



Natural
Resources
Commission

Review of Local Land Services Strategic Plans

March 2016

Enquiries

Enquiries about this report should be directed to:

Name	Sean Halse
Phone	(02) 9228 4844
Fax	(02) 9228 4970
E-Mail	nrc@nrc.nsw.gov.au
Postal address	GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001
Website	www.nrc.nsw.gov.au

List of acronyms

CAG - Local Land Services Community Advisory Group
KPI - key performance indicator
LLS - Local Land Services

This work is copyright. The *Copyright Act 1968* permits fair dealing for study, research, news reporting, criticism and review. Selected passages, table or diagrams may be reproduced for such purposes provided acknowledgement of the source is included.

Document No. D15/4074

ISBN: 978 1 925204 14 8

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Background and scope	3
1.2 Method	3
2 Key findings and next steps	5
2.1 Key findings - legislative compliance	5
2.1.1 State strategic plan - quality	5
2.1.2 Local strategic plans - quality	6
2.2 Next steps	8
2.3 Discussion of findings	8
2.3.1 Goals, strategies and outcomes	8
2.3.2 Performance reporting	9
2.3.3 Refine priorities over time	9
2.3.4 Engagement	10

Attachment A - State Strategic Plan

Attachment B - Central Tablelands Local Strategic Plan

Attachment C - Central West Local Strategic Plan

Attachment D - Greater Sydney Local Strategic Plan

Attachment E - Hunter Local Strategic Plan

Attachment F - Murray Local Strategic Plan

Attachment G - North Coast Local Strategic Plan

Attachment H - Northern Tablelands Strategic Plan Assessment

Attachment I - North West Local Strategic Plan

Attachment J - Riverina Local Strategic Plan

Attachment K - South East Local Strategic Plan

Attachment L - Western Local Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

The Minister for Primary Industries (the Minister) has appointed the Natural Resources Commission (the Commission) as the independent auditor for the Local Land Services' State Strategic Plan and 11 Local Strategic Plans, as per the NSW *Local Land Services Act 2013* (the Act).

The Commission has assessed the extent to which:

- the plans comply with the Act
- their overall quality as strategic planning documents.

Overall quality was assessed against the expectations set out in the Performance Standard for Local Land Services (the Standard).

The Commission found that the strategic plans comply with all relevant sections of the Act except for requirements around timeliness. Overall, the plans provide a sound platform for Local Land Services activities and meet the requirements for strategic plans.

However, the strategic planning process has taken more than two years, despite Sections 37 and 46 of the Act specifying that the plans are to be prepared "as soon as practicable after the commencement of the Act". As a result, the Commission considers that Local Land Services missed early opportunities to meaningfully engage with clients, partners and investors about its purpose, role and strategic direction during the inception of the organisation.

Although the plans have been delayed, they provide a good platform for delivery of outcomes and meet the requirements for strategic plans. The Commission's advice is that the current versions be approved and that plans are revised to address priority areas for improvement identified in this report.

Areas of good practice

The plans demonstrate compliance with the legislative aspects of the Commission's assessment framework. The Commission found that the plans:

- set a vision and identify priorities that focus on appropriate economic, social and environmental outcomes, including profitable and productive primary industries, resilient communities and healthy landscapes
- contain strategies for service delivery across core service areas - agricultural production advice, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency response
- the development of appropriate governance frameworks
- have regard for the state priorities and other relevant state plans and strategies
- reflect consultation and promote local delivery of services to meet investor, stakeholder and customer needs including Aboriginal communities
- incorporate sound scientific and local knowledge and evidence-based practices
- include outcomes that are expected to be achieved by the implementation of the plan
- specify timeframes for achieving specified outcomes.

Areas for improvement

Local Land Services must improve the following areas if they are to deliver high quality client services while also responding to investor requests, emerging risks and changing community needs:

- **goals, strategies and outcomes** – plans have sound goals, strategies and outcomes but to sharpen their strategic planning LLS needs to have clearer accountability for delivering outcomes. This will overcome a lack of clarity about what actions LLS should actually undertake and how these actions will address regional and State priorities.
- **performance reporting** – although plans acknowledge the importance of performance reporting, monitoring and reporting requirements are not yet clear and the identification of outcomes and timeframes is variable. LLS should finalise and implement its performance and improvement framework and reporting system, which is due to be completed in April 2016.
- **refine priorities over time** – strategic priorities are generally sound however, some plans have clearer priorities and are more relevant to landholders than others. LLS should further develop its strategic planning capacity, including risk management and stakeholder engagement capacity, to deliver improved plans and better outcomes for land managers in the future.
- **engagement** – the level of stakeholder consultation on the plans varied across LLS and was not always extensive. Although plans were amended in response to stakeholder feedback, the overall lack of consultation was a missed opportunity. LLS should adopt a more strategic approach to stakeholder engagement, including in future iterations of the strategic plans.

1 Introduction

The Minister for Primary Industries has appointed the Natural Resources Commission (the Commission) as the independent auditor for providing advice regarding the State Strategic Plan and the Local Strategic Plans as per the NSW *Local Land Services Act 2013* (the Act).¹

1.1 Background and scope

Establishment of Local Land Services (LLS) involved:

- combining three legacy organisations with very different functions into a single entity
- implementing a devolved organisation model funded by a range of investors
- establishing legitimacy in the community as a new organisation.

This process has been difficult and at times progress has been slow. Given that LLS has only been operating since January 2014, the Commission has focused on assessing the maturity of strategic planning as demonstrated by the plans. This report provides advice to the Minister regarding approval of the plans. It also identifies how LLS can improve strategic plans in the future to better meet legislative requirements and provide confidence that outcomes will be achieved efficiently through integrated actions.

1.2 Method

The Commission prepared an assessment framework to guide its review of the strategic plans. The framework was designed to enable assessment of compliance with relevant sections of the Act and quality of the plans using the Performance Standard for Local Land Services (the Standard)² as the benchmark. Assessment criteria for both compliance and quality were developed to answer three overarching questions about each plan:

- Does the plan set a clear strategic direction for management and delivery of local land services in the social, economic and environmental interests of the State?
- Does the plan balance State priorities, the needs of local communities and industries, and scientific knowledge in determining priorities/strategies?
- Can the plan be easily implemented and adapted?

Although critical, legislative compliance is relatively straightforward to assess, while quality by its very nature is more subjective. Plans are provided with a maturity rating according to the maturity scale set out in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Maturity rating descriptions

Rating	Description
1	Compliant with legislation and meets requirements of a quality strategic plan, does not need substantial revision
2	Compliant and sound as a foundational plan but some areas need improvement over time
3	Compliant and adequate but in need of further development over time

¹ *Local Land Services Act 2013* Part 4, Sections 41 and 51.

² The Standard is available at: <http://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/performance-standard-lls>

Before the individual plan reviews were conducted, the Commission provided the assessment framework to LLS so it understood the approach being taken.

The Commission received the plans on 3 March 2016 and provided this report on 30 March 2016. As a result the analysis focused primarily on the plans³ themselves. Supplementary evidence was sought through interviews and reviews of additional documentation where necessary to explore key issues and risks identified upon review of the plans. Interviews were conducted with strategic planning representatives from each LLS region, the Executive Support Unit, and key external stakeholders and investors.

³ A note on terminology: throughout the report, the draft State Strategic Plan is generally referred to as the State plan, and draft Local Strategic Plans are referred to as 'regional plans'. When all plans are referenced collectively, 'draft plans' is used. In the attachments which are stand-alone reviews of each plan, 'the plan' is used in each one for simplicity.

2 Key findings and next steps

2.1 Key findings – legislative compliance

Overall, the contents of the strategic plans are compliant with relevant sections of *Local Land Services Act 2013* and meet the fundamental requirements of strategic plans. With regard to timing, the Commission considers that LLS have not met Sections 37 and 46 of the Act, which state that strategic plans are to be prepared “as soon as practicable after the commencement of the Act.”

The Commission acknowledges that LLS has experienced a number of governance issues during its first two years that have impacted on the consistency and quality of strategic planning across the organisation. However, strong strategic plans would help provide a robust basis for LLS to mature into the devolved organisation it aspires to be.

The plans demonstrate compliance with the legislative aspects of the Commission’s assessment framework. The Commission found that the plans:

- set a vision and identify priorities that focus on appropriate economic, social and environmental outcomes, including profitable and productive primary industries, resilient communities and healthy landscapes
- contain strategies for service delivery across core service areas - agricultural production advice, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency response
- the development of appropriate governance frameworks
- have regard for the state priorities and other relevant state plans and strategies
- reflect consultation and promote local delivery of services to meet investor, stakeholder and customer needs including Aboriginal communities
- incorporate sound scientific and local knowledge and evidence-based practices
- include outcomes that are expected to be achieved by the implementation of the plan
- specify timeframes for achieving specified outcomes.

Within this context, the Commission advocates the plans are approved by the Minister on the basis they comply with key legislative requirements, are sound platforms for future refinement, and have already been significantly delayed.

The commission found that the quality of plans could be improved and advocates that the plans are revised over time to address the Commission’s priority areas for improvement outlined below, and to respond to emerging risks and needs.

2.1.1 State strategic plan - quality

The State plan needs to provide sufficient guidance for regions to incorporate state-wide priorities and performance requirements, while allowing for regional variation and priorities.

The State plan complies with the Act and creates a platform for unifying the organisation. However it could be strengthened in a number of areas. Clearly identified priorities tied to an assessment of the risks and drivers for the organisation would improve clarity of the plan and make it more relevant to landholders, community groups, industry, stakeholders and investors.

The plan commits to local decision-making and delivery of services and it incorporates a strong focus on customer service, support for integration of services, collaboration and devolution.

However, exactly how these strategies are to be implemented across LLS at both the State and regional levels could be more clearly articulated. In many cases the reader is required to discern how the strategies will be achieved.

The State plan provides state-wide direction with regard to outcomes and associated monitoring and performance reporting requirements. Guidance regarding intended outcomes could be clearer and attention needs to be given to other indicators of performance that reflect all core functions and investor expectations. For example the majority of performance indicators relate to customer or stakeholder satisfaction. While customer satisfaction is an appropriate measure for some activities it is a poor measure for many of the strategies such as those that relate to compliance. LLS has engaged the Commission to strengthen its performance and improvement framework. Its implementation needs to be prioritised by LLS as it will provide guidance to the regions as well as allow for state-wide outcomes to be measured and reported.

These issues are discussed below, for more detail on the State plan see Attachment A.

2.1.2 Local strategic plans - quality

Table 2 provides a summary of the key results for each of the 11 regional plans when assessed against the quality and maturity framework (section 1.2). Plans are listed in alphabetical order, and detailed assessments of each plan are provided in Attachments B - L.

Table 2: Summary of findings - local strategic plans

Region	Compliant	Quality Rating	Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
Central Tablelands	Yes	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clear evidence base for priorities and thresholds ▪ focus on collaboration ▪ strong support for community participation and devolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ further prioritisation of priorities and actions ▪ logic – specifically between regional priorities and the strategies and actions ▪ refining of ‘regional measures of success’ and timelines
Central West	Yes	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strong focus on integration. ▪ supports devolution ▪ thorough consultation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ much of the required detail, e.g. actions, is deferred to other plans ▪ more information about governance ▪ performance reporting
Greater Sydney	Yes	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ regional specificity ▪ logical objectives, strategies, priorities and actions ▪ ongoing focus on incorporating new knowledge ▪ clear consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ more information about integration of core functions and strategies to address it ▪ more information about governance

Region	Compliant	Quality Rating	Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
Hunter	Yes	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clear prioritisation process ▪ specific outcomes and timelines under each strategy ▪ clear reporting requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ more information about governance ▪ detail on how indicators will be collated or measured
Murray	Yes	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clear prioritisation process ▪ strong governance processes and intention to further improve ▪ focus on community and devolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rationalise information to clarify key messages ▪ accountability for delivery of specific outcomes ▪ monitoring evaluation and reporting / performance reporting
North Coast	Yes	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ regional specificity ▪ governance processes ▪ supports community input to decision-making and priority setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ logic – specifically between ‘priorities and outcomes’, and ‘actions and performance measures’ tables ▪ use and measurement of indicators
Northern Tablelands	Yes	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ regional specificity ▪ focus on community capacity building and collaboration ▪ logical objectives, activities and indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rationalising information to reduce repetition ▪ clarification on extent of consultation during the plan’s development
North West	Yes	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sound prioritisation process. ▪ priorities linked to regional strategies and outcomes ▪ clearly assigns responsibility for delivery of actions and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ feasibility of addressing large number of priorities ▪ role of advisory groups in plan’s development ▪ include indicators (once Business Plan completed)
Riverina	Yes	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strong focus on capacity-building and engagement ▪ thorough consultation processes ▪ processes to support incorporating new knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lacks regional specificity ▪ prioritisation of actions ▪ logic between outcomes, actions and key performance indicators

Region	Compliant	Quality Rating	Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
South East	Yes	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clear approach to integrated service delivery ▪ supports devolution of responsibilities ▪ measurable key performance indicators and timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ incorporating local knowledge (including establishing Community Advisory Groups) ▪ more clearly connecting the actions and outcomes with sub-regional information
Western	Yes	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ regional specificity ▪ logic of strategies and actions with key risks and issues in the region ▪ measurable key performance indicators and timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how it contributes to State plan outcomes, priorities and key performance indicators

2.2 Next steps

The Commission has also identified a number of areas where plans can be improved in regard to quality and suggests the following next steps; LLS should:

- prioritise completion and implementation of a performance and improvement framework which is in draft form. The framework should provide clear accountability for delivering outcomes in the strategic plans
- amend the strategic plans (including the State plan) to address performance reporting measures including updating strategies, key performance indicators and alignment with land manager, investor and partner priorities
- amend individual regional plans to address the key areas for improvement in Table 2 and next steps outlined in Attachments B – L.

2.3 Discussion of findings

This section presents a discussion of the findings under four broad themes.

2.3.1 Goals, strategies and outcomes

The legislation requires that the plans contain strategies (s36, s45) for service delivery across four functional areas: natural resource management, agricultural production advice, biosecurity and emergency response. The Standard expects that strategies integrate service delivery where appropriate, identify potential delivery partners and provide for devolution of responsibility to the community and stakeholder groups where practical.

The State plan indicates that goals are focused on improved integrated outcomes for agricultural advisory services, biosecurity, emergency response and natural resources management and do *“not relate to achieving functional excellence”*. The intent to focus on integrated outcomes is sound. However, the plan should still identify clear outcomes and articulate what should be expected to be achieved with regard to the functional areas through integrated service delivery.

Strategies at the state level largely focus on operational methods for delivering services such as collaboration, capacity building and information provision. As such, the strategies are broadly worded and overlap significantly. While descriptions for each strategy are provided, these appear to apply to LLS regions, leaving the responsibilities for LLS at a state scale unclear. Additionally, the strategies appear to only apply to certain target communities, industries, etc., which are to be identified regionally.

The regional plans do not consistently identify these targeted entities in their plans, leaving it unclear how these strategies will be implemented, what action LLS would actually undertake and/or how the actions would address regional priorities.

Clearer accountability for delivering outcomes, a plan for coordinating implementation and a sound performance and improvement framework will all contribute to the integration of goals and strategies and enhance the likelihood of delivery of outcomes at the state scale.

2.3.2 Performance reporting

The Act (sections 38 (b) and 47 (b)) mandates that strategic plans include requirements for reporting on whether outcomes have been achieved within expected timeframes. The Standard requires monitoring, evaluation and reporting at multiple scales to drive continual knowledge improvement and decision-making that is based on sound evidence.

The plans contain sound standard language regarding the importance of reporting and transparency. However, they do not include clear monitoring and reporting requirements, and they vary in whether they specifically identify expected outcomes and timeframes. The plans acknowledge that monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements are still in development. The Commission is currently-working with LLS to help develop a performance and improvement framework, including a set of state-wide KPIs.

At the state level, LLS' responsibilities and accountabilities are unclear, as is how LLS will leverage the benefits in the coordination of some investments to achieve state-wide goals. A variety of KPIs are set out in local strategic plans. These should be revised and aligned with the state-wide KPIs when they are formally adopted by LLS.

With regard to adaptive management, the plans all discuss the importance of triple loop learning to drive improvements in performance. The plans vary in the degree to which they specifically address how they will implement adaptive management, including active capture and response to new knowledge. The plans also discuss the importance of innovation for adapting to change and improving efficiency. The performance and improvement framework will set out how LLS intends to approach adaptive management and innovation in a consistent manner.

Overall, monitoring, evaluation and reporting is the main area where improvement across the suite of plans is needed.

2.3.3 Refine priorities over time

LLS strategic priorities are overall sound. In some plans they are more meaningful for landholders, in others they are very high level and may lack traction on the ground. In some, the priorities are clear, while in others there is a long somewhat overlapping list of priorities. For the inaugural strategic plans the priorities are overall sufficient to provide direction and purpose while maintaining organisational flexibility.

The Act requires LLS to regularly and periodically review its strategic plans and to update them if the Minister so directs. The Standard is based upon continuous improvement recognising that LLS operates in a highly dynamic space with a complex range of landscape management issues and finite resources with which to address them. It expects that plans demonstrate leadership by focusing on priority issues and addressing key risks in an effective manner.

In order to be effective in this challenging environment, LLS needs to be flexible in how it identifies, prioritises and addresses issues within each region as well as state wide. Each of the strategic plans contain consistent adaptation and continual improvement strategies that will facilitate well-considered responses to change and maintain the relevance of the plans over time. This is a high quality foundation for the plans.

With regard to risk, some regional plans do not specifically address risk management at either an operational or governance level whereas others are more explicit in the way they address risk. For example, the Central Tablelands plan defers responsibility to a regional Governance and Risk Committee that has not yet been established. In contrast, the Greater Sydney plan contains a comprehensive regional analysis of risks and emerging issues. It includes a discussion of sub-regions and key priorities for each functional area, as well as a description of the unique challenges faced by the region and how it plans to address them.

LLS needs to continue to refine its risk management and capacity to be agile to emerging issues. For LLS to take over two years to develop its plans indicates how long it took LLS to find its feet as a new organisation. It now needs to become nimble and able to anticipate and respond to change in its complex operating environment.

The challenge for LLS is to develop and foster greater strategic planning capacity, including capacity to manage risks, capacity to engage strategically with internal and external stakeholders, and capacity to learn from its past performance. Strategic planning is not an event, nor an output, it is a process. The challenge is not about how to write a better plan but how to develop better leadership, strategic thinking and systems. Through this, LLS will be well positioned to deliver improved outcomes not just for yesterday's needs but also for tomorrow's.

The trigger for the next revision of the strategic plans should not be pre-ordained. It should be based upon feedback on performance, emerging risks and external drivers of change, including investors and ministerial preferences.

2.3.4 Engagement

Strategic planning presents a significant opportunity for an organisation to engage meaningfully with its stakeholders. This is particularly important for LLS which is an amalgamation of several former agencies and now operates within a devolved business model that relies on collaborative partnerships. Partner organisations expect their concerns to be listened to and when feedback is provided, how that feedback has influenced strategic decisions.

According to the Standard, engagement maximises opportunities to understand the strategic objectives of investors, partners and land managers. It also drives customer satisfaction by involving them in the design, prioritisation, delivery and continuous improvement of services. From a regulatory perspective Local Land Services is required to consult widely on strategic plans.

Consultation on the draft plans was varied and not always extensive even though a state-wide communications strategy for strategic plan consultation was prepared. For the State plan,

consultation was limited to a small number of government agencies and stakeholders. For regional plans, senior staff in some regions went 'on the road' to present their strategic plans to key stakeholders, while others used Local Community Advisory Groups (LCAGs) if they were in place.

The draft plans were placed on public exhibition from 12 October to 22 November 2015, when interested parties could make formal submissions. LLS chose an online consultation platform, "LLS Open", for submissions. During a recent audit of LLS communications, conducted by the Commission, external stakeholders commented that LLS Open was a restrictive format that only enabled responses to specific questions, rather than accommodating traditional feedback methods such as free text, a letter or email. As a consequence, many land managers and stakeholders reportedly did not make submissions or felt limited in the quality of feedback they could provide. Despite the variable approach to consultation, plans were amended in response to feedback received.

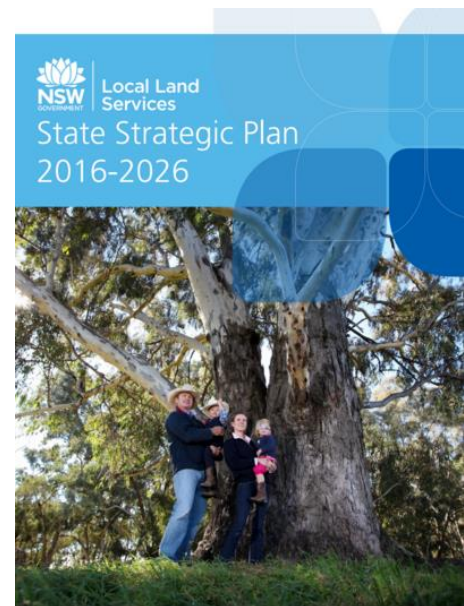
Consultation on the draft plans was a missed opportunity for meaningful engagement with LLS' many stakeholders. Given the importance of investors and partners for delivering on-ground outcomes, LLS needs to refocus efforts to increase strategic engagement with them as the plans are implemented. During future iterations of strategic plans, the level of engagement should be decided well in advance and consultation methods tailored to meet the needs of all concerned investors, partners and land managers.

Attachment A – State Strategic Plan

Key findings

The State Strategic Plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas:

- The plan has a consistent focus on customer service and supports local community engagement and capacity building.
- The plan includes a vision that focuses on appropriate economic, social and environmental outcomes – *“Resilient communities in productive, healthy landscapes”*.
- The plan provides strong support for integration of services at the regional scale to improve efficiency of on-ground actions.
- The narrative and strategies support adaptive management approaches and innovation in service delivery.
- The strategies support devolution of decision making by LLS regions to their communities. However, devolution to LLS regions by state level LLS is inadequately addressed.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- Performance reporting – The plan discusses the importance of reporting and transparency, and the intent to develop and implement a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework. However, monitoring and reporting requirements are not yet established.
- Clear, measurable outcomes - The specific outcomes expected from implementing the plan are not clearly identified. Objectives and key performance indicators are indicated, but these lack specificity and do not cover the breadth of LLS’ service delivery and legislative responsibilities.
- State priorities - The plan does not indicate the key risks, issues and opportunities for LLS as an organisation. Clear identification of state priorities would make the plan more meaningful for stakeholders and investors and assist regions to better align with state priorities.
- Clarity of strategies - The strategies are broadly worded and overlap significantly. Some of the descriptions are helpful in clarifying the intent, but others are confusing. The strategy descriptions focus on operational delivery at the regional scale, with no indication as to how they would be applied at a state-wide scale.
- Governance – The governance section of the plan could be strengthened to more clearly specify how LLS governance arrangements will support achievement of goals and strategies. While the plan touches generally on governance, a clear indication of the state and local roles and how devolution within LLS will be implemented would improve the plan.

Next Steps

The Executive Support Unit of LLS should prioritise the finalisation of a performance and improvement framework and revise the State plan accordingly. This will also guide revisions of regional plans regarding improved performance reporting.

Attachment B - Central Tablelands Local Strategic Plan

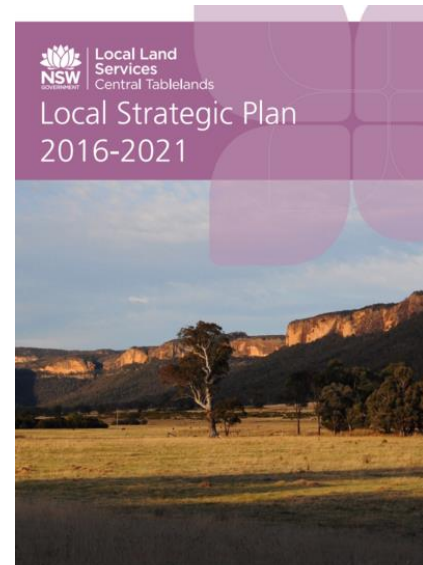
Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan is closely aligned with the State plan, adopting the State plan's vision, mission, values and strategies. As regional actions are linked to these strategies, implementation of the plan would logically support achievement of the State strategies.
- The regional priorities were developed using best available evidence from a range of sources and take into account diverse stakeholder needs and identified thresholds. The process described for investment prioritisation includes discussion of the evidence base, knowledge gaps and opportunities to build supporting data.
- The plan demonstrates a reasonable focus on integration including a core capability related to integrated service delivery.
- The plan has a strong focus on collaboration with local stakeholders and community, although the details of how this collaboration will be implemented are not discussed.
- The narrative of the plan provides strong support for community participation and devolution in general and there are specific actions related to community/stakeholder involvement in decision-making.
- The plan includes the standard language regarding triple loop learning. This is supported by a specific action to develop the Adaptive Management Plan by June 2016, increasing confidence that adaptive management will be implemented.
- The plan includes an action for initiating and participating in the development of best management practices and innovation, but further details are not provided.
- Consistent with other plans, the plan focuses on customer service and community engagement and incorporates strategies and actions related to the core service areas for LLS.

The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan contains a large number of 'regional priorities' and actions, with further prioritisation deferred to the investment plan. This implies the feasibility of implementing the suite of actions has not been fully considered at this stage.
- Strategies and actions are identified but are for the most part vague, do not provide a great deal of strategic direction, nor are they regionally specific. The outcomes (identified as 'regional success' measures) are broad and would be difficult to measure. Timelines are provided for the foundation actions, which indicate major planning/review points and implementation phases, but on the whole it is not clear what is supposed to be achieved in what timeframe.
- The flow of information is somewhat difficult to follow through the plan. There are gaps in logic between the regional priorities and the strategies and actions specified, as well as between the actions and the expected outcomes (regional success measures).
- The plan would be improved by further indication of how they will achieve or drive integration.



- The plan includes general discussion of governance in the narrative and there is an action to create a Governance and Risk Committee. The plan would be improved by clearer discussion of how governance will support delivery of outcomes.

Next Steps

Central Tablelands LLS should address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

- Complete the Investment Priority Plan that will include key risks and emerging issues in the region, targets, prioritise actions and identify knowledge gaps.
- Complete the Adaptive Management Plan including key performance indicators.
- Proceed with plans to establish the Governance and Risk Committee, and provide further detail as to how governance will support the delivery of outcomes.

Attachment C - Central West Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The narrative of the plan has a strong focus on the importance of integration across LLS' business areas and between LLS and external service delivery activities.
- The plan contains a reasonable discussion of the region, but the link to the regional outcomes and priorities could be clearer.
- The plan supports devolution including regional priorities that support community participation in decision-making.
- The region leveraged a range of information sources in developing the plan, including consultation and analysis carried out for previous planning processes, staff input regarding on-ground issues, local board knowledge and a community survey.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan contains a reasonable number of priorities but does not contain actions as it states these will be included in the Business Plan. As a consequence, it is not evident what the region actually intends to do or deliver.
- The plan does not specifically address risk management at either an operational or governance level.
- The plan makes no explicit reference to governance or a governance framework.
- The plan does not include any measureable indicators or the State plan key performance indicators. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements are deferred to other plans.

Next Steps

Central West LLS should address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

- Complete the Business Plan that will include actions, an Adaptive Management Strategy, targets, and key performance indicators, as a priority.
- Include further information about the risk management process and governance framework, and how these will support achievement of goals.

Attachment D - Greater Sydney Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan contains a comprehensive regional analysis including risks and emerging issues. It includes a discussion of subregions and key priorities for each functional area, as well as a clear description of the unique challenges faced by the Greater Sydney LLS region and how they will be addressed.
- The plan contains a description of each strategic objective and strategy, making it clear what the intent of the strategy is and what the regional priorities are. The associated key actions along with responsibilities assigned to lead organisations and partners are linked to these strategies.
- The plan itself contains a lot of strategies and actions; however, it contains a sound discussion of the limitation of resources and plans for prioritising investment in on-ground actions. This will provide confidence that the feasibility of the actions has been considered.
- The region considered a range of information sources including local and scientific knowledge in developing the plan, and the plan contains strategies for continuing to identify and incorporate new knowledge.
- The key threats and regional drivers are identified and generally linked logically to the strategies and key actions. The discussion of the strategies explains the logic for their selection and associated key actions. The term 'outcomes' is replaced by 'strategic objectives and intents', but they are clear and logical.
- The plan includes example key performance indicators, which are measurable with associated timeframes. While there is room to improve with regard to specification of final indicators and quality of the indicators, assigning clearly measurable indicators is good practice.
- The plan clearly describes the community consultation undertaken over the course of the planning process and how it informed the plan. Local Community Advisory Groups have been established and were involved in identification of sub-regional and sectoral priorities, which are identified and addressed in the plan.
- The plan demonstrates how strategies, actions and outcomes align with the State plan, without compromising regional specificity. It also demonstrates alignment with other partner priorities by identifying key partners for each action.

The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan contains the standard discussion of the importance of integration, but does not include specific strategies or actions regarding integration.
- The plan contains some strategies and actions that support sound governance, but the plan would be improved by incorporating a discussion of how the governance framework will support achievement of the region's objectives.



- The plan includes a discussion of adaptive management, and indicates commitment to capture new knowledge, but specifics of how this will occur is deferred to other yet-to-be developed plans.
- The importance of monitoring and reporting is discussed, as are examples of the type of reporting they undertake, but there is no detail as to how evaluation and adaptation will actually happen.

Next Steps

Greater Sydney LLS should address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

- Finalise key performance indicators.
- Develop and implement the monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategy and plan using the new performance improvement framework.

Attachment E - Hunter Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan reflects experience, knowledge and a thorough understanding of regional issues, including the key risks and threats to the region, and incorporates strategies and actions to address them.
- The strategies and actions address the core service areas for LLS including natural resources management, biosecurity, emergency response and agricultural production advice.
- The plan clearly describes their prioritisation process, which was informed by best available evidence including local and scientific knowledge.
- The plan spatially represents the natural resource management priorities for the Hunter.
- Local Community Advisory Groups and broader community input informed the development of the plan, which should accommodate diverse stakeholder needs.
- The plan's goals, strategies and outcomes are nested and the information is presented in a way that emphasises the logic between them.
- The plan includes specific outcomes and timelines under each of the strategies. The strategies and outcomes are largely measurable.
- The plan includes strategies and actions that will support community participation and inclusive decision-making.
- The plan clearly identifies relevant delivery partners in each of the four service delivery areas.
- The plan incorporates information from a broad range of sources, and contains strategies and actions that will help them to capture and respond to new knowledge.
- The plan clearly describes their reporting requirements.
- The plan uses some excellent and engaging graphics to portray some of the unique characteristics of the region.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan includes indicators of success across each of the key goals and strategies, but does not specify how the information will be collated or measured.
- The plan does not identify specific targets and only includes an action to review and utilise a performance reporting framework rather than specifying how it will be done.
- The plan includes an action to develop corporate governance procedures, but provides little other explicit information relating to governance and how it will support achievement of outcomes.

- The plan includes an action to develop corporate governance procedures, but provides little other explicit information relating to governance and how it will support achievement of outcomes.

Next Steps

That Hunter LLS addresses the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

- Implement the performance improvement framework, and provide further clarification about how key performance indicators will be collated and measured.

Attachment F - Murray Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan reflects experience, knowledge and a thorough understanding of regional and sub-regional issues and incorporates strategies and actions to address them.
- The strategies and actions address the core service areas for LLS including natural resources management, biosecurity, emergency response and agricultural production advice.
- The plan identifies early priorities that should result in economic, social and environmental outcomes. Further, the prioritisation process appears to be sound, considered feasibility and was informed by best available evidence.
- The plan focuses on community leadership and devolution of responsibilities and resources.
- The plan provides for governance at all levels of planning and contains regional actions to further develop and support governance standards and improve business systems to support delivery and reporting.
- Local Community Advisory Groups and stakeholder consultation informed the development of the plan, which should accommodate diverse stakeholder needs.
- The plan describes the drivers of change in the region and clearly links these with goals, objectives and strategies.
- The plan demonstrates a reasonable degree of integration, with objectives and actions delivering against multiple strategies. Integration of planning and service delivery also underpin some of the investment principles.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan contains a lot of information, such as strategies and actions, and struggles to resolve all the complexity into concise and accessible messages that clearly explain what LLS wants to achieve.
- Prioritised targets are not included in this plan. These are deferred to the Business Plan, making it difficult to gauge the potential effectiveness of the plan, or how the region will demonstrate achievement of outcomes.
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting is still evolving. The LLS are currently working on how it will capture information against its wider goals and outcomes.
- Accountability is a core value and included in the investment principles; but the lack of reporting requirements reduces confidence in the plan's ability to drive accountability.

Next Steps

That Murray LLS address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

- Complete the business plan including additional detail regarding prioritisation of actions and how they will integrate services as soon as possible.
- Develop a monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategy that includes specific and feasible targets, timelines for achievement of outcomes and assigns accountability for delivery of specific outcomes.

Attachment G - North Coast Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan has a strong regional focus, identifying sub-regions and their priorities.
- The plan identifies the region's key risks and drivers of change and the regional priorities are clearly linked to them.
- The strategies and actions address the core service areas for LLS including natural resources management, biosecurity, emergency response and agricultural production advice.
- The plan contains governance-related goals and strategies and describes how governance will contribute to achieving outcomes.
- Local Community Advisory Groups and stakeholder consultation informed the development of the plan, which should accommodate diverse stakeholder needs.
- The plan has a focus on internal integration. North Coast LLS deliberately developed actions that span its business units and achieve multiple outcomes.
- The plan includes specific actions to incorporate community input to decision-making and priority-setting.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- Outcomes are clearly linked to regional priorities. Strategies, objectives, actions and performance measures are also linked, but the logic between these and the regional priorities is unclear.
- The plan provides short and long-term indicators that will be used to measure success, but which measures will be used and how is unclear.
- As with other plans, monitoring, evaluation and reporting is a work in progress. The LLS has a draft performance reporting plan and is developing draft resource condition protocols to understand resource condition and how it will change with investment.

Next Steps

That North Coast LLS address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

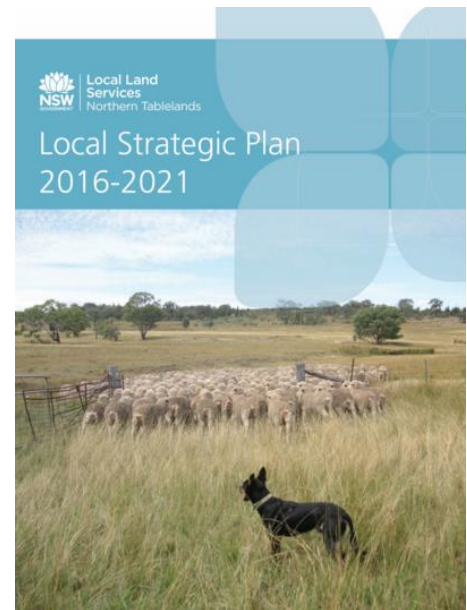
- Complete the business plan and other supporting plans, including additional detail regarding prioritisation of actions, as soon as possible.
- Develop a monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategy that specifies feasible targets and timelines for achievement of outcomes.

Attachment H - Northern Tablelands Strategic Plan Assessment

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan sets a clear and compelling vision for the region and describes how it fits in the hierarchy of other plans and policies. As such it is likely to resonate with local stakeholders and ratepayers.
- The plan reflects a thorough and sophisticated understanding of the region, clearly articulates the regional and sub-regional issues and how the LLS intends to address them. The plan identifies nine socio-ecological landscapes and an integrated resilience framework that were used to inform the prioritisation process.
- The strategies address the core service areas for LLS including natural resources management, biosecurity, emergency response and agricultural production advice.
- The plan identifies priority objectives that contribute to economic, social and environmental outcomes. The priority objectives, activities and performance indicators are logical and nested, and appear realistic and achievable. It also specifies timelines for achievement of objectives.
- The plan has a strong focus on community capacity-building and collaboration.
- The plan includes specific actions to incorporate community input to decision-making and priority-setting.
- The plan demonstrates a reasonable degree of integration, with business operations managed through functional areas that align priority objectives to functions and services.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- monitoring, evaluation and reporting is evolving. The functional area plans are required to include performance reporting.

Next Steps

That Northern Tablelands LLS address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

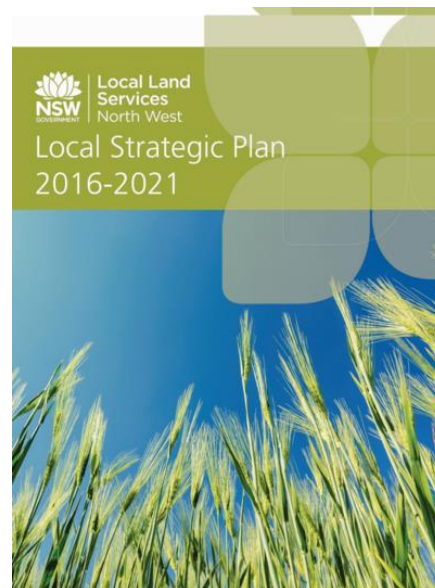
- Clarify performance reporting.

Attachment I - North West Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan has a strong regional focus and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the region and sub-region.
- The plan identifies achievable economic, social and environmental outcomes.
- The plan clearly sets out priorities and links them to regional strategies and associated outcomes.
- The plan identifies priorities across themes and at a sub-regional level. The prioritisation process appears to be sound and informed by best available evidence.
- The plan describes the key challenges and threats to the region and contains actions and priorities to address them, although the link could be more explicit.
- The strategies and actions address the core service areas for LLS including natural resources management, biosecurity, emergency response and agricultural production advice.
- The plan demonstrates a reasonable degree of integration, with strategies and actions that will require the LLS' functional areas to work together to deliver the expected outcomes.
- The plan's strategies and actions have a focus on increasing community capacity to participate in decision-making.
- The plan provides for the development of governance processes and acknowledges how governance will guide decision-making and achieve organisational goals.
- The plan clearly assigns responsibility for the delivery of actions and outcomes, and contains strategies that will support transparent reporting to stakeholders.
- If implemented the strategies and key regional delivery actions would contribute to the achievement of the stated outcomes and goals.
- The plan should accommodate diverse stakeholder needs and supports ongoing stakeholder input in to priority-setting and decision-making.
- The plan describes the adaptive management processes to capture and respond to new knowledge.
- The plan includes 'regional measures of success' that on the whole appear sound, balanced and aligned with the plan's priorities and outcomes.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan contains a large number of priorities but it is unclear whether they can all be addressed within the resources available. The plan notes that they will be progressively reviewed and refined as part of the adaptive management process.
- The extent to which common goals and collaborative opportunities contributed to priorities is unclear. The degree to which local advisory and other stakeholder groups provided initial input to the plan is also unclear. However, they were engaged and provided feedback during the public consultation phase.

- The plan does not include indicators but states they will be included in the Business Plan.
- The plan specifies some appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms including internal evaluations and asset condition monitoring, but states they will develop and implement a monitoring evaluation reporting and improvement framework by 2020.

Next Steps

That North West LLS address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

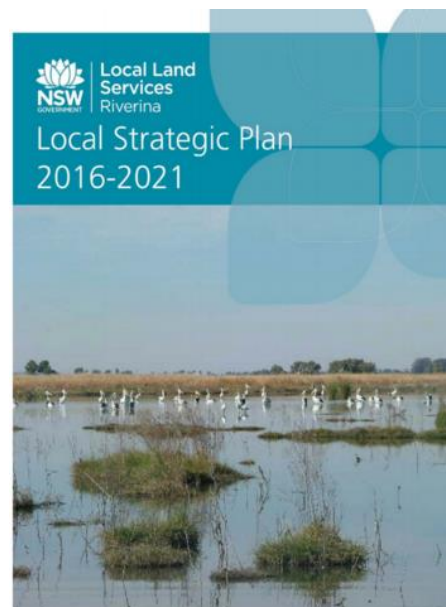
- Proceed with plans to refine the number priorities.
- Complete the business plan and operational plans, which will include specific targets, timelines and indicators.

Attachment J - Riverina Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan has a strong focus on customer service, capacity building, and community and stakeholder engagement.
- The plan priorities and actions were developed based on consultation with sub-regional community advisory groups, and information from previous planning processes that involved significant consultation. Amendments to the actions were also made in response to stakeholder feedback received during the public consultation phase.
- The plan uses best available evidence including scientific and local knowledge and includes methods to incorporate a range of knowledge sources going forward.
- The plan narrative includes discussion of the importance of innovation, and there is a specific action related to adoption of innovative approaches.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan lacks regional specificity. While the plan contains a reasonable level of regional analysis, risks and emerging issues are not discussed and it fails to clearly link the regional analysis with the strategies and actions identified.
- The plan defers prioritisation of actions to other plans to be developed for implementation, with no clear indication of how prioritisation will be carried out. This reduces confidence that the strategies and actions can feasibly be implemented with the resources available.
- Strategies, actions and outcomes are often broad and lack specificity, leaving it unclear what the region expects to achieve through the plan's implementation.
- In several cases the logic of the plan is unclear. It is not evident that implementing the stated action will achieve the specified outcomes, or that the key performance indicators and method for measuring them would demonstrate that the desired outcomes had been achieved.
- There is limited evidence of intent to devolve responsibility to stakeholders and community.
- The plan discusses integration of service delivery generally, but does not provide clear strategies and actions to support how integration will actually occur.
- The plan describes limited monitoring and reporting requirements.

Next Steps

That Riverina LLS address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

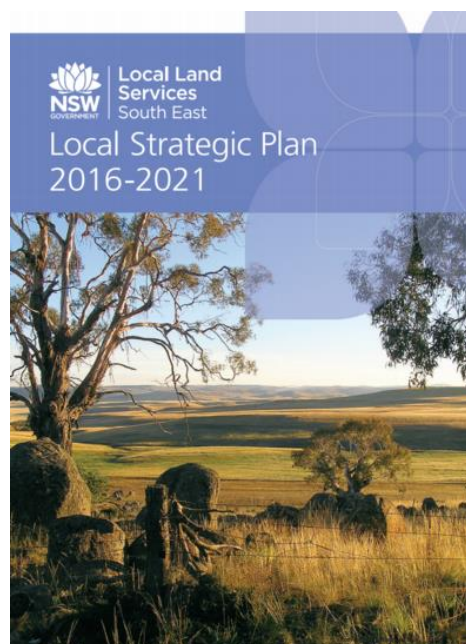
- Complete supporting plans and where appropriate include additional detail regarding prioritisation of actions, link regional analysis with the strategies and actions identified in the plan and describe how they will integrate services as soon as possible
- Develop a monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategy that includes specific and feasible targets, timelines for achievement of outcomes and assigns accountability for delivery of specific outcomes.

Attachment K - South East Local Strategic Plan

Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan includes a thorough description of the region, demonstrating a strong understanding of regional and subregional landscapes, including key features, risks, opportunities and drivers. As such it is likely to resonate with local stakeholders and ratepayers.
- The plan describes a clear approach to integrated service delivery at the local scale through the planned development of sub-regional Local Area Plans. These are intended to drive local delivery of services that best meet the needs of investors, stakeholders and customers.
- The plan supports devolution of responsibilities and decision-making and includes strategies, actions and outcomes to drive devolution.
- The plan was informed by a range of information sources and commits to using these sources going forward.
- The plan demonstrates good logic. The key threats and drivers are clearly explained at the start of the plan and the strategies and actions logically address them. There is room for some improvement in demonstrating the logic for the selected outcomes, as well as the links between the goals and strategies.
- The plan includes measureable key performance indicators with associated timeframes. While there is room to improve with regard to quality of the indicators, assigning clearly measureable indicators is good practice.
- The plan has a strong focus on adaptive management, including strategies and actions for implementing adaptive management.



The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- Local knowledge was sourced from community consultation undertaken for previous planning processes, and from opportunistic discussions with landholders and key stakeholders. Some minor amendments to the plan were also made in response to stakeholder feedback received during the public consultation phase. There is intent to further seek local knowledge through four landscape-based Community Advisory Groups, local planning processes and other engagement processes.
- The actions and outcomes in the plan are broad and lack specificity, however, if the actions are combined with sub-regional information, which is the presumed intent, they become more specific. The plan could be improved by making this connection clearer.
- The indicators do not cover the full breadth of the outcomes and actions identified in the plan, reducing confidence that reporting of indicators would demonstrate that the desired outcomes have been achieved.

Next Steps

That South East LLS address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan.

- Prepare a monitoring, evaluation and reporting plan ensuring that performance indicators logically demonstrate achievement of the specified outcomes and how the region will meet state scale reporting requirements.

Attachment L - Western Local Strategic Plan

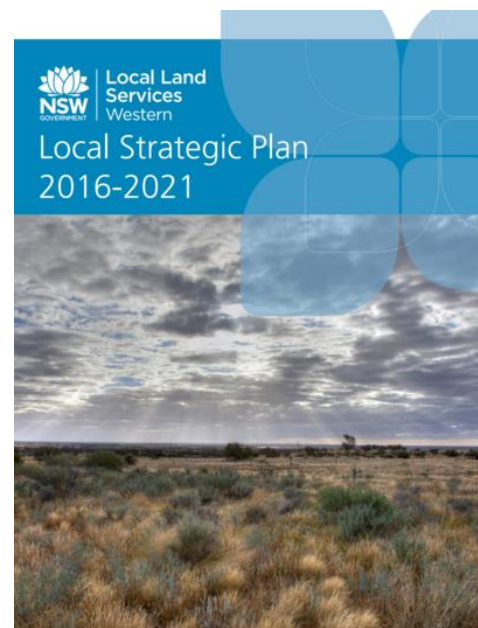
Key findings

The plan demonstrates good practice in the following areas.

- The plan clearly lays out the drivers of change within the region and includes regionally specific strategies and actions to address them. As such it is likely to resonate with local stakeholders and ratepayers.
- The plan contains clear objectives, strategies and actions. Actions are appropriately specific for a strategic plan while also addressing regionally specific issues.
- The plan is particularly strong with regard to logical alignment of strategies and actions with the identified key risk and issues.
- Integration is a theme throughout the plan and specific actions to drive integration, as well as core values, and a key performance indicator related to integration are included.
- The evidence base for the plan is clear, coherent and the analysis underpinning the selection of strategies and actions is described, providing confidence that the plan is based on best available evidence from a range of sources.
- The plan clearly articulates how community consultation and stakeholders contributed to the development of the plan.
- The plan provides support for devolution of responsibilities, including in the objectives and strategies.
- The plan provides support for ongoing adaptive management, including a sound discussion of the importance of using a range of knowledge sources to provide lessons for improvements going forward.
- The plan describes a commitment to innovation in the region and provides confidence that innovation will be harnessed to achieve regional objectives by addressing innovation through its strategies, actions and key performance indicators.
- The plan includes clear, measureable performance indicators with a timeframe for achieving them. Benchmarking is a strength of the plan and is a solid foundation for performance reporting.
- The plan discusses many aspects of good governance, supported by governance related strategies and actions.

The plan could be improved by addressing the following areas of concern:

- The plan provides a loose indication of how it contributes to the State strategic plan, but could more clearly demonstrate of how the strategies, actions and performance indicators will contribute to state outcomes, priorities and key performance indicators.



Next Steps

That Western LLS address the following issues through adaptive management and future revision of the plan:

- Develop and implement the adaptive management strategy, which will involve further prioritisation of actions, and describe how new knowledge will be captured and incorporated in to planning and implementation.