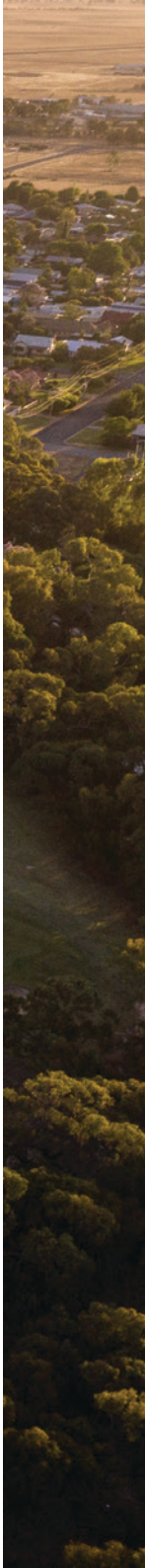




*State of the
Region Report*
2024



Acknowledgement of Country

The Edward River community is located on the traditional lands of the Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa people.

We acknowledge their continuing connection to these lands, and pay our respects to their elders: past, present and emerging.

The Edward River Council also recognises the diversity of different cultures within our community and their contribution.

Contact

This Report has been prepared by Edward River Council on behalf of the Edward River community.



The graphic contains the following information:

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About this report:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Edward River community with an update on the status of key community indicators that, together, help us to better understand our local area.

Where data is available over time, it is provided in this report to assist in monitoring trends and fluctuations affecting the Edward River region, which was declared a local government area in May 2016. For comparison, regional and state information is included where it is available to provide a context for the Edward River region's experience. For the purpose of this report, the regional comparison is for the eleven local government areas that are member councils of the Riverina & Murray Joint Organisation (including: Albury, Berrigan, Carrathool, Edward River, Federation, Griffith, Hay, Leeton, Murray River, Murrumbidgee and Narrandera local government areas).

Under the NSW *Local Government Act 1993*, local councils prepare a State of the Region Report on behalf of their local community. The report serves as an important monitoring tool – reviewing how the community has fared over the past few years and informing the development of the next Community Strategic Plan.

Explanatory note:

The Community Strategic Plan is prepared by the local council on behalf of its community. It should identify key issues and challenges for the local area and surrounding region and take into consideration planning and priorities of other levels of government. The Community Strategic Plan is required to include strategies for achieving each of the Plan's objectives, as well as identifying who in the community will contribute to the delivery of those strategies. It must include assessment methods that will enable the community to determine if its objectives are being achieved over time.

The Edward River *Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050* did not include strategies or methods for assessing if its objectives were being achieved. However, a report arising from significant community engagement to inform the Community Strategic Plan's development did include significant information about the state of the region in 2021, and what the community desired for its future at that time. For this reason, the '*Our Region, Your Say*' *Community Consultation Report* (Seftons, October 2021) has been considered in the development of this report, as it makes clearer what the community's goals were at that time (than the published Community Strategic Plan).

Information has been collated in this Report under each of the five Outcomes, describing the state of the Edward River community today (data sources are identified at the end of this Report). Census data is a key source of information, and for that reason some data dates to 2021 when the last Census was conducted. More contemporary data and estimates have been provided where it is available.

Edward River in 2021

From the *Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050*:

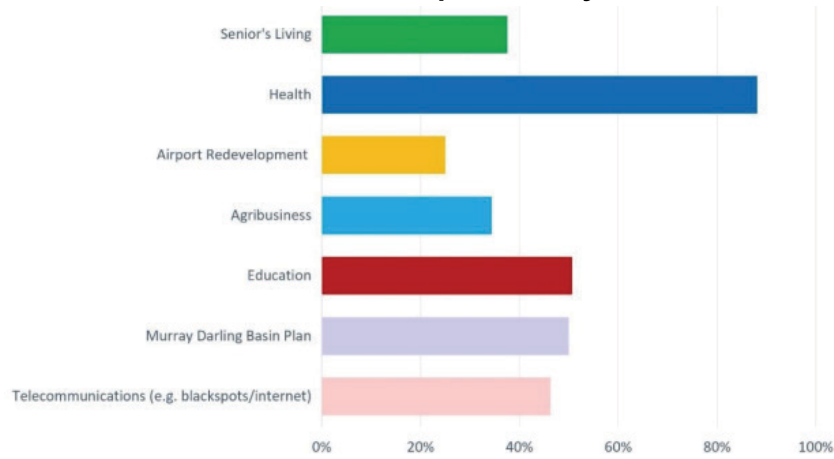
WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

- A healthy, socially connected, and resilient community
- A diverse economy that delivers ongoing benefits
- An active community that takes initiative and is 'heard' by political, business and community authorities
- A community that is connected to the world through technology and transport
- Vibrant and creative towns and villages supported by sustainable, quality infrastructure
- A place to visit for nature, food and fun

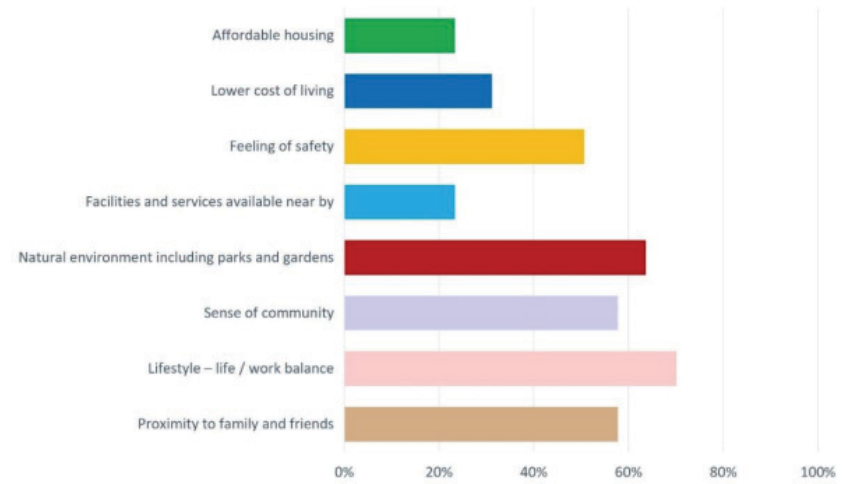
These outcomes will only be achieved with a supportive foundation of leadership and collaboration between all sectors of government and local business and interest groups.

What was the community’s focus for Edward River community in 2021?

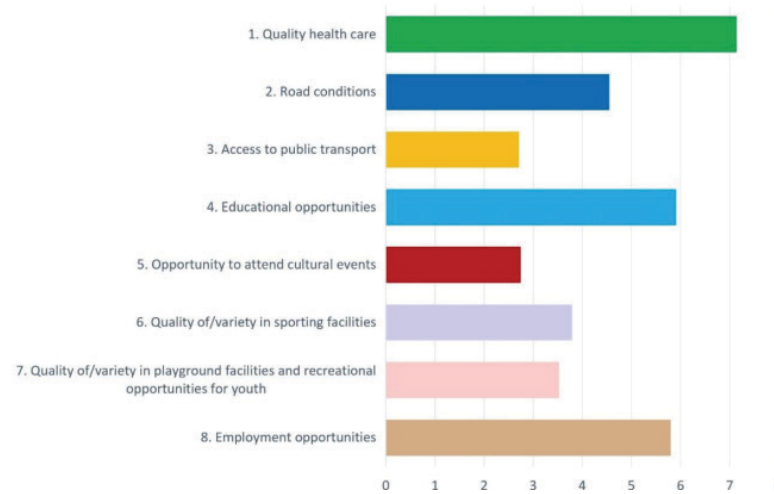
“What is important to you?”



“What do you enjoy about living in the Edward River region?”



“What should the community advocate for over the next 10 years?”



Introduction:

This State of the Region Report has been prepared to align with the five Outcome themes of the *Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050*:

Outcome 1 - Shaping the Future



Protect and enhance both our **natural** and **built environment** as we grow

Outcome 2 - An open and connected community



Build capacity and **access to freight, transport, information and cultural links** within and beyond our region

Outcome 3 - Encouraging growth through partnerships



Invest in, **promote** and **celebrate living, working and visiting the Edward River experience**

Outcome 4 - Delivering community assets and services



Develop and maintain public infrastructure that supports local businesses to **grow and attract new investment**

Outcome 5 - Accountable leadership and responsive administration



Councillors are **leaders in the community** who are informed and responsive to the community's expectations

NOTE:

The previous Community Strategic Plan (published 2018) was also prepared under five themes, although these were described differently:

- A great place to live
- A prosperous and vibrant community
- A valued and enhanced natural environment
- A region with quality and sustainable infrastructure
- A community working together to achieve its potential

OUTCOME 1: Shaping the future

Protect and enhance both our natural and built environment as we grow:

1. *Pristine natural environment*
2. *Quality built environment*
3. *Enhanced active and passive open spaces*
4. *Sustainable waste management*

1.1 Pristine natural environment

- According to the 2021 Census, the Edward River region covers **888,344.6 hectares**. Of this, 859,344 hectares (96.7%) is agricultural land and 7,217 hectares (0.8%) is protected land (including a National Park, nature reserves and other protected land, up from 0.4% in 2018).
- Of the region's **agricultural land** in 2021, 62,304 hectares (7.3%) are areas of irrigated agricultural land, with 199,350 mega litres of **water** applied to that land in 2021.
- CO2 (greenhouse gas) **emissions** in 2021 across the Edward River LGA were estimated to be 867 Kt compared to 626 Kt in 2019 and 402 Kt in 2016. The highest contributor to CO2 emissions in Edward River was from land use including forestry and agriculture.
- The number of small-scale (eg domestic) **solar** array installations in Edward River was 129 in 2023, compared to 193 in 2019.

1.2 Quality built environment

- The number of **Development Applications** (DAs) determined in 2023-24 across the Edward River LGA was 100, with a total value of \$22,266,421.00. This compares with 118 DAs determined in 2021-22 with a value of \$13,567,036.00.
- In 2023, the value of total **building approvals** in Edward River was \$26 million (compared to \$9 million in 2021).
- In 2021, 13.6% of **private dwellings** in Edward River were unoccupied (compared to 12.4% regionally, and 9.4% across NSW).

1.3 Enhanced active and passive open spaces

- In 2021, across the Edward River area, 7,217 hectares (0.8%) is **protected land** (including a National Park, nature reserves and other protected land, up from 0.4% in 2018).
- In 2021-22, Edward River Council managed 947.2 hectares of **open public space**, compared with 1,162.5 hectares in 2018-19.

1.4 Sustainable waste management

- In 2023-24, the amount of **waste generated** across Edward River per capita was 22.62 kgs per week (compared to 13.55 kgs per week in 2021-22 and compared to the regional average of 14.72 and the state average of 9.72 kgs per week per capita).
- In 2021-22, the **recycling rate** was 23% (compared to 26.3% in 2018-19 and compared to a regional average of 37.9% and a state average of 46.3%).

OUTCOME 2: An open and connected community

Build capacity and access to freight, transport, information and cultural links within and beyond our region:

1. *Transport and freight links*
2. *Communications and technology links*
3. *Cultural and personal links*

2.1 Transport and freight links

- In 2023-24, Edward River's **road network** totalled 1,598.8 km (unchanged from 2021-22). This equates to 189.5 km per capita (compared to the regional average of 263.16 km per capita, and the state average of 138.37 km per capita).
- In 2023, there were 14 **motor vehicle crashes** on the Edward River road network (with 18 injured but no fatalities). This compared to 8 crashes in 2020 (with 8 injured and no fatalities).
- Deniliquin **airport** is operated by Edward River Council and has CASA certification. Five other local government areas in the region also have CASA-certified aerodromes (Albury, Berrigan, Federation, Griffith, Hay and Narrandera).

2.2 Communications and technology links

- In 2016, 72% of Edward River households had **internet access** (compared to 71.9% regionally, and 82.5% statewide).

2.3 Cultural and personal links

- In 2021, 4.8% of Edward River residents identified as **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** (compared to 4% in 2016 and 3.3% in 2011). Across the region, 6.24% of residents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (compared to 5.1% in 2016 and 4.7% in 2011) and statewide 3.4% of residents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (compared to 2.9% in 2016 and 2.5% in 2011).
- In 2021, 5.7% of Edward River residents were **born overseas** (compared to 6.4% in 2016). Across the region, 9.7% of residents in 2021 were born overseas (compared to 8.4% in 2016), and statewide 29.3% of residents in 2021 were born overseas (compared to 27.6% in 2016).
- In 2021, 3% of Edward River residents spoke **a language other than English** at home (compared to 3.2% in 2016 and 2.2% in 2011). Regionally, 6.8% of residents in 2021 spoke a language other than English at home (compared to 5.6% in 2016 and 4.7% in 2011) and statewide 26.6% of residents in 2021 (compared to 25.2% in 2016 and 22.5% in 2011).

OUTCOME 3: Encouraging growth through partnerships

Invest in, promote and celebrate living, working and visiting the Edward River experience:

1. *Education*
2. *Economic development*
3. *The Edward River experience*
4. *Health*

3.1 Education

- In 2021, 124 children across Edward River were enrolled in a **preschool** program (compared to 142 in 2017).
- In 2021, 36.1% of adults across Edward River had **completed Year 12** or equivalent (compared to 33.3% in 2016 and 30.9% in 2011). Regionally in 2021, 36.7% of adults had completed Year 12 or equivalent (compared to 32.8% in 2016 and 30.3% in 2011), and statewide 58.9% in 2021 (compared to 53.9% in 2016 and 49.2% in 2011).
- In 2021, 55.4% of adults across Edward River had a **non-school qualification** (compared to 54.6% in 2016 and 49.2% in 2011). Regionally in 2021, 54.0% of adults had a non-school qualification (compared to 52.5% in 2016 and 46.5% in 2011), and statewide 64.1% in 2021 (compared to 60.9% in 2016 and 57.2% in 2011).
- In 2021, 72.9% of **15-19 year olds** across Edward River were fully engaged in education and/or employment (down from 74.8% in 2016 and 79.4% in 2011). Regionally in 2021, 76.9% of 15-19 year olds were fully engaged in education and/or employment (down from 77.3% in 2016 and 78.8% in 2011), and statewide 81.5% in 2021 (compared to 82.5% in 2016 and 81.8% in 2011).

3.2 Economic development

- An indicator of economic development is population growth. The estimated Edward River **resident population** in 2023 was 8,430 (compared to 8,456 in 2021 and 8,728 in 2018). Population density decreased from 1 person per square kilometre in 2018 to 0.9 persons per square kilometre in 2021. Edward River's projected population for 2041 is 9,012.
- In 2022, 57.3% of Edward River's population was **working age** (15-64 year old), compared to 59.2% in 2018. Regionally the working age population in 2022 was 60.0% (compared to 61.5% in 2018), and statewide it was 64.2% (compared to 65.3% in 2018).

- In 2021, Edward River's **unemployment rate** was 3.6% (compared to 5% in 2016 and 4% in 2011). Regionally the unemployment rate in 2021 was 3.6% (compared to 4.8% in 2016 and 4.4% in 2011), and statewide it was 4.9% in 2021 (compared to 6.3% in 2016 and 5.9% in 2011).
- In 2023, the **industries** with the greatest number of businesses in Edward River were (i) agriculture, forestry and fishing, (ii) construction and (iii) rental, hiring and real estate services. This is unchanged from 2020 and is reflected regionally as well. Statewide, however, the industries with the greatest number of businesses were (i) construction, (ii) professional, scientific and technical services and (iii) rental, hiring and real estate services (also unchanged from 2020).
- In 2021, the industries with the most **employees** in Edward River were (i) agriculture, forestry and fishing, (ii) health care and social assistance and (iii) retail (unchanged from 2011, but with manufacturing featuring in 2016). Regionally in 2021 the industries employing the most people were (i) agriculture, forestry and fishing, (ii) manufacturing and (iii) health care and social assistance (unchanged from 2016 and with retail also included in 2011). Statewide in 2021, health care and social assistance was the industry that employed the most people, followed by retail and professional, scientific and technical services (retail, education and training, construction and manufacturing also featured in statewide data for 2016 and 2011).
- In 2020-21, Edward River's **gross regional product** was \$523 million (contributing to a total gross regional product of \$9,468 million). The value of agricultural production in Edward River in 2021 was \$326.3 million (contributing to regional agricultural production of \$3,604.2 million).
- The total number of **businesses** in Edward River in 2023 was 1,023 (up from 943 in 2021 and 922 in 2019). Regionally, there was a total of 16,422 businesses (up from 14,704 in 2019).
- In 2023, the number of businesses in Edward River with **one or more employees** was 418 (compared to 421 in 2021 and 386 in 2019). The total number of **employee jobs** in Edward River in 2020 was 7,048 (compared to 7,334 in 2018 and 6,039 in 2016).
- **Nett business growth** (business entries less business exits) in Edward River was +2 in 2023 (compared to -20 in 2020 – possibly explained by the COVID pandemic). Across the region, there was nett business growth of +147 in 2023 (compared to -3 in 2020).

3.3 The Edward River experience

- In 2023, Edward River had 48 of the region's 778 **accommodation and food service businesses** (compared to 38 of the region's 693 accommodation and food service businesses in 2019).
- Over the four years 2016-2019, there was an annual average of 90 **tourism businesses** in Edward River (of the region's 1,678 tourism businesses).

- Between 2016 and 2019, there were 197,000 **visitors** to Edward River, with the annual average tourist stay being 3 nights (the same as the regional average and compared to 3.12 nights statewide). The average tourist spend per night in Edward River was \$122 (compared to \$133 regionally and \$195 statewide).
- Edward River is famous for its **Deni Ute Muster**. The event attracts up to 20,000 people to the area, with an estimated \$9+ million being generated into the local economy, plus \$1+ million spent directly with local businesses and contractors by the event organisers. More than 1,000 volunteers contribute to the event and close to \$100,000 is donated back to community groups.
- In 2021, 1% of Edward River residents aged 15 years and over were employed in **arts or recreation** services industries (up from 0.6% in 2016 and 2011).

3.4 Health

- In 2021, 15.5% of Edward River residents aged 15 years and over were **employed in health care and social assistance** industries (up from 13.1% in 2016 and 2011).
- In 2018 it was estimated that 22.4% of Edward River residents lived with **disability** (compared to 22.3% regionally).
- In 2021, the **top three self-reported health conditions** for Edward River residents were arthritis (12.3% of residents), asthma (10.0% of residents) and a mental health condition (10.0% of residents). Regionally the top three self-reported health conditions were arthritis (11.4%), asthma (10.6%) and a mental health condition (8.9%). Statewide the top three self-reported health conditions were arthritis (8.4%), a mental health condition (8.0%) and asthma (7.8%).
- In 2020, **life expectancy** at birth for Edward River residents was 84.2 years (up from 80.0 years in 2001), and life expectancy at age 65 was 87.3 years (up from 84.2 years in 2001). This compares to the regional average for life expectancy at birth in 2020 of 83.7 years (compared to 80.0 years in 2001) and for life expectancy at 65 years in 2020 of 87.0 years (compared to 84.1 years in 2001). Statewide, the 2020 average for life expectancy at birth was 84.5 years (compared to 80.6 years in 2001) and for life expectancy at 65 years in 2020 of 87.7 years (compared to 84.7 years in 2001).

OUTCOME 4: Delivering community assets and services

Develop and maintain public infrastructure that supports local businesses to grow and attract new investment:

1. *Vibrant villages and towns*
2. *Reliable water and sewerage*
3. *Friendly and supportive customer service*

4.1 Vibrant villages and towns

- Edward River hosts 1 of 27 **public swimming pools** in the region. In 2017-18, Edward River had one of 29 public swimming pools in the region. There are 460 public swimming pools managed by councils across NSW.
- In 2020-21, there were 10 **public halls** across Edward River, of 93 across the region (and 1,813 in NSW).
- In 2021-22, Edward River had 1 of 19 **public libraries** in the region (382 in NSW). In 2017-18 there were 21 public libraries across the region and 378 in NSW.

4.2 Reliable water and sewerage

- In 2022-23, Edward River had 169 km of **water** trunk and reticulation mains. There were 3,698 water **connections** (up from 3,506 in 2016-17).
- In 2022-23, there was an average **water leakage/loss** from the Edward River water trunk and reticulation mains network of 132.27 litres per day per connection (compared to a regional average of 73.20 litres per day per connection).
- The **typical residential water bill** for Edward River in 2022-23 was \$1,785.29 (compared to a regional average of \$1,297.56)
- In 2022-23, Edward River had 112 km of **sewerage** mains, with an average of 63.39 sewerage **breaks and chokes** per 100km (compared to the regional average of 61.86 breaks and chokes per 100km).

4.3 Friendly and supportive customer service

- The draft Edward River Growth Strategy identifies as an objective “*upskilling local tourism service providers to meet the expectations of and **enhance customer experience** for locals, regular visitors (eg sales representatives) and new visitors.*”

OUTCOME 5: Accountable leadership and responsive administration

Councillors are leaders in the community who are informed and responsive to the community's expectations:

1. *Collaborative and engaged*
2. *Financially sustainable*
3. *Professional workplace culture*

5.1 Collaborative and engaged

- Across Edward River in 2021, 20.7% of residents **volunteered** with an organisation or group (down from 26.9% in 2016 and 27.2% in 2011). Regionally, 19.0% of residents volunteered with an organisation or group (down from 25.2% in 2016 and 2011), and statewide 13% of residents volunteered with an organisation or group (down from 18.1% in 2016 and 16.9% in 2011).
- In 2024, 16 candidates stood for **local government election** in Edward River (for a total of nine councillor positions). In 2021 there were 11 candidates, and in 2017 there were 17 candidates.
- In 2024, 44.4% of Edward River elected **councillors** were female. In 2021, 55.6% of councillors were female and in 2017, 33.3% of councillors were female

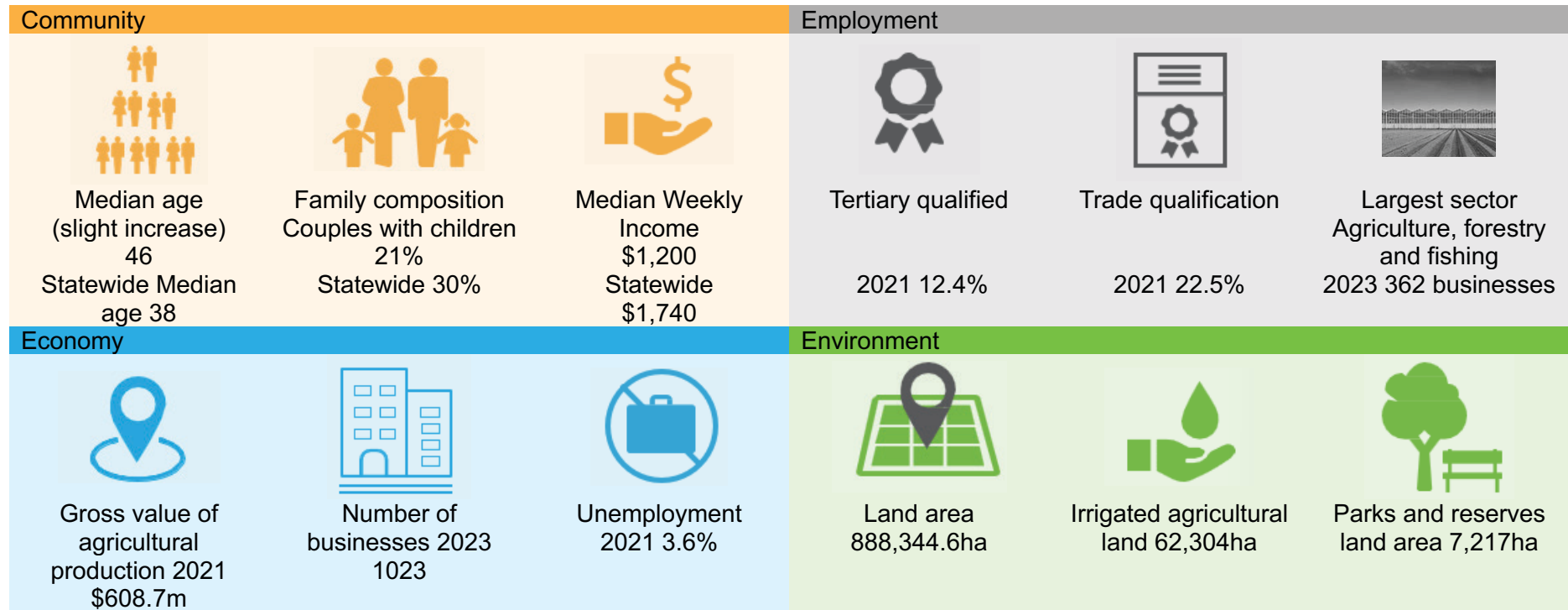
5.2 Financially sustainable

- In 2022-23, Edward River **Council's audited annual financial statements** reported a net operating result of \$10,543,000, total equity of \$536,772,000, and total cash and investments of \$51,282,000.
- In 2019-20, Edward River Council's audited annual financial statements reported a net operating result of -\$4,461,000, total equity of \$481,063,000, and total cash and investments of \$44,652,000.
- In 2016-17, Edward River Council's audited annual financial statements reported a net operating result of \$9,842,000, total equity of \$411,644,000, and total cash and investments of \$43,372,000.

5.3 Professional workplace culture

- In 2021, 55.4% of adults across Edward River had a **non-school qualification** (compared to 54.6% in 2016 and 49.2% in 2011). Regionally in 2021, 54.0% of adults had a non-school qualification (compared to 52.5% in 2016 and 46.5% in 2011), and statewide 64.1% in 2021 (compared to 60.9% in 2016 and 57.2% in 2011).
- In 2021, 10.8 of people in Edward River had Bachelor or Postgraduate **degree qualifications** (compared to 9% in 2016 and 7.8% in 2011). In 2021, 9.2% of people in Edward River had Advanced or Graduate **diploma qualifications** (compared to 8.2% in 2016 and 7.2% in 2011). In 2021, 22.5% of people in Edward River had **certificate qualifications** (compared to 21.6% in 2016 and 20.7% in 2011).
- In 2021, the most common **fields of study** for Edward River residents' qualifications were management and commerce, engineering and related technologies, and health. In 2016, the most common fields of study were engineering and related technologies, health, and management and commerce. In 2011, the most common fields of study were management and commerce, engineering and related technologies, and health.

Other key community indicators



Informing the next Community Strategic Plan

As well as providing an update about how the Edward River community is fairing against a range of community indicators, and showing trends over time, the information contained in this Report will be a key informant for the development of the next Edward River Community Strategic Plan.

This Report's information will help to inform community conversations about the issues facing the Edward River region and help to determine what the community's goals are for the future: socially, economically, environmentally and in relation to our civic leadership.

Data sources

All data sourced for this report is from reputable data sources, including the following:

Data source	Web address
Australian Bureau of Statistics – region profiles	https://dbr.abs.gov.au/index.html
Australian Bureau of Statistics – census data	https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area
Australian Trade & Investment Commission – Tourism Research Australia	https://www.tra.gov.au/en/regional/local-government-area-profiles
Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (NSW)	https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_crime_stats/bocsar_lgaexceltables.aspx
Civil Aviation Safety Authority	https://www.casa.gov.au/search-centre/aerodromes
Deni Ute Muster	https://www.deniutemuster.com.au/
Informed Decisions (ID) – State of the Regions Economic Indicators	https://www.ideconomicinsights.com/2021annualeconomicupdate
NSW Electoral Commission	https://pastvtr.elections.nsw.gov.au/LG2101/index
NSW Environmental Protection Authority – local council waste and resource recovery data reports	https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/waste/local-council-operations/local-council-waste-and-resource-recovery
NSW Health Stats	https://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au/
Office of Local Government – Your Council Report	https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/comparative-council-information/your-council-report/
NSW Planning’s population projections	https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/populations
NSW Government’s SEED Initiative (Sharing & Enabling Environmental Data)	https://www.seed.nsw.gov.au/net-zero-emissions-dashboard
Transport for NSW – crash statistics	https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/statistics/interactivecrashstats/index.html
NSW Water – Local water utility performance	https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/local-water-utilities/local-water-utility-performance



This *State of the Region Report* was prepared with the assistance of Karen Legge Consulting



EDWARD RIVER COUNCIL
**STATE OF THE REGION REPORT
2024**

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