



John Barilaro
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional NSW
Minister for Skills
Minister for Small Business

MEDIA RELEASE

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MILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR COUNCILS IN THE FAR WEST

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW John Barilaro today announced a \$20 million package for councils in the state's Far West to help establish two Joint Organisations and fund air services, better roads, tourism and culture projects in the region.

Mr Barilaro made the announcement after presenting a multi-million dollar funding package to a meeting of representatives from eight Far West councils at Parliament House in Sydney this morning.

Mr Barilaro said the funding was critical to helping the councils deliver for the most remote parts of NSW.

"As Minister for Regional NSW, I recognise the unique needs and challenges of the vast Far West which covers almost half the land area of NSW," Mr Barilaro said.

"We've put millions of dollars on the table to help encourage councils in the Far West to voluntarily join a Joint Organisation," he said

Late last year the NSW Government introduced legislation to allow local councils in regional NSW to join forces and voluntarily form Joint Organisations.

So far, 90 per cent of councils across regional NSW have already volunteered to join a Joint Organisation.

Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries said Joint Organisations are designed to improve the collaboration between local councils and the NSW Government on important regional projects, and in turn improve service delivery for people in rural and remote areas.

"Joint Organisations in the Far West would mean better collaboration across government, which would lead to better planning and more big-picture projects," Mr Humphries said.

Member for Murray Austin Evans said Joint Organisations comprise member councils, State Government agencies and other key stakeholders to plan and prioritise important projects across traditional council boundaries, that councils on their own would otherwise struggle to get done.

"This bucket of money will give members of Joint Organisations in the Far West grounds to start collaborating and making decisions that make life better for families,

local business owners and communities in the region,” Mr Evans said.

The NSW Government is encouraging the Far West councils to join one of two Far West Joint Organisations – north and south.

The proposed funding package includes:

- \$250 000 to each Joint Organisation to update existing western road plans in their region;
- \$500,000 to each Joint Organisation to employ an Executive Officer and any support staff required;
- \$250,000 to each Joint Organisation towards planning support with NSW Public Works;
- \$5 million to each Joint Organisation to invest in tourism and culture infrastructure projects to grow the visitor economy; and
- Funding to re-establish Far West Air Services to Cobar, Bourke and Lightning Ridge or Walgett with the opportunity to upgrade airport facilities in both the north and south.

Mr Barilaro said four of the Far West Councils have already committed to a Joint Organisation in the south and he encouraged remaining councils to consider the opportunities for a Joint Organisation in the north.

“The NSW Government has been working with these councils for some time, and I hope today’s commitment shows we are serious about seeing strong and effective local government in the Far West,” Mr Barilaro said

“We are doing everything we can to make regional NSW a location of choice - where people can get great jobs, run great businesses and enjoy a great lifestyle - and a commitment from Far West councils to join a Joint Organisation would no doubt go a long way in helping achieve that for the people living in the region,” he said.

Nationals candidate for Barwon Andrew Schier attended the meeting today in Sydney.

“People in the Far West are always battling the tyranny of distance and remoteness – and today’s meeting made it clear to me that this government gets that, and wants to see our Far West thriving,” Mr Schier said.

Councils committed to a Joint Organisation in the south include Balranald, Broken Hill, Central Darling and Wentworth. Councils that have not yet made a commitment include Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar and Walgett.

Funding from the \$20 million package will be made available in the new financial year.

On Friday 11 May 2018, eleven new Joint Organisations were created across regional NSW that involved the commitment of more than 70 councils.

*****Vision is available in the Dropbox link below:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9k3droui2tnvxy4/AACcNp9WEujot823tZIHsYT8a?dl=0>

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