



# SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FOR CASTLEREAGH COUNTRY RDRP

## PRIORITY PROJECTS RAPID BCR REVIEW

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PREPARED FOR:

GILGANDRA SHIRE COUNCIL  
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# 1 Introduction and Methodology

The Castlereagh Country Regional Drought Resilience Plan (RDRP) aims to address the challenges posed by drought and enhance resilience within the Castlereagh Country region of New South Wales. The methodology outlines the systematic process employed to identify, evaluate, and prioritise projects aligned to the RDRP conceptual framework. By comprehensively assessing each priority project with a rapid Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) approach, the beneficial impact of each project to drought resilience efforts in the region can be evaluated and selection of projects for implementation can occur in a quantifiable and deterministic manner.

## 1.1 Project Scoping and Identification

A range of potential drought resilience enhancement projects were identified in the Castlereagh Country RDRP based on their alignment with strategic objectives, stakeholder input direction and RDRP program priorities.

## 1.2 Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

The evaluation and prioritisation framework is designed to assess the feasibility, impact, and strategic alignment of priority projects within the RDRP program. The framework purpose aims to prioritise projects that offer the greatest potential for delivering tangible benefits and advancement of program objectives.

## 1.3 Evaluation Criteria and Weighting

A set of evaluation criteria developed as part of the prioritisation framework is used to assess project feasibility, impact, and alignment with program objectives. Weightings are assigned to each criterion based on its relative importance in determining project priority.

## 1.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Key to the success of project prioritisation is identification of pertinent data and information to assess project feasibility, cost-effectiveness and potential benefits for drought resilience. Each potential project was considered based on factors such as financial viability, technical feasibility, and socio-economic impact.

## 1.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

Build on the stakeholder engagement findings, including community members, government agencies, industry stakeholders, and non-governmental organisations, to solicit input, gather feedback, and ensure alignment with local priorities and needs.

## 1.6 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Identify potential risks, challenges, and uncertainties associated with each project. Develop risk mitigation strategies and contingency plans to address identified risks and minimise their impact on project outcomes.

## 1.7 Prioritisation and Decision-making

Apply the evaluation criteria and weighting to prioritise projects based on their assessed feasibility, impact, and strategic alignment. Make informed decisions regarding project selection, sequencing, and resource allocation to maximise program effectiveness and impact.

## 1.8 BCR Calculation and Financial Analysis

Conduct a rapid BCR analysis for each priority project to assess economic viability and potential return on investment. Calculate the BCR for each project based on estimated costs and anticipated benefits, considering factors such as project duration, discount rates, and sensitivity to key variables.



## 2 Priority Projects for Rapid BCR Review

The assessment concerns six priority projects, each designed to address specific aspects of drought resilience within the Castlereagh Country region. The projects are:

- Priority Project 1 – Groundwater access and availability online toolkit
- Priority Project 2 – Projects Telecommunication, Digital and Automation Enhancement Strategy
- Priority Project 3 – Drought Communication Strategy
- Priority Project 4 – Ag Ideas Business innovation Grant Program
- Priority Project 5 – Drought Innovation and Resilience Showcase Field Day
- Priority Project 6 – Community Wellbeing Initiative

In addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by drought within the region these projects have been selected to target specific areas crucial for enhancing resilience, fostering innovation, and bolstering community well-being. By aligning with the program objectives and utilising a data-driven evaluation framework, these projects aim to deliver substantial benefits to the region, paving the way for sustainable development and prosperity.

This report provides a detailed overview of each priority project, offering deeper insights into objectives, key benefits, project costs, and anticipated impacts. Through this comprehensive examination, a thorough understanding is gained of how each project contributes to the overarching goal of enhancing drought resilience within the Castlereagh Country region. From telecommunications enhancement strategies to business innovation grant programs and water storage feasibility studies, these projects are dissected to highlight their significance in addressing the diverse challenges posed by drought. With a focus on data-driven analysis and strategic alignment, this section delves into the intricacies of each project, showcasing their potential to drive positive change and foster long-term sustainability.



## 3 Priority Project 1 – Castlereagh Country Region Groundwater Access and Availability Online Toolkit

### 3.1 Project Scope

The Castlereagh Country region groundwater access and availability online toolkit will provide a dedicated online interface that combines and simplifies available hydrogeological information on local groundwater, existing water bore infrastructure, water access licence locations and volumes, cost estimates for bore drilling and water licensing, and any other relevant historical and current data available across the various existing online platforms. The tool kit would be dynamic with information updated through integration with useful existing online platforms.

### 3.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of the toolkit:

- A central point for people in the Castlereagh Country region to access data regarding groundwater availability, quantity, and quality specific to this region.
- Provide information for stakeholders to understand the water licencing process and issues in the Castlereagh Region
- Provide information to increase evidence-based decision making for access to and managing groundwater resources.
- Provide information that encourages investment in small scale irrigation farming to increase local production of fodder crops.
- Reducing the economic risk to farmers and those reliant groundwater for domestic purposes.

### 3.3 Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

Table 1: Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework Priority Project 1

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Weighting	Assessment
<b>Technical Feasibility</b>	HIGH	40%	This criterion assesses the technical feasibility and integration requirements of proposed toolkit.
<b>Economic Viability</b>	HIGH	30%	This criterion evaluates the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of developing and implementing the toolkit, including capital costs, operational expenses, and potential revenue streams or cost savings.
<b>Socio-economic Impact</b>	HIGH	20%	This criterion analyses the potential socio-economic benefits of the proposed toolkit, including impacts on agricultural productivity, job creation, community resilience, and regional economic development.
<b>Strategic Alignment</b>	HIGH	10%	This criterion considers factors such as other programs, data and resources currently available and how these could be utilised and integrated into the toolkit

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

- The scoping will involve gathering data on groundwater availability, demand projections, climate patterns, land use, and stakeholder input.
- Desktop review, key stakeholder interviews and working with groundwater/hydrogeological experts in the region will guide

the information that is available through the toolkit

### 3.5 Further Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- Stakeholder engagement activities will be detailed consultations with local communities, government agencies, water utilities, agricultural producers, and environmental organisations.
- Input from stakeholders will be solicited to gather feedback, focus functionality, and ensure alignment with local priorities throughout toolkit development.

### 3.6 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

- Potential risks, such as funding constraints, technical challenges and data access will be identified and assessed.
- Risk mitigation strategies and contingency plans will be developed to address identified risks and minimise their impact on project outcomes.

### 3.7 Prioritisation and Decision-making

- Evaluation criteria and weighting will be applied to the element of the toolkit based on effectiveness, economic viability, socio-economic impact, and benefit in driving evidence-based decision making.
- Informed decisions regarding project selection, sequencing, and resource allocation will be made to maximise program effectiveness and impact.

### 3.8 Delivery and Reporting

- A comprehensive project management plan would be developed to implement the project.
- The plan will include rapid BCR analysis, stakeholder engagement summaries, risk assessments, and implementation recommendations to guide decision-making and inform project implementation.

### 3.9 Itemised Costs - Castlereagh Country region groundwater access and availability online toolkit

Table 2: Itemised Costs Priority Project 1 - Stage 1

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Initial Project Scoping</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a basic project scope of works to inform the development of a scope of works</li> </ul>	5,000
<b>Procurement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a request for quotation to seek proposals for the market to develop the toolkit</li> </ul>	5,000
<b>Specialist Engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The engagement of a contractor to research, develop and implement the toolkit and provide guidance for its ongoing management</li> </ul>	100,000
<b>Stakeholder Engagement and Testing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting stakeholder engagement activities, including key stakeholder meetings, workshops, and consultations, to gather input and test the information to be included in the</li> </ul>	10,000

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Project Management and Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overseeing project planning, coordination, and administration to ensure effective delivery of the toolkit</li> </ul>	30,000
<b>Total Estimated Project Costs</b>	<b>150,000</b>
<i>BCR Assumed Actual Benefits: \$500,000</i>	3.33

### 3.9.1 Standard Rates for Contract services

- **Groundwater/Hydrological and Specialist:** \$250 - \$300 per hour
- **Website Specialist and graphic design:** \$100 - \$200 per hour
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation:** \$100 - \$200 per hour
- **Researchers and Data Analytics:** \$150 - \$250 per hour
- **Project Management and Administration:** \$200 - \$300 per hour

### 3.9.2 Rapid BCR Calculation and Assumed Benefits

The BCR for The Castlereagh region groundwater access and availability online toolkit 3.33. This indicates that for every \$1 invested in the project, approximately \$3.33 in benefits are anticipated to be generated, suggesting significant economic viability and positive returns on investment.

### 3.9.3 Assumed Benefits for Castlereagh region groundwater access and availability online toolkit

- Improved water management practices leading to enhanced water security and availability during drought periods.
- Increased agricultural productivity and reliability of water supply, supporting the viability of farming operations.
- Enhanced community resilience to drought and other water-related challenges through providing evidence-based decision making for new water infrastructure.
- Economic development opportunities arising from improved knowledge of groundwater, attracting investment and supporting local businesses.

## 4 Priority Project 2 – Castlereagh Major Projects Telecommunications Enhancement Strategy

### 4.1 Project Scope

The Castlereagh Major Projects Telecommunications Enhancement Strategy endeavours to construct a robust business case aimed at enhancing telecommunications and digital accessibility within the Castlereagh Country region. Focused on bolstering connectivity and communication infrastructure, the strategy seeks to underpin economic development, foster community resilience, and drive regional growth during drought conditions. By addressing the existing gaps in digital services, the strategy aims to lay the groundwork for a more connected and prosperous region, ultimately benefiting businesses during drought.

### 4.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of the project include:

- The primary objectives of the project include:
- Evaluate current telecommunications infrastructure, assess gaps and limitations,
- Identify opportunities for improvement, and
- Develop a holistic telecommunications enhancement strategy to address the region's connectivity needs.
- Understand the opportunities for automation and technology enhancements for drought affected businesses particularly in the agricultural, agri-tourism and local business.

### 4.3 Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

Table 3: Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework Priority Project 2

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Weighting	Assessment
<b>Technical Feasibility</b>	HIGH	30%	Assess the technical feasibility of proposed telecommunications enhancement solutions, including infrastructure upgrades, network expansion, and technology adoption.
<b>Economic Viability</b>	HIGH	40%	Evaluate the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of implementing telecommunications, digital and innovative automated enhancement initiatives, considering capital investments, operational expenses, and potential revenue streams.
<b>Socio-economic Impact</b>	HIGH	20%	Analyse the potential socio-economic benefits of improved telecommunications and automated coverage, including impacts on business productivity, innovation, job creation, and community well-being (ie a farmer can leave the farm if feed and water can be automated).
<b>Strategic Alignment</b>	HIGH	10%	Ensure alignment of proposed strategies with regional development priorities, government policies, and industry standards to maximise program effectiveness and impact.

#### 4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

- Conduct a thorough assessment of existing telecommunications and digital infrastructure, including coverage maps, service providers, and connectivity challenges.
- Analyse data on population demographics, economic activity, industry trends, and community needs to inform telecommunications and digital enhancement strategies.

#### 4.5 Further Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- Engage with telecommunications providers, government agencies, local businesses, community organisations, and residents to gather input, identify priorities, and address concerns related to telecommunications coverage and connectivity.
- Foster collaboration and partnerships to leverage resources, expertise, and support for implementing telecommunications enhancement initiatives.
- Engage with industry clusters to seek opportunities for digital and automated advancements if connectivity and network coverage was more stable.

#### 4.6 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

- Identify potential risks and challenges associated with telecommunications enhancement projects, such as regulatory barriers, funding constraints, technical limitations, and community resistance.
- Develop risk mitigation strategies and contingency plans to address identified risks and minimise their impact on project outcomes.

#### 4.7 Prioritisation and Decision-making

- Apply evaluation criteria and weighting to prioritise telecommunications enhancement strategies based on their innovation, automation opportunities, technical feasibility, economic viability, socio-economic impact, and strategic alignment.
- Make informed decisions regarding project selection, sequencing, and resource allocation to maximise program effectiveness and address priority connectivity needs in the Castlereagh Country region.

#### 4.8 BCR Calculation and Financial Analysis

- A rapid BCR analysis has been conducted to assess the economic viability and potential return on investment of the telecommunications and digital enhancement strategy.
- The BCR has been calculated based on estimated costs and anticipated benefits, considering factors such as improved agricultural and business productivity, enhanced connectivity, and economic development that will prosper during drought.

#### 4.9 Delivery and Reporting

- Deliver a comprehensive report for the Castlereagh Major Projects Telecommunications Enhancement Strategy, including refined BCR analysis, stakeholder engagement and industry summaries, risk assessments, and implementation recommendations over a short, medium, and long-term timeframe.
- Provide clear recommendations for action, prioritised project timelines, and resource requirements to guide decision-making and inform project infrastructure and training implementation.

## 4.10 Itemised Costs

Table 4: Itemised Costs Priority Project 2

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Technical Feasibility Study</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting technical research, site analysis, and feasibility studies to evaluate current infrastructure and identify enhancement opportunities.</li> </ul>	20,000
<b>Technology Adoption Research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researching and exploring new technologies and innovations, such as 5G networks, fiber-optic cables, and satellite communication systems, to enhance connectivity and performance in the Castlereagh Country region.</li> </ul>	25,000
<b>Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting stakeholder engagement activities, including meetings, workshops, and public consultations, to gather input and address concerns regarding telecommunications enhancement strategies</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Industry Engagement and Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging with industry clusters and innovators to explore technological advancements and innovative solutions for enhancing telecommunications in the Castlereagh Country region.</li> </ul>	20,000
<b>Risk Assessment and Mitigation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying potential risks and challenges associated with telecommunications enhancement projects and developing risk mitigation strategies.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Quantity Surveyor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessing the technical and financial feasibility of proposed telecommunications enhancement solutions and costing the strategy solutions.</li> </ul>	15,000
<b>Project Management and Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overseeing project planning, coordination, implementation, and monitoring activities to ensure the successful execution of the telecommunications enhancement strategy.</li> </ul>	35,000
<b>Total Estimated Project Costs</b>	<b>135,000</b>
<i>BCR Assumed Actual Benefits: \$500,000</i>	<b>2.22</b>

### 4.10.1 Standard Rates for Contract services

Quantity surveyors typically use standard rates for various construction-related activities. These rates may vary depending on factors such as location, project complexity, and market conditions. As of the current standard rates in Australia:

- **Technical Feasibility Study:** \$100 - \$150 per hour
- **Infrastructure Network Advisor:** \$200 - \$300 per hour
- **Network Expansion:** \$150 - \$250 per hour
- **Technology Adoption:** \$250 - \$350 per hour
- **Risk Assessment and Mitigation:** \$150 - \$250 per hour



- **Project Management and Administration:** \$200 - \$300 per hour
- **Agriculture Consultant:** \$80 – \$200 per hour
- **Drought Specialist:** \$250 – \$350 per hour

#### 4.10.2 Rapid BCR Calculation and Assumed Benefits

The BCR for the Castlereagh Major Projects Telecommunications Enhancement Strategy is calculated at 2.22. This figure indicates that for every 1 dollar invested in the strategy, approximately \$2.22 in benefits are projected to be generated. This promising ratio suggests the potential economic viability and positive returns on investment for the proposed telecommunications enhancement.

#### 4.11 Assumed Benefits for Telecommunications Enhancement Strategy

- **Enhanced Connectivity for Agribusiness:** Improved telecommunications services will facilitate economic growth in agriculture and agri-tourism sectors, bolstering local townships during droughts.
- **Improved Emergency Response:** Reliable communication channels will enhance community safety and well-being, enabling swift emergency responses for agricultural operations.
- **Increased Access to Market Information:** Expanded telecommunications coverage ensures farmers and businesses have access to vital market information, supporting better decision-making and competitiveness.
- **Strengthened Community Networks:** Enhanced communication infrastructure fosters collaboration among agricultural stakeholders, strengthening community resilience during crises.
- **Economic Prosperity for Rural Areas:** The strategy's benefits include job creation, increased agricultural productivity, and thriving local economies, leading to sustained prosperity in rural regions.
- **Stakeholders, organisations, and government agencies involved in drought response and mitigation efforts.**
- **Potential economic benefits from increased donations, volunteerism, and tourism promotion during drought periods, contributing to local economies and community resilience.**

## 5 Priority Project 3 – Drought Communication Strategy

### 5.1 Project Scope

The Drought Communication Strategy aims to enhance local and external communication channels to support drought-affected communities in the Castlereagh Country region. The plan will focus on clear and consistent messaging, stakeholder engagement, and public relations efforts to facilitate the improved management of donations, offer support, combat negative narratives, and highlight the benefits of visitation and purchasing from the region’s economies during drought periods.

### 5.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of the project include:

- Improve communication channels, stakeholder engagement, and public relations to raise awareness, garner support; and
- Combat negative narratives during drought periods.
- Develop strategies and actions to support the receipt, management and distribution of donations that occur during intense droughts.
- Enhance existing destination campaigns such as Real Country to maintain and enhance visitation during the region to support local businesses.
- Enhance existing campaigns that encourage shop local, support local within the Castlereagh Region
- Facilitate purchasing from Castlereagh Region business by metro areas not impacted by drought.

### 5.3 Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

Table 5: Evaluation and Prioritisation Priority Project 3

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Weighting	Assessment
Technical Feasibility	HIGH	30%	Engage with stakeholders to gather input, identify priorities, and address concerns related to drought communication strategies.
Economic Viability	HIGH	40%	Evaluate the effectiveness of communication channels, messaging, and outreach efforts in reaching and engaging target agencies.
Socio-economic Impact	HIGH	20%	Analyse the potential socio-economic benefits of improved communication and support mechanisms during drought periods.
Strategic Alignment	HIGH	10%	Ensure alignment of communication strategies with regional development priorities and community needs.

### 5.4 Data Collection and Analysis

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing communication channels, messaging effectiveness, and stakeholder engagement practices.
- Analyse data on drought impacts, community resilience, economic activity, and public perceptions to inform communication strategies.

### 5.5 Further Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- Engage with stakeholders, including community members, government agencies, local businesses, and non-profit



organisations, to gather input and foster collaboration.

- Facilitate partnerships and alliances to leverage resources, expertise, and support for implementing the drought communication strategy.

## 5.6 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

- Identify potential risks and challenges associated with communication efforts, such as misinformation, public skepticism, and resource constraints.
- Develop risk mitigation strategies and contingency plans to address identified risks and ensure effective communication outcomes.

## 5.7 Prioritisation and Decision-making

- Prioritise communication strategies based on stakeholder input, data analysis, and risk assessment findings.
- Make informed decisions regarding messaging, outreach tactics, and resource allocation to maximise communication effectiveness and impact.

## 5.8 BCR Calculation and Financial Analysis

- A rapid BCR analysis has been conducted to assess the economic viability and potential return on investment of the communication strategy.
- The BCR has been calculated based on estimated costs and anticipated benefits, considering factors such as project duration, discount rates, and sensitivity to key variables.

## 5.9 Itemised Costs

Table 6: Itemised Costs Priority Project 3

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting stakeholder engagement activities, including community meetings, workshops, and consultations, to gather input and address concerns.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Communication Materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing communication materials such as brochures, flyers, and fact sheets to disseminate information about drought resilience and preparedness.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Public Relations Campaign</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a public relations campaign to raise awareness about drought-related issues, promote community involvement, and foster behavioural change.</li> </ul>	15,000
<b>External Communications Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing an external communications approach, such as a website or social media channels, to provide timely updates, resources, and support to the community.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Project Management and Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overseeing project planning, coordination, and administration to ensure effective delivery of the drought communication strategy.</li> </ul>	5,000

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Total Estimated Project Costs</b>	<b>50,000</b>
<i>BCR Assumed Actual Benefits: Economic benefits from improved communication and support mechanisms during drought periods: \$200,000</i>	<b>4.0</b>

### 5.9.1 Standard Rates for Contract services

Quantity surveyors typically use standard rates for various construction-related activities. These rates may vary depending on factors such as location, project complexity, and market conditions. As of the current standard rates in Australia:

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation:** \$100 - 200 per hour
- **Project Management and Administration:** \$200 - 300 per hour
- **Business Strategy Consultant:** \$100 - \$300 per hour
- **Communications Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour
- **Public Relations Consultant:** \$100 - \$250 per hour
- **Marketing Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour

### 5.9.2 Rapid BCR Calculation and Assumed Benefits

The BCR for the Drought Communication Strategy is approximately 4.0. This indicates that for every \$ 1 invested in the project, approximately \$4.0 in benefits are anticipated to be generated, suggesting significant economic viability and positive returns on investment.

### 5.10 Assumed Benefits

- Enhanced local and external communication channels leading to increased community awareness, engagement, and support for drought-affected areas.
- Improved coordination and collaboration among stakeholders, organisations, and government agencies involved in drought response and mitigation efforts.
- Potential economic benefits from increased donations, volunteerism, and tourism promotion during drought periods, contributing to local economies and community resilience.

## 6 Priority Project 4 – Ag Ideas Business Innovation Grant Program

### 6.1 Project Scope

The Ag Ideas Business Innovation Grant Program aims to support businesses affected by drought by providing funding for innovative projects and initiatives.

### 6.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of the project include:

- Build upon the existing Big Ideas Business Grant Program in the Gilgandra Shire;
- Create an Agriculture/Agri-business/Agri-tourism program aimed at diversifying these sectors;
- Foster an ecosystem for innovation within the agricultural and related industries;
- Prioritise projects with a commercial return focus to contribute to local economic growth; and
- Stimulate business innovation, entrepreneurship, and resilience in drought-affected areas through targeted grant funding.

### 6.3 Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

Table 7: Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework Priority Project 4

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Weighting	Assessment
Technical Feasibility	HIGH	30%	Assess the potential impact and scalability of proposed Agriculture/Agri-business/Agri-tourism business innovation projects.
Economic Viability	HIGH	40%	Evaluate the economic feasibility and sustainability of proposed projects, including revenue generation potential and cost-effectiveness.
Socio-economic Impact	HIGH	20%	Analyse the potential community benefits of funded projects, such as job creation, skill development, and local economic growth
Strategic Alignment	HIGH	10%	Ensure alignment of proposed projects with regional development priorities and industry trends.

### 6.4 Data Collection and Analysis

- Conduct a review of business proposals, innovation plans, and project feasibility studies to assess eligibility and potential impact.
- Analyse data on business performance, market trends, and industry needs to inform grant allocation decisions.

### 6.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- Engage with businesses, industry associations, economic development agencies, and local governments to promote the grant program and solicit applications.
- Provide guidance and support to applicants throughout the grant application process, including workshops, webinars, and one-on-one consultations.

## 6.6 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

- Identify potential risks and challenges associated with funded projects, such as market volatility, technical feasibility, and financial viability.
- Develop risk management strategies and monitoring mechanisms to mitigate risks and ensure successful project outcomes.

## 6.7 BCR Calculation and Financial Analysis

- A rapid BCR analysis has been conducted to assess the economic viability and potential return on investment of the grant program.
- The BCR has been calculated based on estimated costs and anticipated benefits, considering factors such as project duration, discount rates, and sensitivity to key variables.

## 6.8 Itemised Costs

Table 8: Itemised Costs Priority Project 4

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Grant Funding Allocation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate grant funds to selected business innovation projects based on merit, feasibility, and potential impact.</li> </ul>	80,000
<b>Administration and Oversight</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop application guidelines, eligibility criteria, and evaluation criteria for grant applicants.</li> <li>• Establish a grant review committee to assess applications, conduct interviews, and select recipients.</li> <li>• Allocate grant funds to selected business innovation projects based on merit, feasibility, and potential impact.</li> <li>• Negotiate funding agreements and milestones with grant recipients to ensure accountability and project delivery.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Stakeholder Engagement, Marketing and Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the grant program and funded projects through various marketing channels, including websites, social media, press releases, and events.</li> <li>• Develop marketing materials, success stories, and case studies to showcase the impact and outcomes of the grant program.</li> <li>• Provide technical assistance, mentorship, and training programs to support grant recipients in implementing their business innovation projects.</li> <li>• Facilitate networking opportunities, workshops, and knowledge-sharing forums to foster collaboration and innovation within the business community.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Project Management and Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress, outcomes, and impacts of funded projects.</li> <li>• Conduct site visits, progress reports, and performance reviews to assess project effectiveness and compliance with grant requirements.</li> </ul>	5,000
<b>Total Estimated Project Costs</b>	<b>105,000</b>

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
Assumed Actual Benefits: Estimated Economic benefits from funded business innovation projects: AUD 250,000	2.9

### 6.8.1 Standard Rates for Contract services

Quantity surveyors typically use standard rates for various construction-related activities. These rates may vary depending on factors such as location, project complexity, and market conditions. As of the current standard rates in Australia:

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation:** \$100 - \$200 per hour
- **Project Management and Administration:** \$200 - \$300 per hour
- **Business Strategy Consultant:** \$100 - \$300 per hour
- **Innovation Consultant:** \$100 - \$250 per hour
- **Grant Writing Consultant:** \$80 - \$150 per hour

### 6.9 Rapid BCR Calculation and Assumed Benefits

The BCR for the Ag Ideas Business Innovation Grant Program is approximately 2.9. This suggests that for every AUD 1 invested in the program, approximately AUD 2.9 in benefits are anticipated to be generated, indicating positive economic returns on investment.

### 6.10 Assumed Benefits

- Stimulate business innovation and entrepreneurship in drought-affected areas, leading to the development of new products, services, and technologies.
- Create opportunities for job creation, skills development, and economic diversification through funded business innovation projects.
- Foster a culture of resilience and adaptability among businesses, enhancing the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the local economy.

## 7 Priority Project 5 – Drought Innovation and Resilience Showcase Field Day

### 7.1 Project Scope

The Drought Innovation and Resilience Showcase Field Day project aims to establish an annual event to showcase innovative solutions and strategies for drought resilience in the Gilgandra and Warrumbungle regions. The event will serve as a platform to promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building among stakeholders to address the impacts of drought on local communities, agriculture, and businesses.

### 7.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of the project include:

- Evaluate current drought resilience initiatives and identify gaps and opportunities for innovation;
- Showcase innovative technologies, practices, and initiatives that enhance drought resilience and adaptation;
- Facilitate networking and collaboration among stakeholders to foster innovation and knowledge exchange; and
- Promote community awareness and engagement in drought resilience efforts.

### 7.3 Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

Table 9: Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework Priority Project 5

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Weighting	Assessment
<b>Technical Feasibility</b>	HIGH	30%	Assess the logistical feasibility of organising the agricultural showcase, including venue selection, event planning, and participant engagement.
<b>Economic Viability</b>	HIGH	40%	Evaluate the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of hosting the showcase, considering expenses for venue rental, equipment, marketing, and staff.
<b>Socio-economic Impact</b>	HIGH	20%	Analyse the potential socio-economic benefits of the showcase, such as knowledge sharing among farmers, market access for local producers, and promotion of sustainable agriculture practices.
<b>Strategic Alignment</b>	HIGH	10%	Ensure that the showcase adheres to environmental regulations and practices, minimising waste generation, energy consumption, and carbon emissions.

### 7.4 Data Collection and Analysis

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing drought resilience initiatives, technologies, and practices in the region.
- Analyse data on climate patterns, water availability, agricultural productivity, and socio-economic impacts of drought.
- Identify key challenges and opportunities for innovation in drought resilience and adaptation.

### 7.5 Further Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- Engage with local farmers, businesses, government agencies, research institutions, and community organisations to gather input and insights.



- Foster partnerships and collaboration to leverage resources, expertise, and support for the showcase field day.
- Solicit feedback and ideas from stakeholders to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the event.

## 7.6 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

- Identify potential risks and challenges associated with organising the showcase field day, such as funding constraints, logistical issues, and adverse weather conditions.
- Develop risk mitigation strategies and contingency plans to address identified risks and minimise disruptions to the event.

## 7.7 BCR Calculation and Financial Analysis

- A rapid BCR analysis has been conducted to assess the economic viability and potential return on investment of the Showcase Field Day.
- The BCR has been calculated based on estimated costs and anticipated benefits, considering factors such as project duration, discount rates, and sensitivity to key variables.

## 7.8 Prioritisation and Decision-making

- Apply evaluation criteria to prioritise innovative solutions and initiatives for inclusion in the showcase field day.
- Make informed decisions regarding event logistics, program content, and resource allocation to maximise the impact and relevance of the event.

## 7.9 Itemised Costs

Table 10: Itemised Costs Priority Project 5

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Event Planning and Coordination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overseeing project planning, coordination, and administration to ensure effective delivery of the drought communication strategy.</li> <li>• Develop event concept, theme, and agenda.</li> <li>• Coordinate logistics such as venue booking, catering, and equipment rentals.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Marketing and Promotion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design promotional materials including flyers, posters, and digital ads.</li> <li>• Implement marketing strategies to reach target audience through social media, email campaigns, and local media outlets.</li> </ul>	5,000
<b>Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with stakeholders including local farmers, businesses, government agencies, and community groups to solicit participation and support.</li> <li>• Organise outreach activities such as information sessions, workshops, and networking events.</li> </ul>	5,000
<b>External Communications Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing an external communications approach, such as a website or social media channels, to provide timely updates, resources, and support to the community.</li> </ul>	10,000

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Program Development and Content Creation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curate content for the showcase field day including presentations, demonstrations, and interactive sessions.</li> <li>Coordinate with speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors to ensure program alignment with objectives.</li> </ul>	5,000
<b>Total Estimated Project Costs</b>	<b>35,000</b>
<b>BCR Assumed Actual Benefits: Economic benefits from improved agricultural practices, knowledge sharing, and market access: \$150,000</b>	<b>4.29</b>

### 7.9.1 Standard Rates for Contract services

Quantity surveyors typically use standard rates for various construction-related activities. These rates may vary depending on factors such as location, project complexity, and market conditions. As of the current standard rates in Australia:

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation:** \$100 - 200 per hour
- **Project Management and Administration:** \$200 - 300 per hour
- **Communications Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour
- **Public Relations Consultant:** \$100 - \$250 per hour
- **Marketing Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour
- **Event Management Consultant:** \$100 - \$250 per hour
- **Agriculture Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour

### 7.9.2 Rapid BCR Calculation and Assumed Benefits

The BCR for the Field Day Showcase is approximately 4.29. This suggests that for every \$ 1 invested in the project, approximately \$ 4.29 in benefits are anticipated to be generated, indicating significant economic viability and positive returns on investment.

### 7.10 Assumed Benefits

- Increased adoption of drought-resistant agricultural practices through knowledge sharing and demonstration, leading to improved farm resilience and sustainability.
- Strengthened community cohesion and mental well-being through social interaction and support networks fostered during the event.
- Enhanced agricultural productivity and profitability as a result of improved access to innovative farming techniques and market opportunities showcased at the event.



## 8 Priority Project 6 – Community Drought Resilience Development Fund

### 8.1 Project Scope

The Community Drought Resilience Development Fund aims to establish a local or regional fund that enables the community to undertake drought support events early in the drought cycle, prior to when government support programs typically make funds available. This initiative also aims to reduce stigma about mental health problems and provide professional education for health and agricultural support services to address the effects of drought-related stress.

### 8.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of the project include:

- Establish a local or regional fund to support community-led drought support events early in the drought cycle.
- Reduce stigma about mental health problems to overcome barriers to seeking professional help and advice early.
- Provide professional education for health services, including general practitioners, and non-health agricultural support services to address the effects of drought-related stress.
- Conduct community education and public health campaigns to enable farmers and rural residents to identify the effects of drought.

### 8.3 Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

Table 11: Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework Priority Project 6

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Weighting	Assessment
Technical Feasibility	HIGH	25%	Assess the feasibility of establishing and managing the community fund and implementing education and public health campaigns.
Economic Viability	HIGH	35%	Analyse the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the proposed initiatives in addressing drought-related challenges.
Socio-economic Impact	HIGH	20%	Evaluate the potential impact on reducing stigma about mental health, improving access to support services, and enhancing community resilience.
Strategic Alignment	HIGH	20%	Engage with key stakeholders, including community members, health professionals, and agricultural support services, to gather input and ensure the initiatives meet their needs.

### 8.4 Data Collection and Analysis

- Collect data on community needs, existing support services, and perceptions of mental health and drought-related stress.
- Analyse data to identify gaps in support services and areas where education and public health campaigns are needed.

### 8.5 Further Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- Engage with community members, health professionals, agricultural support services, and other stakeholders to gather input and feedback on the proposed initiatives.
- Foster collaboration and partnerships to leverage resources and support for implementing the community resilience initiatives.

## 8.6 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

- Identify potential risks and challenges associated with establishing the community fund and implementing education and public health campaigns.
- Develop risk mitigation strategies and contingency plans to address identified risks and minimise their impact on project outcomes.

## 8.7 BCR Calculation and Financial Analysis

- A rapid BCR analysis has been conducted to assess the economic viability and potential return on investment of the Community Chest / Fund.
- The BCR has been calculated based on estimated costs and anticipated benefits, considering factors such as project duration, discount rates, and sensitivity to key variables.

## 8.8 Prioritisation and Decision-making

- Apply evaluation criteria and weighting to prioritise initiatives based on their feasibility, impact, and alignment with community needs.
- Make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and project implementation to maximise the effectiveness of the community resilience initiatives.

## 8.9 Itemised Costs

Table 12: Itemised Costs Priority Project 6

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Establishment of Community Fund</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and select appropriate legal structures for the fund.</li> <li>• Engage legal professionals to draft necessary documentation.</li> <li>• Secure initial seed funding through fundraising activities or grants.</li> </ul>	10,000
<b>Professional Education Programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop educational materials tailored to health and agricultural support services.</li> <li>• Organise training sessions and workshops in collaboration with stakeholders.</li> <li>• Deliver educational programs to health professionals and agricultural support staff.</li> </ul>	6,000
<b>Community Education and Public Health Campaigns</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design compelling educational materials and resources targeting the community.</li> <li>• Plan and execute outreach activities and events to engage the community.</li> <li>• Utilise various communication channels to disseminate information.</li> </ul>	6,000
<b>External Communications Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing an external communications approach, such as a website or social media channels, to provide timely updates, resources, and support to the community.</li> </ul>	4,000

Line Item	Cost Estimate (\$)
<b>Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key stakeholders and establish communication channels for engagement.</li> <li>Schedule and facilitate stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and consultations.</li> <li>Gather feedback and input to inform the design and implementation of initiatives.</li> </ul>	4,000
<b>Project Management and Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate resources and oversee project implementation according to the established plan.</li> <li>Ensure effective communication and coordination among project team members.</li> <li>Manage administrative tasks such as budgeting, reporting, and documentation.</li> <li>Develop evaluation frameworks with clear indicators and metrics for assessing impact.</li> <li>Regularly monitor progress and performance against established targets.</li> <li>Collect and analyse data to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.</li> </ul>	5,000
<b>Total Estimated Project Costs</b>	<b>35,000</b>
<b>BCR Assumed Actual Benefits: Economic benefits from improved social wellbeing, knowledge sharing, and education access: \$150,000</b>	<b>4.29</b>

### 8.9.1 Standard Rates for Contract services

Quantity surveyors typically use standard rates for various construction-related activities. These rates may vary depending on factors such as location, project complexity, and market conditions. As of the current standard rates in Australia:

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation:** \$100 - 200 per hour
- **Project Management and Administration:** \$200 - 300 per hour
- **Communications Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour
- **Agriculture Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour
- **Mental Health Consultant:** \$100 - \$250 per hour
- **Community Development Consultant:** \$80 - \$200 per hour
- **Fundraising Consultant:** \$80 - \$150 per hour

### 8.9.2 Rapid BCR Calculation and Assumed Benefits

The BCR for the Field Day Showcase is approximately 4.29. This suggests that for every \$ 1 invested in the project, approximately \$ 4.29 in benefits are anticipated to be generated, indicating significant economic viability and positive returns on investment.

### 8.10 Assumed Benefits

- Increased adoption of drought-resistant agricultural practices through knowledge sharing and demonstration, leading to improved farm resilience and sustainability.
- Strengthened community cohesion and mental well-being through social interaction and support networks fostered during the event.
- Enhanced agricultural productivity and profitability as a result of improved access to innovative farming techniques and



market opportunities showcased at the event.

### 8.11 Project Priority 1. Castlereagh Country Region Groundwater Access and Availability Online Toolkit

The Castlereagh Country region groundwater access and availability online toolkit will provide a dedicated online interface that combines and simplifies available hydrogeological information on local groundwater, existing water bore infrastructure, water access licence locations and volumes, cost estimates for bore drilling and water licensing, and any other relevant historical and current data available across the various existing online platforms. The tool kit would be dynamic with information updated through integration with useful existing online platforms.

### 8.12 Project Priority 2. Projects Telecommunication, Digital and Automation Enhancement Strategy

The Castlereagh Major Projects Telecommunications, Digital and Automation Enhancement Strategy aims to improve telecommunications coverage and infrastructure in region. With a high rating in technical feasibility and economic viability, this project is poised to enhance connectivity, support economic development, and improve response services.

### 8.13 Project Priority 3. Drought Communication Strategy

The Drought Communication Strategy focuses on improving local and external communication channels during drought periods. With high ratings in socio-economic impact and strategic alignment, this project is expected to increase community awareness, engagement, and support, bolstering resilience in times of drought.

### 8.14 Project Priority 4. Ag Ideas Business Innovation Grant Program

The Big Ideas Business Innovation Grant Program aim to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship in the business and agricultural sectors, respectively. With high ratings in economic viability and strategic alignment, these programs are poised to drive innovation, create jobs, and foster economic diversification in drought-affected areas.

### 8.15 Project Priority 5. Drought Innovation and Resilience Showcase Field Day

The Field Day Showcase aims to promote agricultural resilience, knowledge sharing, and community cohesion. With an emphasis on showcasing drought-resistant agricultural practices, this project is expected to enhance farming sustainability and community engagement, contributing to drought resilience.

### 8.16 Project Priority 6. Community Wellbeing Initiative

The Community Wellbeing Initiative focuses on supporting mental health projects, social events, and education campaigns to enhance community resilience during drought periods. By reducing stigma about mental health and providing professional education for health and agricultural support services, this project aims to improve community well-being and support drought-affected individuals.

## 9 Overall Opportunity for Program Impact

Collectively, these projects form a cohesive plan to enhance drought resilience in the Castlereagh Country region. By addressing key challenges in water management, communication, innovation, and economic development, the projects aim to build a more resilient and sustainable future for communities, mitigating the impacts of drought and fostering long-term prosperity.

The table below provides a comparative analysis of how each project aligns with the Evaluation Criteria and Weighting identified earlier. It allows for a quick assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each project in meeting the specified criteria.

Table 13: Evaluation Criteria

Priority Project Name	Technical Feasibility	Economic Viability	Socio-economic Impact	Strategic Alignment
<b>Project 1:</b> Groundwater Access and Availability Online Toolkit	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
<b>Project 2:</b> Projects Telecommunication, Digital and Automation Enhancement Strategy	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
<b>Project 3:</b> Drought Communication Strategy	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
<b>Project 4:</b> Ag Ideas Business innovation Grant Program	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH
<b>Project 5:</b> Drought Innovation and Resilience Showcase Field Day	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
<b>Project 6:</b> Community Wellbeing Initiative	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH

## 10 Summary of Project Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCR)

Table 14 provides a concise overview of the objectives, key benefits, project costs, and rapid BCR for each of the six projects within the Castlereagh Country RDRP.

Table 14: Objectives Overview

Priority Project Name	Project Objectives Overview	Key Benefits Overview	Indicative Project Costs \$	BCR
<b>Project 1:</b> Groundwater Access and Availability Online Toolkit	Provide a dedicated online interface that combines all available hydrogeological information on local groundwater, existing water bore infrastructure, details of licensed bores and cost estimates for bore drilling and water licensing.	Improved water management, agricultural productivity, community resilience, and economic development.	150,000	3.33
<b>Project 2:</b> Projects Telecommunication, Digital and Automation Enhancement Strategy	Enhance telecommunications coverage and infrastructure in the Castlereagh Country region to support economic development and community resilience.	Improved connectivity, economic growth, enhanced quality of life, and emergency services support.	135,000	2.22
<b>Project 3:</b> Drought Communication Strategy	Improve local and external communication channels to support drought-affected communities in the Castlereagh Country region.	Increased community awareness, engagement, and support during drought periods.	50,000	4.0
<b>Project 4:</b> Ag Ideas Business innovation Grant Program	Stimulate business innovation, entrepreneurship, and resilience in drought-affected areas through targeted grant funding.	Business innovation, job creation, economic diversification, and community development.	105,000	2.9
<b>Project 5:</b> Drought Innovation and Resilience Showcase Field Day	Field Day Showcase Promote agricultural resilience and knowledge sharing, enhance community cohesion, and support mental wellbeing.	Increased adoption of drought-resistant agricultural practices, strengthened community cohesion, enhanced agricultural productivity.	35,000	4.29
<b>Project 6:</b> Community Wellbeing Initiative	Support mental health projects, social events, farming information events, maintain community sport and recreation facilities, and green spaces.	Improved mental health support, social cohesion, enhanced farming practices, maintained community facilities.	35,000	4.29

In conclusion, the six priority projects outlined in this overview represent a concerted effort to tackle the complexities of drought resilience. Through rigorous analysis and strategic planning, each project has been tailored to address key facets of community development, infrastructure enhancement, and socio-economic resilience. As they move forward, these projects hold the promise of not only mitigating the immediate impacts of drought but also laying the groundwork for a more resilient and prosperous future for the Castlereagh Country region.