

# RDA Independent Review

November 2016



CENTRAL NSW  
COUNCILS



Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources; effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

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



2 November 2016

Reference bw:vp 111602  
Enquiries: Ms J Bennett: 0428 690 935

The Hon Warwick L Smith AM  
RDA Independent Review

[rdareview@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:rdareview@infrastructure.gov.au)

Dear Mr Smith,

**Re: RDA Independent Review**

Central NSW Councils (Centroc) represents over 243,000 people covering an area of more than 72,500sq kms comprising the Local Government Areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Hilltops, Lachlan, Lithgow, Mid-Western, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Upper Lachlan, Weddin, and Central Tablelands Water.

It is about the same size as Tasmania with half the population and a similar GDP.

Centroc's vision is to be recognised as vital to the sustainable future of NSW and Australia.

Its mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional cooperation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources.

Centroc has two core objectives:

1. Regional Sustainability - Encourage and nurture suitable investment and infrastructure development throughout the region and support members in their action to seek from Governments financial assistance, legislative and/or policy changes and additional resources required by the Region.
2. Regional Cooperation and Resource Sharing – Contribute to measurable improvement in the operational efficiency and effectiveness of Member Councils through facilitation of the sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources and, where appropriate, the aggregation of demand and buying power.

The Centroc Board is made up of the 30 Mayors and General Managers of its member Councils who determine priority for the region. These priorities are then progressed via sponsoring Councils. For more advice on Centroc programming and priorities, please go to our website

<http://www.centroc.com.au>



Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the call for submissions on Regional Development Australia. Selected as a Pilot Joint Organisation for the 2015 calendar year, Centroc had the tasks of:

- regional planning and prioritisation;
- advocacy and leadership; and
- intergovernmental collaboration.

Notably, during this period we built on our existing strong relationship with RDA by signing an MoU in May of that year.

We understand the terms of reference for this review to be;

1. *Alignment with the Australian Government policy objectives (including the smaller government agenda) now and into the future. This will include consideration of:*
  - a. *whether the current RDA programme framework is appropriate for delivery of the Australian Government's regional agenda, considering new initiatives; state and territory regional policy agendas; and implementation mechanisms and changes to regional programmes.*
2. *The RDA programme framework, including the:*
  - a. *value of RDA Committees' outputs and measures of success;*
  - b. *purpose and structure of the Chairs Reference Group;*
  - c. *funding model/formula for the programme (including historic and future allocations, state co-funding and potential collaborative arrangements);*
  - d. *number of RDAs and their boundaries (including processes to alter them, and whether capital cities and external territories should be included);*
  - e. *desire to minimise any duplication of activities between other bodies in states and territories (including Joint/Regional Organisations of Councils, Regional Development Commissions, etc.); and*
  - f. *RDA Committees' role in both promoting access to programmes and assisting proponents to develop proposals.*
3. *The governance and administration of the programme, including:*
  - a. *whether RDA Committees can manage their internal governance appropriately within the current structure;*
  - b. *whether appointment processes are appointing appropriately skilled committee members;*
  - c. *RDA Committee membership and appointment arrangements, with a focus on simplifying the administrative processes involved in appointing RDA members;*
  - d. *how government can best support and administer the RDA programme, including evaluation processes, data collection and staff resourcing; and*
  - e. *any other opportunities for reducing the administrative burden imposed on RDA Committees and government in delivering the RDA programme.*



*Signing the MoU between RDA Central West and Central NSW Councils with The Hon J Barilaro, Minister for Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills and Minister for Small Business, as witness*

The Centroc Board highly value and appreciate the relationship we have with RDACW. This includes the work we do collaboratively under our MoU and beyond.

Our two Chairs work together, share insights, and advocate strongly for our region. At the Recent Centroc Board meeting it was resolved interalia to:

#### 7d.1a Regional Development

<b>Resolved</b>	<b>Mr G Styles/Mr J Bell</b>
<b><i>Continue its advocacy and write to the Hon John Barilaro, Minister for Regional Development outlining its support for ongoing funding for the RDA network in New South Wales and that the Joint Organisations and RDA committees can, in combination and by working together, provide superior results for regional development outcomes in NSW.</i></b>	

A review of RDA needs to be considered in the broader question of “how do we do regional development in NSW and Australia?” In NSW this is far from clear. It is the Centroc Board’s view that work needs to be done to align effort in regional development. While we are doing this in our region it is amid a significant period of change for regional governance in NSW including:

- Changes to the Local Government Act introducing a new focus on the regions the most significant of which is the development of Joint Organisations;
- A review of governance for Regional Coordination by the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- Changes to the regional planning framework including the development by the NSW Department of Planning of Regional Plans, “Making it Happen in the Regions” and the mooted introduction of Regional Planning Agreements by the NSW Office of Local Government;
- Changes to regional tourism;
- Uncertainty as to future funding of RDAs by the NSW Government;
- Changes to the regional development funding framework including the mooted Base Plus Plus model and activity as a result of the leasing of poles and wires.

It is also noteworthy that State agencies in NSW have been undergoing significant change as part of new employment and structural arrangements.

In our view, RDA has been suffering from death by a thousand cuts including ongoing funding uncertainty. In this environment they can hardly be an employer or Board of choice and undoubtedly find it difficult. Having said that this region has undertaken significant collaborative projects with our RDA including a substantive piece of work on infrastructure prioritisation and a shared and strategic approach to supporting agriculture. Our RDA takes the lead in developing advice and supporting improvements in telecommunications.

This region particularly values RDA’s role in bringing the Federal Government to the table and its role in supporting business. There is only so far a Local Government organisation can go in supporting business and the independence of RDA in this regard is highly valued in our region.

Please find following more detail on some of the terms of reference:

**Is the current RDA programme framework is appropriate for delivery of the Australian Government's regional agenda, considering new initiatives; state and territory regional policy agendas; and implementation mechanisms and changes to regional programmes?**

In our view, a consistent framework of program delivery supporting regional development blanketing the nation adds value to Australia. Having the State and Federal Government in the one office is a step closer to one stop shop services.

In our region we see great potential for the RDA, especially if funded appropriately, to deliver the Australian Government's regional agenda, considering new initiatives; state and territory regional policy agendas; and implementation mechanisms and changes to regional programmes.

Currently they do the best they can with what they have. The Chair and Board are well grounded and versed in the region and the organisation is able to deliver within its budgetary constraints.

The Centroc Board suggests that the focus on business development in this region is seriously hampered by resourcing. We also see the potential for greater outreach into community but again this is constrained by resource. If RDAs actually administered a funding program as has happened in the past, we see great potential for them to make direct and informed impacts.

**Funding model/formula for the programme (including historic and future allocations, state co-funding and potential collaborative arrangements)**

In the first instance careful thought needs to be given on what the Federal Government wants to achieve from RDAs. There is great potential for them to be even better and stronger, delivering more consistent data and aligning better with other regional entities. We would suggest being able to directly administer funding would be worthwhile. Anecdotal advice from this region is that community capacity building through targeted funding adds value to our communities.

Centroc has policy to progress an even more collaborative arrangement than currently afforded by our MoU (attached).

**Number of RDAs and their boundaries (including processes to alter them, and whether capital cities and external territories should be included)**

We support boundaries in NSW that align with mooted Joint Organisation Boundaries.

**Desire to minimise any duplication of activities between other bodies in states and territories (including Joint/Regional Organisations of Councils, Regional Development Commissions, etc.)**

As advised above, this issue needs to be considered in the context of the current sweeping change in the regional governance in NSW. Reducing duplication is important and in our region we manage it through our highly functional MoU with RDA. There are significant points of difference between RDAs and mooted JOs – a particular challenge will be engagement with business where the focus of NSW Local Government Legislation is responsiveness to Community Plans. We see potential for RDA in our region to better occupy this space building on their good work undertaken to date.

**RDA Committees' role in both promoting access to programmes and assisting proponents to develop proposals.**

We support RDAs doing both assistance and assessment and would like to see our RDAs administering funding programs. In our view it is possible to do both by managing conflict using internal fire walls, similar to how Councils manage development.

**Conclusion**

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to this process. In Central NSW we are very supportive of our RDA and see an opportunity for the Federal Government to do more with these entities.

In our region we particularly value the fact that RDA works so closely with business and brings the Federal Government together with the State.

Our MoU with RDA has shown us the potential for all of Australia for better collaboration between Local Government working collaboratively and RDAs – we see this as a part of the answer going forward and are keen to provide any information in this regard.

We seek to work with the Federal government to support out RDA in any way we can. Please contact Executive Officer Jennifer Bennett on 0428 690 935 if you wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill West', written in a cursive style.

Cr Bill West

**Chair**

Central NSW Councils (Centroc)

enc: MoU with RDA

# Memorandum of Understanding

Between



CENTRAL NSW  
COUNCILS

and



**Regional  
Development**  
*Australia*  
CENTRAL WEST



This Memorandum of Understanding

Dated

Is between

**Central NSW Councils (referred to as Centroc)**

AND

**Regional Development Australia Central West (RDACW)**

[Collectively referred to as “the parties”]

## **1. PRINCIPLES**

1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding is to record the determination of Centroc and RDACW to cooperate to progress identified priorities and challenges, in the areas of;

- Transport and logistics
- Quality and secure water supply
- Health
- Telecommunications
- Regional Development
- Employment & Education
- Planning
- Energy and
- Culture and Arts

to achieve better economic, social and environmental outcomes for the Councils, communities, industries and organisations within Centroc and RDACW boundaries.

1.2 This Memorandum of Understanding will streamline the governance process and endeavor to reduce duplication by both parties to support initiatives of common identified priorities and challenges.

1.3 The parties intend to work together on common priorities and challenges as identified in their respective strategic plans.

1.4 The parties intend to work together, at the same time respecting differing priorities and needs of both organisations.

1.5 The parties recognise the importance of strengthening the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the communities in which they operate.

- 1.6 The parties acknowledge that at times they will:-
- (a) Disagree
  - (b) Hold different priorities
  - (c) Have priorities that are irrelevant to the other party.

In such circumstances the individual party is free to pursue its own priority, respecting the view of the other party and not act to undermine the other party.

- 1.7 It is intended that matters of mutual interest will be matters for the parties, but not all matters of mutual interest will be developed jointly.
- 1.8 The parties agree that there are operational areas or categories, where there should be:
- (a) Dialogue
  - (b) Co-operation
  - (c) Information sharing
  - (d) Formal Agreement
- 1.9 The parties agree that there are operational processes which will provide structure around matters involving;
- (a) Advocacy
  - (b) Regional boundaries
  - (c) Funding
  - (d) Meeting attendance & reporting
  - (e) Collaborative regional projects
- 1.10 The parties recognise substantial opportunities exist for the development of the Central West.

## 2. PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

- 2.1 The priorities and challenges identified through both individual and collaborative strategic planning processes by the parties include;
- The development and sustainability of transport and logistics (including public transport) and water infrastructure for the region
  - Retention and growth of health services including aged care services
  - Improved telecommunications for future sustainability
  - The need for infrastructure and services to sustain communities
  - Regional development and investment
  - Employment, education, youth development and skill shortages
  - Planning sustainable urban, industrial and environmental development
  - Energy supply (including renewable energy) and pricing stability
  - Improved funding and support for culture and the arts
  - Developing further capacity to achieve successful outcomes for the region through Commonwealth and State funding programmes
  - Industry development, with a focus on key contributing industries including, but not limited to, agriculture

### **3. CATEGORIES**

#### **3.1 MATTERS FOR DIALOGUE**

- Advocating for the region
- Identification and development of strategies to address the identified priorities and challenges of the region
- Inter-regional activities & projects

#### **3.2 MATTERS FOR COOPERATION**

- Advocating for the region
- Grant acquisition
- Regional projects
- Information and knowledge sharing
- Inter-regional activities and projects

#### **3.3 MATTERS FOR FORMAL AGREEMENT**

- Advocating for the region
- Grant acquisition
- Information and knowledge
- Sharing of resources
- Development of resources
- Regional projects
- Inter-regional activities and projects

### **4. OPERATIONAL PROCESSES**

#### **4.1 ADVOCACY**

- 4.1.1 The parties agree to provide background information to the Executive Officer of the other party prior to lobbying activities which may impact on the other party.
- 4.1.2 The parties agree to provide support to the other for advocacy purposes by way of media releases, social media and or letters of support to progress common identified priorities.
- 4.1.3 One party will not act to undermine the other party.
- 4.1.4 The parties agree to following either party's branding and support guidelines.

#### **4.2 REGIONAL BOUNDARIES**

- 4.2.1 The parties are free to work with members of the other party individually or collectively.
- 4.2.2 Where Centroc's members and activities involve RDAs other than CW, Centroc is to advise RDACW first of activities to be undertaken with another RDA.

**4.3 FUNDING**

- 4.3.1 The parties agree to provide support in a timely manner to the other for grant acquisition by way of letters of support where funding is sort to progress common priorities.
- 4.3.2 The parties will agree to share information that may assist in the development of grant applications.

**4.4 MEETINGS & REPORTING**

- 4.4.1 The Chair of RDACW is invited to attend the meeting of the Board of Centroc on an ongoing basis.
- 4.4.2 The RDACW Executive Officer is invited to attend the General Managers Advisory Meetings (GMAC) on an ongoing basis.
- 4.4.3 The Executive Officer of Centroc and/or other Centroc members may be invited to attend RDACW committee meetings to discuss regional matters from time to time.
- 4.4.4 RDACW updates on its activities, provided to Centroc from time to time, may be used in part or in full by Centroc in its Annual Report should it elect to do so.

**4.5 COLLABORATIVE REGIONAL PROJECTS**

- 4.5.1 The parties agree to work collaboratively on projects of common interest, to reduce duplication and expand benefits of funded projects.
- 4.5.2 The parties involvement in each project will be determined by their available resources.
- 4.5.3 A work plan outlining collaborative projects at Appendix A will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure its relevance.

**5. GOVERNANCE**

- 5.1 This Memorandum of Understanding does not constitute a partnership between the parties, nor a joint venture.
- 5.2 This Memorandum of Understanding does not authorise one party to represent or act as an agent or speak on the behalf of the other party.
- 5.3 This Memorandum does not authorise one party to incur a debt on behalf of or the other party.

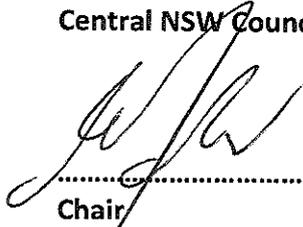
- 5.4 Where one party has obtained sensitive information for joint purposes, it will not misuse that information for its own benefit or to the detriment of the other party.
- 5.5 With regards to intellectual property;
- 5.5.1 Neither party may use the logo or corporate image of the other unless agreed in writing by the parties for joint marketing, sponsorship or grant acquisition purposes.
- 5.5.2 If a party develops or makes available any intellectual property in the course of or for the purposes of this Memorandum of Understanding:
- (a) All proprietary rights to that intellectual property will remain the sole property of that party;
- And
- (b) That intellectual property may only be used by the other party for the purposes of this Memorandum of Understanding and with the prior consent of the first party.
- 5.6 One party will not attempt to actively mislead the other party.
- 5.7 This Memorandum of Understanding may be terminated at anytime, however separate agreements may continue and be dealt with on their own terms.
- 5.8 There shall be no variation to this Memorandum of Understanding unless such variation is in writing and signed by both parties.

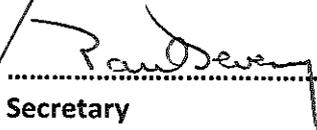
## **6. TERM OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

- 6.1 It is intended this Memorandum of Understanding is ongoing.
- 6.2 This Memorandum of Understanding may be terminated at any time by either party by giving written notice to the other party.
- 6.3 This Memorandum of Understanding and its effectiveness will be reviewed annually.

Signed by

Central NSW Councils

  
.....  
Chair

  
.....  
Secretary

Signed by

Regional Development Australia – Central West

  
.....  
Chair

  
.....  
Secretary

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2015

## Appendix A – the Work Plan for Collaborative Projects for RDA Central West

Last Updated: 24 March 2015

Project Name	Description	Commitments	Timeframe
The Priority Infrastructure Matrix	See detail attached	See detail attached	Tool: November 2014 Water: November 2014 Transport: April 2015 Community: June 2015 Telecommunications: June 2015 (to be confirmed)
The infrastructure issues paper to the Regional Growth Plan			January 2015
Support to the Regional Growth Plan		Parties will inform and support each other with regard to the contribution to this project led by DOPE	
Regional Food and Fibre Plan		Parties will work together, and with other stakeholders as necessary, to develop the terms of reference for a study or such other work that will inform the development of a food and fibre strategy for the NSW Central West	Commence scoping in April 2015 and develop project timeline