to engage youth. A jobs board was created to promote training and employment opportunities at career expos in both Mount Isa and Cloncurry.

### Case study – Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation spinifex project

The Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation in Camooweal is refining its spinifex harvesting operations and developing a pilot processing facility, thanks to support from the Queensland Government's Jobs and Regional Growth Fund.

The project initially created 11 Indigenous jobs. There may be opportunity to expand to commercial operations once the applications for spinifex are fully realised. Spinifex has the potential for high-value applications in the latex, paper, plastics and rubber industries.

The Traditional Owners have collaborated for many years with The University of Queensland to help uncover the unique properties of spinifex that has in turn led to Australia's most advanced nanocellulose technology.

The Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation hopes the project's success will allow it to act as a model that can be replicated across remote and regional areas enabling other Indigenous communities to benefit from the harvesting and processing of spinifex.

## Strategic priority 3: Working with businesses and communities to deliver integrated and appropriate services

Strategic priority 3 of the blueprint provides for strategic coordination of community and government service delivery. A funding allocation of \$2.6 million will enhance the province's capacity to adapt and evolve with the changing social and economic landscape as the province transitions towards a more diverse economic base.

A detailed description of each action's deliverables is outlined below.

### Establish a new regionally based strategic blueprint implementation team

The multidisciplinary implementation team was established in late 2017, bringing together economic, community and Indigenous experts to drive blueprint actions. This team works across agencies to coordinate and deliver actions including:

- project facilitation services
- economic development planning both at the regional and local levels
- local consultation on various elements of the blueprint
- coordination of agency activities
- development of supply chains supporting the resources industry
- training and capacity building workshops for business on topics such as digital readiness and tendering
- engagement and support for Indigenous youth to identify career pathways and improve workforce engagement
- improved understanding of the employment and training environment.

### Convene a North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The North West Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) has met five times in various regional locations. The SAC brings together a broad range of stakeholders from the region to consider the ongoing implementation of the blueprint and provide advice on the development of actions.

### Host a North West Futures Forum

The North West Futures Forum was held in Mount Isa in August 2018. It was decided to hold the forum in 2018 to enable the outcomes from a range of blueprint actions to be discussed. The Honourable Cameron Dick MP, then Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning led a range of speakers who addressed economic opportunities, the future direction of the region and the implementation of the blueprint.

Executives from departments tasked with key blueprint deliverables identified progress to date.

Presentations were also provided from industry bodies and consultancies undertaking supporting studies. The forum saw the release of the *North West Queensland Economic Diversification Directions Statement*. This document guided discussions on the development of the NWQEDS. The regional priorities and opportunities that were identified were incorporated into the final strategy and associated implementation plan.

The forum attracted over 100 attendees from a broad range of stakeholder groups including resource companies, explorers, economic development agencies, local governments, community organisations, traditional owners and employment agencies. Through interactive sessions, stakeholders provided feedback on work undertaken to date and helped to direct the future implementation of blueprint actions.

### **Develop a North West Community Strategy**

Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) was appointed in November 2018 to lead development of the community strategy and action plans for each of the 10 local government areas in the province. To date QCOSS has:

- undertaken a literature review
- commenced community consultation to inform the strategy's development
- engaged with local councils, community organisations, businesses and local citizens across the province to progress the development of the local action plans.

A community reference group has been established to support development of the strategy and local action plans. The group met three times to discuss and provide local intelligence regarding this work.

The strategy will be closely aligned with, and leverage community recovery efforts being undertaken as part of the 2019 monsoon event.

The Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) has provided support to communities impacted by the 2019 monsoon event through:

- embedding of five Community Development Officers in the local governments of McKinlay, Richmond, Cloncurry, Flinders and Carpentaria to develop and implement a Local Recovery and Resilience Action Plan
- the Flexible Funding Grant, to be administered over two years across all impacted local government areas to support locally led projects that assist in recovery and/or build resilience. The initial round of funding has been approved and includes projects that align with work being delivered through the blueprint. Projects include:
  - showgrounds in Burke and Winton
  - grazing forum in Cape York
  - a Fit 4 Rural Futures camp
  - resilience project for the Southern Gulf beef industry
  - a recovery well initiative at the Mount Isa School of the Air
  - an aviation pod in McKinlay.

### **Continue to improve integrated regional service delivery**

This medium-term action has commenced. Through ongoing engagement with local government and RABs, DSDTI is aligning economic development outcomes across the region with the NWQEDS.

# Conclusion

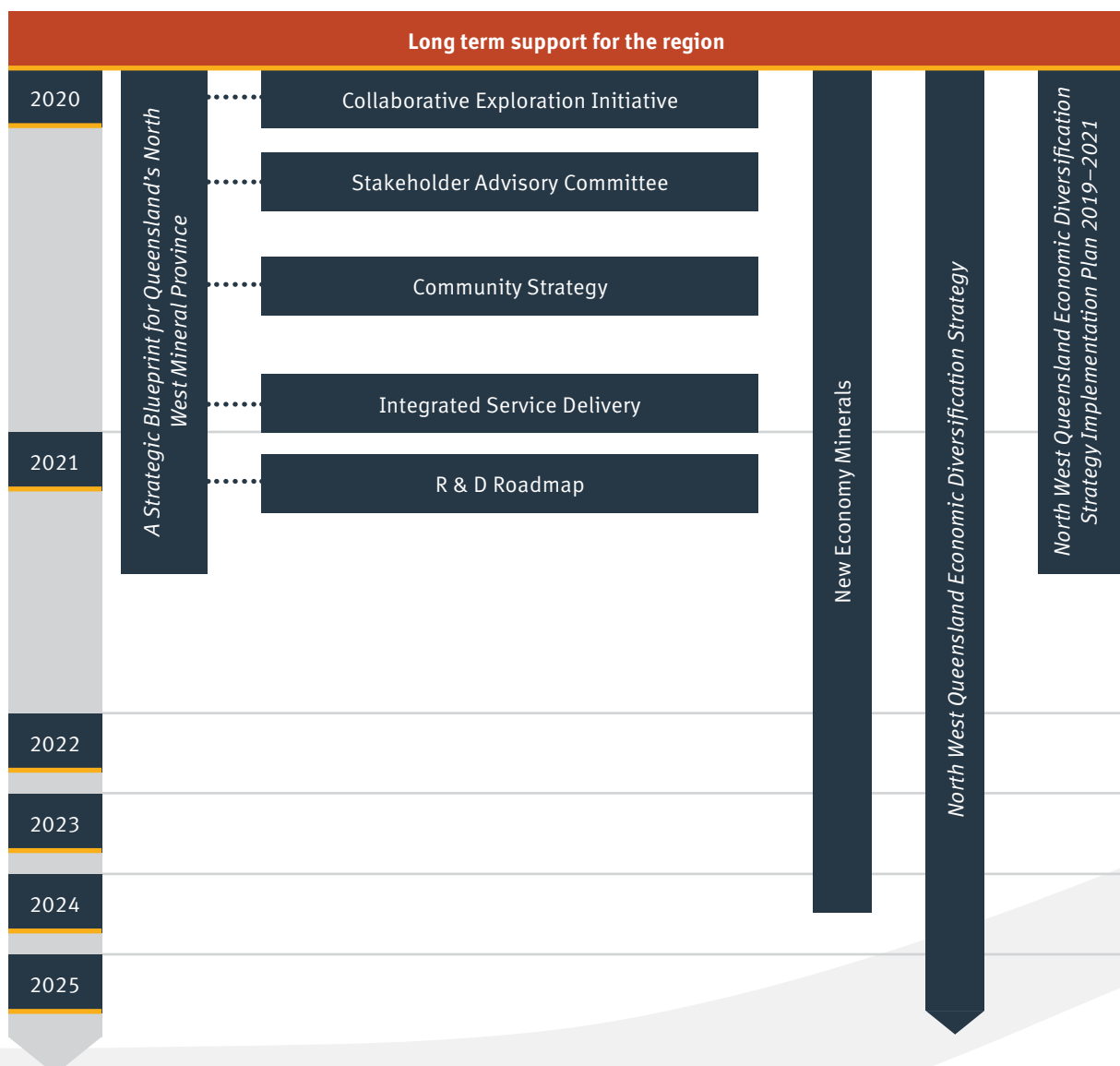
Actions under each of the blueprint's strategic priorities are progressing on schedule and delivering the anticipated outcomes.

The blueprint's framework has been successful in providing a strong foundation for collaborative action. Over the next two years, we will continue to work with implementation agencies and key stakeholders to deliver remaining actions that will help to create the preconditions necessary for ongoing regional sustainability and growth.

The partnerships formed will continue to help guide implementation and ensure that the blueprint remains responsive to emerging regional opportunities.

Through its actions, the blueprint has established additional programs of work that will provide ongoing support to the region beyond mid-2021. These are outlined in the diagram below.

Figure 2: Support programs







## Appendix 1 - Summary of funding and projects by local government area

The table below provides a summary of funding and projects by local government area.

Local government area	Funding	Queensland Government funding program	Project	Est. Full-time Equivalent
Across multiple LGAs	\$2,840,000	2019–20 State Budget	Renewal of Moondarra to Mount Isa terminal reservoir pipeline upgrade	9.1
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund-Round 1	Savannah Way Art Trail, through Croydon, Normanton, Carpentaria, Karumba, Burketown and Doomadgee	NA
Burke Shire Council	\$655,720	BoR Round 2	Gregory Water Treatment Plant Solar Power Project	2.1
	\$225,500	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Realignment and raising of the Leichardt River crossing	0.7
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund-Round 1	Gulf Country Frontier Days Festival	NA
	\$112,500	Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund	Adels Grove Camping Park for a conference room and camp kitchen	0.4
	\$2,300,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA
Carpentaria Shire Council	\$180,000	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Expansion of tourism industry within the Shire Undertake strategic planning studies to identify key infrastructure	0.6
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund – Round 2	Karumba Barra and Blues Festival	NA
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund – Round 2	Karumba Barra and Blues Festival and Anglers Classic	NA
	\$3,450,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA

Local government area	Funding	Queensland Government funding program	Project	Est. Full-time Equivalent
Cloncurry Shire Council	\$500,000	BoR Round 2	Cloncurry Stormwater Drainage Upgrade – Stage 2	1.6
	\$644,140	BoR Round 3	Cloncurry Stormwater Infrastructure Upgrade	2.1
	\$947,300	BoR Round 4	Cloncurry Saleyards Heavy Vehicle Rest Area Upgrade	3.0
	\$642,613	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Cloncurry Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrade – Detailed design for the upgrades at the existing Sewage Treatment Plant	2.1
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund – Round 1	Cloncurry Stockman’s Challenge and Campdraft	NA
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund – Round 1	Trailblazing the West – Cloncurry, Julia Creek, Richmond	NA
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund – Round 2	2020 Curry Merry Muster Festival	NA
	\$2,740,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA
Croydon Shire Council	\$30,000	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Croydon Shire Council/Mountain Bike Trail Network – business case to determine the economic benefits of building	0.1
	\$487,644	BoR Round 2	Croydon Caravan Park infrastructure expansion	1.6
	\$2,060,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA
Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council	\$2,970,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA

Local government area	Funding	Queensland Government funding program	Project	Est. Full-time Equivalent
Etheridge Shire Council	\$461,700	Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund	Cobbold Gorge Tours to develop, construct and install a glass bottom bridge to span an 11 metre gap over the Cobbold Gorge	1.5
	\$500,000	BoR Round 2	Forsyth Water Treatment Plant	1.6
	\$2,203,300	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Gilbert River Irrigation Project – a business case for the construction of an irrigation scheme on the Gilbert River	7.1
	\$2,140,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA
Flinders Shire Council	\$35,000	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Storm Water Management Plan to improve the sustainability and amenity value of the urban stormwater management systems	0.1
	\$200,600	BoR Round 2	Hughenden Aerodrome Security Fence	0.6
	\$375,000	BoR Round 2	Hughenden Landfill Upgrade	1.2
	\$1,000,000	BoR Round 2	Hughenden Industrial Precinct – Stage 2	3.2
	\$2,200,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA
McKinlay Shire Council	\$244,924	Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund	Build additional infrastructure to provide an upmarket experience at the artesian bath facility at Julia Creek Caravan Park	0.8
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund – Round 2	Julia Creek Dirt n Dust Festival	NA
	\$312,920	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Business case and design for proposed Community Children's Services Hub Julia Creek	1.0
	\$500,000	BoR Round 3	Julia Creek Airport Upgrade	1.6
	\$523,750	BoR Round 4	Julia Creek Smart Hub	1.7
	\$2,110,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA

Local government area	Funding	Queensland Government funding program	Project	Est. Full-time Equivalent
Mount Isa City Council	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund-Round 1	Outback Queensland Masters	NA
	\$1,084,527	BoR Round 2	Mount Isa Civic Centre and Library Upgrade	3.5
	\$837,000	BoR Round 3	Mount Isa Water Reservoir No. 3 Reconstruction	2.7
	Confidential	Jobs and Regional Growth Fund	Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation spinifex harvesting operations and pilot processing facility	11.0
	\$130,000	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	GIS dataset assembly for all council asset information and projects	0.4
	\$380,000	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Mount Isa Transport and Logistics Centre	1.2
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund –Round 1	National Boxing Series	NA
	< \$100,000	Outback Tourism Events Fund – Round 2	Festival of Outback Opera	NA
	\$1,230,000	Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund	Revitalisation of the Riversleigh Fossil Centre	3.9
	\$829,000	Youth Justice Reforms Investment Package	Mount Isa Transitional Hub to deliver after hours diversion services to high risk young people	2.7
	\$5,910,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA
Richmond Shire Council	\$300,000	BoR Round 2	Richmond Lakeview Caravan Park Redevelopment	1.0
	\$500,000	BoR Round 2	Water Reticulation and Drainage Project – Richmond	1.6
	\$1,350,000	Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program	Richmond agricultural precinct – Detailed design of the water diversion irrigated agricultural precinct	4.3
	\$2,100,000	Works for Queensland	2017–2019 various projects	NA

## **Remote Area Boards**

Projects by the two RABs that are approved and progressed, and which align with the NWQEDS, include:

- assessment of alternatives to SWER Lines at McKinlay Shire
- bio-fuel trial cropping project at Cloncurry
- developing new Outback Queensland tourism routes
- strategic water storage feasibility study for the North West
- redevelopment of the Hughenden powerhouse
- the North Queensland biomass project
- fibre optic line from Doomadgee to Burketown
- development of a farm stay station manual
- feasibility study to optimise 4G services in Doomadgee
- digital resilience and digital capability in the Gulf
- digital tourism
- marine and riverine infrastructure and economic development for the Lower Gulf.



Image: DSDTI

## Contact

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