Development of a High Quality Training Hub in the Maranoa

Scoping Brief

Phase I. Pre-feasibility Assessment, ‘Testing the Idea’

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Interpretations and conclusions drawn from the analysis of information from consultations and review of reports and publications rests with the author of this document and not Maranoa Regional Council (MRC), the Institute for Land Water and Society, Charles Stuart University (ILWS-CSU) or any other partner to this research activity.

Consultations for the preparation of this Scoping Brief have been undertaken so as to ensure that privacy and confidentiality are strictly maintained.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

This Pre-feasibility Assessment provides essential information and a process to assist Maranoa Regional Council (MRC) to review the concept, approach and implementation challenges for developing ‘a high quality training hub in the Maranoa’. So equipped, Council will be better informed when deciding whether or not to support such an initiative. Arguably, a decision to proceed with catalysing the development of such a hub would be an important step towards aiding MRC to:

- stimulate self-sustaining economic and community development
- optimise the opportunities offered by regions natural and human resources
- promote the delivery of sustainable project outcomes for existing, new and innovative economic activities

Most importantly, to proceed aligns with the ‘Connected Futures’ umbrella under which MRC are nurturing an economic development model which sees education, training and professional development driving the combination of local jobs and quality lifestyles as the foundations for sustainable communities. MRCs definition of sustainable communities for the Maranoa is based upon adaptability and responsiveness to changes in external markets, environments and technology.

Situation

MRC is well positioned to help guide the delivery of high quality education, training and professional development from Roma based facilities to all six Councils making up the ‘South West Region’. Council could work collaboratively with the regional LGAs, the educational sector, business, industry and the community as a key stakeholder in:

- enabling the provision of institutional capacity building infrastructure (virtual and physical) for teaching, learning and research
- fostering collaborative institutional arrangements and articulated programs
- enhancing skills, professional development and research capabilities
- generating and wisely applying knowledge

Findings

This pre-feasibility assessment has found that the key ingredients for the development of a high quality training hub in the Maranoa are already in place. Albeit, not on the one campus or facility nor under one governance and funding source. Integration and coordinating mechanisms are required to bring the hard and soft educational and training infrastructure together to operate more coherently and better align funding arrangements. Essentially, to ensure that educators and trainers are more responsive to current and emerging skills and professional needs of industry, business and the workforces in Roma and the South West region.
Coupled with this, strategies are needed to ensure that students and trainees are attracted to and retained at the local institutions. This is essential because government funding is now linked to the users and their preferences and not to institutions and what they may offer. A range of government funding programs are available. However, how they are being used needs to be seen in the context of the contestable space in which education and training is currently being offered in Roma and the wider region.

Currently, there are lot of providers and only a small pot of funds available to deliver skills training. Competition for participants is intense and often it is hard to retain sufficient numbers to make programs and courses economically viable. As a consequence, students and trainees are going elsewhere and the facilities in Roma and regional centres are underutilised and closing. And the local and regional skills bank is being depleted. This situation must be reversed. Arguably, there needs to be a different set of rules for operating facilities and funding participation in rural and remote regions.

TAFE Queensland have recognised the importance of building a greater presence in the west. Geographically, the Roma Campus delivers services to over 78% of the total land area of the region (ie the six regional LGAs). Developing the western region has been included in the TAFE strategic plan and a ‘Western Region Manager’ is being recruited to drive this into the future through a ‘Western Education Hub’. Such a commitment is core to the provision of a high quality education, training and professional development to serve the needs of Roma and other regional centres.

The university sector is already in the region, as illustrated by USQ, QUT, UQ and USC being involved in a range of research projects and they could be readily linked to the TAFE facilities as a virtual ‘Universities Centre’. As an additional player, ILWS-CSU would be very interested in such an arrangement as a research base. And the SEGRA Foundation would be interested in delivering seminars and forums on sustainable regional development.

**The next steps**

As the principle advocate for the community, MRC has a pivotal role to play in stimulating the ‘take up’ of the idea of ‘growing’ a regional training hub that optimises the available education and training facilities and funding sources. To this end, the next steps could be:

1. Council to convene a meeting of representatives of government institutions delivering education and training in Roma (DET, TAFE, QATC, Roma State College and the PL Hub) to share and obtain feedback on the ‘testing of the idea for a high quality training hub in the Maranoa’ as documented in this pre-feasibility assessment. The meeting would allow Council to obtain an appreciation of the opportunities for and challenges to delivering a more collaborative and integrated approach to vocational education and skills provision.

2. Based on the outcome of the inter-institutional meeting, Council to facilitate an *Education and Training Forum* to introduce the proposition to a broader population of providers, industry, business NGOs and the community, with the aim of gaining buy-in and support to move the collaborative initiative forward.
1. SETTING THE SCENE

Purpose of the Scoping Brief

Figure 1 outlines a suggested phased approach for the development of a high quality training hub in the Maranoa. This Pre-feasibility Assessment provides essential information and a process to assist Maranoa Regional Council (MRC) to review the concept, approach and implementation challenges for developing such a facility. So equipped, Council will be better informed when deciding whether or not to support furthering such an initiative.

Arguably, a decision to proceed with catalysing the development of a high quality training hub is an important step towards enabling MRC to:

- facilitate self-sustaining economic and community development
- optimise the opportunities offered by regions natural and human resources
- address and mitigate natural and human caused risks and challenges
- deliver sustainable project outcomes for existing, new and innovative economic activities

Most importantly, to proceed aligns with the ‘Connected Futures’ umbrella under which MRC are nurturing an economic development model which sees education and training driving the combination of local jobs and quality lifestyles as the foundations for sustainable communities. MRCs definition of sustainable communities for the Maranoa which is based upon adaptability and responsiveness to changes in external markets, environments and technology.

Background

The fourteen day Toowoomba Surat Basin Study Tour (TSBST) to the USA and Canada in August 2013 provided participants with insights into how:

- philanthropy can drive the establishment and operation of world class education and training facilities catering to needs of the oil and gas industries
- Local Governments and their communities are benefiting from needs driven education and training that is tailored to their regions natural and human resources
- important it is to diversify the region’s economic base
- education and training are inextricably linked to economic diversification and sustainable regional development

Three key recommendations were identified in the TSBST report to Council for further investigation. Namely: the development of a high quality training hub in the Maranoa; the development of economic strategies to diversify the region’s industries, ensuring a maximum benefit for other key industries (such as agriculture, tourism and aviation); and building international economic development partnerships with the ‘Town of Olds’.
Figure 1

Suggested Pathway for the Development of a High Quality Training Hub in the Maranoa

Initiating Point
Recommendation 4.1 from TSBTR Report August 2013

Action Task
Proposal to Council for Scoping Brief and Scoping Workshop

Phase I. Pre-feasibility Assessment, ‘Testing the Idea’

Action Tasks: Scoping Brief
- Consultations
- Information review
- Exploration of institutional arrangements
- Education and training resources evaluation
- Appreciation of the situation

Action Tasks: Scoping Workshop
Possible discussion topics
- Review of Scoping Brief
- Approach
- Governance
- Education and training resources and assets
- Possible student numbers
- Economic viability
- Staffing realities

Workshop Report
- Observations and conclusions
- Implementable recommendations
- Suggested way forward for MRC

Phase II. Confirm Institutional and Economic Feasibility of Initiative

Phase III. Detailed Planning and Resourcing for Incremental Project Implementation

Phase IV. Delivery of Need Driven Education, Training and Research Products

Phase V. Iterative Evaluation and Institutional Enhancement

Phase VI. Review, Refocusing and Repositioning to Meet Changing Regional Realities and Needs
To these ends, this **Scoping Brief** explores the pathway towards the ‘development of a high quality training hub in the Maranoa’ and documents the work for **Phase I** of the ILWS-CSU proposal as endorsed by Council as Resolution No. GM/06.2017/06 (as summarised in **Figure 1**).

**Objectives and outcomes**

Operationally, MRC could become a catalyst for achieving outcome focused education, training and professional development objectives such as:

- enabling the provision of institutional capacity building infrastructure (virtual and physical) for teaching, learning and research
- fostering collaborative institutional arrangements and articulated programs
- enhancing skills, professional development and research capabilities
- generating and wisely applying knowledge

Achievement of these objectives should help to attain measurable environmental, social and economic outcomes in terms of more productive dry and wetland catchment systems. For example, with focus on water in underpinning the regions ‘natural capital’; and enhanced livelihoods and lifestyles, with an emphasis on employment opportunities for a better trained and skilled workforce as core to the ‘social capital’ of the town and region.

With this intent, **Attachment 1** provides a schematic overview of how this could be progressed with the overarching economic and community purposes of:

- maximising the socio-economic opportunities offered by the regions land, water (surface and ground) and biological resources with respect to horticulture, agriculture, grazing and ecosystems services
- delivering sustainable project outcomes for existing and new economic activity by addressing natural and human caused risks and challenges including (for example) changing climatic conditions and potential human impacts on aquifers

**2. APPROACH**

**Rationale**

Australia wide regional cities and towns are facing the challenge of how to enable school leavers to undertake apprenticeships, skills and professional development and university based tertiary studies locally. There is compelling evidence that once young people leave to pursue education and training it is difficult to encourage them to return. Retention of this population cohort is a vexatious area of issue that goes beyond the simple provision of education and training facilities. Wider employment opportunities in metropolitan areas and major regional centres are a strong attractor to leave for ‘the big smoke’. As well, decoupling from family and wanting to have greater personal freedom are strong motivations for many young people to seek broader life experiences than are available in the ‘home town’.
So, what can be done to break this common pattern of departure and retain a larger proportion of school leavers? Also, what could be done to encourage apprentices and aspiring professionals to undertake training and programs in towns such as Roma? And how could these strategic actions be matched to the rapidly changing needs for new skills and professional capabilities for employment in the new and emerging industries projected for regional Australia in the 21st Century?

As a microcosm of the regional Australian situation, Roma and the Maranoa-Western region provides an ideal setting for initiating a proactive and practical approach for addressing the core issues raised above.

**Scoping the education and training issues**

The core issues in the rationale raise a number of questions relating to vocational education, skills focused training and professional development. These are listed below and were put forward in the ILWS-CSU proposal for this *Pre-feasibility Assessment*.

- What hard and soft infrastructure do we already have in Roma that could be used physically for education and training delivery and as a home for a ‘virtual regional centre of excellence’?
- Who owns and operates the vocationally focused facilities, how is it being utilised and at what capacity?
- Who would be the users of the ‘centre’ and what would be the intensity of use in terms of students/trainees undertaking programs and courses?
- How would this differ from what is offered now in Roma or Dalby or in Toowoomba?
- Who could be partners to the enterprise and under what governance arrangements?
- How would regionally relevant research be embedded and what would be the focus of the research effort?
- Who would be involved in such activities and who would fund the work?
- What innovative skills development and teaching and learning programs could be provided that could meet emerging and future sustainability technology and resource’s optimisation business and industry needs?
- Who could be involved in the day-to-day facilities management and program and course delivery?
- What could the cost structures look like and is the venture politically, economically and societally feasible?

These questions are synthesised under five focusing themes and addressed systematically, in **Table 1**.

3. OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

**Key tasks**

The key tasks undertaken to *develop the concept of an “Education Hub” in the Maranoa* (Resolution No. GM/06.2017/06) were:
• consultations and information review
• preliminary education and training resources evaluation
• initial exploration of institutional arrangements
• appreciation of the situation

**Consultations and information review**

The assessment documented in this *Scoping Brief* has focused on:

• gaining a broad picture of the existing educational facilities and operations
• dimensioning constraints to and opportunities for enhancing education and training delivery in Roma
• identifying education and training needs, research opportunities and potential partnerships

Being a pre-feasibility assessment, information collation and review has been limited to that need to achieve these ends and included:

• consultations in Sippy Downs, Roma, Toowoomba and Brisbane
• collation and review of institution prepared reports
• appraising information on departmental websites

Organisations and persons consulted for Phase I are listed at [Attachment 2](#).

**Preliminary education and training resources evaluation**

*Table 1* synthesises the ten questions listed and summary information is provided for each theme under the headings:

• Existing educational facilities and operations
• Governance and management
• Identified education and training needs
• Potential partnerships and research opportunities
• Staff and student retention

**Appreciation of the situation**

Nationally, case examples are available to demonstrate that no single post-secondary educational institution (vocational or university) can provide a teaching, learning and research environment that is tailored to the suite of skills and professional capabilities needed to transition economies and societies from either a primary industry focus or a mineral resources extraction dependency to a natural and human resources optimisation model.
## Table 1. Preliminary Education and Training Resources Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Summary of the situation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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| **Existing educational facilities and operations** | The key facilities’ that could be readily linked and enhanced for vocational and professional programs are:  
- Roma State College (Upper School)  
- TAFE South West Region  
- The Darling Downs South West Region Professional Learning Hub (DDSWRPLH)  
- St John’s Catholic School  
- Golden West Apprenticeships  
- Queensland Agricultural Training College (QATC) | Formal links are required to optimise the physical and soft infrastructure.  
Notes at Attachment 3 provide background information on the DDSWRPLH  
GWA is a training coordinator, provider and job placer |
| **Governance and management**    | Department of Education and Training covers:  
- Roma State College  
- DDSWRPLH  
TAFE Queensland in Roma is now a statutory body and not a government department, has degree granting powers and is seeking strong links with Queensland and interstate universities. | Policy underpinning will be required to support adaptive management arrangements to optimise the potential of DET and TAFE in Roma |
| **Identified education and training needs** | The results of a TAFE assessment found a need for skills training including (for example):  
- Health (nursing and allied health)  
- Individual support and personal services  
- Community and personal services  
- Trades (engineering, vehicle mechanics, construction)  
- Tourism, hospitality and retail | A thorough audit will be needed of the current and future needs of local industries and businesses.  
MRCs needs could be a start point. |
| **Potential partnerships and research opportunities** | DDSWRPLH is providing regional service opportunities for beginning and experienced teachers and is linked to USC and USQ.  
CSU is interested in exploring research and non-degree educational course activities in sustainable regional development.  
GWA a not for profit Group Training Organisation (GTO) collaborates with TAFE | Partnerships for professional development and applied research activities to be covered in Phase II for confirming feasibility |
| **Staff and student retention**  | Highlighted by informants as major issue.  
No quantitative data or information obtained for the pre-feasibility assessment | Economic viability considerations relating to staff and students and their needs should be fully explored as part of Phase II |
Roma, in its Maranoa regional setting, provides a practical example of a transitional economy, and one where the future is still uncertain and education and training needs are yet to be fully determined. Arguably, the economic and social future of the region hinges on optimising the inherent value of the land, water and biological resources and the innate potential of the current and future population. Moreover, this will require a radical rethinking on how the human or societal capital of the region can be enhanced. Ideally, through maximising the potential offered by ground-breaking job focused approaches to education, training and professional development that are now available or could be introduced into regional areas.

Communications and data transfer technology is rapidly reducing the need for major built infrastructure for the delivery of education and training. Facilitated learning is fast replacing face to face teaching. A collaborative mix of technical training facilities and industry located offices, field stations, workshops and laboratories is a possible way forward for enabling skills development that is focused on the direct requirements of the workplace.

What is required in this context is a cooperative aggregation of hard and soft infrastructure and focused education and training programs tailored to current and emerging employment opportunities. Ideally, these interconnected elements should have direct links to the ‘job markets’ that meet the aspirations of young people in regional towns and centres as well as those in metropolitan areas who may wish to relocate to employment and the lifestyles found in rural environs.

**Exploring institutional arrangements**

Current and emerging region wide biophysical, economic and social challenges require a different approach to produce ‘jobs ready’ tradespersons, technologists and professionally qualified personnel. This necessitates a different mix of hard and soft infrastructure for the institutional capacity needed to meet this challenge as well as requiring:

- flexible thinking and unwavering commitment
- sound institutional and community partnering and adaptable governance
- economically viable collaborative institutional and commercial arrangements
- innovative articulated programs and locally appropriate cost effective course delivery to provide the skills and knowledge needed for the jobs of the 2020s and beyond

Building on the learnings of the 2013 TSBST, as well as related practical and professional experiences, enables MRC to be well positioned to further explore the establishment of a high quality training hub to underpin the economic and social sustainability of the Maranoa-Western Rivers region. Geographically, this would include the six Local Government Authorities west of Dalby that encompass the catchments the Condamine, Balonne, Nebine, Warrego, Paroo and Bullo rivers. Specifically to enhance technical skills, foster professional development and develop regionally relevant research capabilities. The future steps that could be followed to progress the initiative are framed in Figure 2 with the tasks for Phase II indicated. This next step is not in the remit of MRC and would be decided institutionally and collaboratively actioned.
Possible Way Forward for Developing a High Quality Training ‘Hub’ in the Maranoa

‘Western Rivers Institute’ or ‘Western Education Hub’?

**Initiating Point**
Recommendation 4.1 from TSBTR Report August 2013

**Action Completed**
Council actioned proposal for Scoping Brief, Scoping Workshop and Report

**Phase I. Pre-feasibility Assessment, ‘Testing the Idea’**

**Phase II. Confirm Institutional and Economic Feasibility of Initiative**

**Phase III. Detailed Planning and Resourcing for Incremental Project Implementation**

**Phase IV. Delivery of Need Driven Education, Training and Research Products**

**Phase V. Iterative Evaluation and Institutional Enhancement**

**Phase VI. Review, Refocusing and Repositioning to Meet Changing Regional Realities and Needs**

**Action Tasks: Feasibility Study**
- Confirm key topics for feasibility study (Focusing Questions)
- Initiate a community engagement and communications strategy
- Review of operational options
- Review possible governance arrangements
- Audit education and training resources and assets
- Determination of possible student numbers
- Confirming economic viability
- Addressing staffing realities
- Risk analysis
- Documentation and dissemination

**MRC Workshop and Report**
- Observations and conclusions
- Implementable recommendations
- Confirm way forward for MRC and partners
Operationally, the institutional arrangements for the ‘hub’ could follow a number of configurations. The initial review of the hard and soft infrastructure available in Roma points to maximising the use of the built infrastructure already in place with education and training personal and products geared to local and regional needs driven training and learning. Functionally, this could take the form of a multi campus-multi-purpose facility operated collaboratively by the existing secondary education and vocation focused institutions and apprenticeship and traineeship delivers. Specifically, TAFE Queensland, Roma State College (Upper School), the Darling Downs South West Region Professional Learning Hub (DDSWRPLH) or in short the Roma PL Hub, St John’s Catholic School, Golden West Apprenticeships (GWA) and other Group Training Organisations (GTOs)

That said, other options should be tested when confirming the institutional and economic feasibility of the initiative. For example, it could be a public driven not-for-profit ‘community university-college’ similar to the Cooma model taken up by Broken Hill. Another example is provided by the Geraldton Universities Centre (GUC) in Western Australia that supports the delivery of a range of university programs in partnership with Central Queensland University (CQU) and the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). Similar regional centres in other states offer online programs and courses from a range of universities. These options would be explored in Phase II using oversees and Australian facilities and experiences as analogues.

4. BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Existing conditions

This pre-feasibility assessment has found that the key ingredients for the development of a high quality training hub in the Maranoa are already in place. Albeit not on the one campus nor with one governance or funding arrangement. And this is sound foundation on which to ‘grow’ collaborative and integrated delivery of education and training.

Figure 1 outlines the existing conditions where basically, the educational and training facilities are operating in isolation from each other. The Roma PL Hub has links with Roma State College (RSC) and other regional schools. Currently, the USC and USQ are placing students with the PL Hub for pre-service training in regional schools.

Prior to TAFE becoming a statutory body there were strong links between the Upper School of RSC and the TAFE with the premises being adjacent. These could be re-established through innovative collaborative projects that build knowledge and skills in (for example) sustainability technologies.

Golden West Apprenticeships (GWA), a Group Training Organisation (GTO), collaborates with TAFE Queensland with the aim of arresting the decline in apprenticeships and traineeships. Specifically, the collaboration are seeking to demonstrating pathways to re-energise and reskill regional communities through the Regional Australia Skills Program (RASP). Currently, GWA are seeking funding to build accommodation at the TAFE Roma Campus for visiting apprentices and trainees.
Figure 1. Overview of Existing Conditions

Possible future arrangements

Figure 2 schematically indicates the possible institutional arrangements for the provision of high quality education, training and professional development for Roma and its related region. As a working title, this could be referred to as ‘The Western Rivers Institute’ or ‘The Western Education Hub’ or a name that reflects the agreed positions of the parties to the collaboration. And ‘badging’ would be a product of the Phase II work.

Functionally, what is needed to achieve the institutional configuration summarised in Figure 2 could include (for example) the following:

- A robust coordination process to integrate the operations of the partnering institutions to a common purpose
- Agreed intragovernmental and intergovernmental policy underpinning of the initiative
- Strong institutional partnerships through which innovative programs and courses could be delivered and regionally relevant applied research undertaken
- Sound collaborative governance and adaptive management arrangements that maximise input from the university sector, industry, business and the community
- Employment focused programs and courses that will attract and hold trainees, tertiary students and emerging professionals in Roma and other rural, regional and remote towns
- Learning by doing to ensure that trainees and professional development graduates are confirmed as being ‘job ready’
- Direct links to local and regional employees to facilitate workplace learning in technical and professional fields.
To reflect on the case example illustrated in Attachment 1, interfacing TAFE, the Upper School of the Roma State College, partnering universities and private sector training providers could focus on land, water (surface and ground) and biological resource opportunities. Such an outcome focused framework could be applied equally to other areas of economic development opportunity in the Maranoa-Western Rivers Region.

**Emerging scope and geographic reach**

TAFE is pivotal to integrating education and training in the region. Now having degree granting status, is a game changer. As shown schematically in Figure 2, this would include working closer with the RSC, the Roma PL Hub, QATC, GTOs, private schools and emerging skills development projects. Geographically, the reach would include all six LGAs encompassing the South West of the state who have compelling interests in economic and community development in their region.

TAFE Queensland have recognised the importance of building a greater presence in the west. Geographically, the Roma Campus covers over 78% of the total land area of the territory supported by TAFE Queensland. That is, all six regional LGAs. This situation highlights the challenge confronting providers and employers as how to increase participation and raise vocational skills levels in regional towns and centres with small populations and limited job opportunities.

This area of issue is now being proactively addressed by TAFE Queensland. Developing the western region has been included in the TAFE strategic plan and a Western Region Manager is being recruited to drive this into the future. Such a commitment is essential to the development of a high quality education, training and professional development hub to serve the needs of Roma and other regional centres across the South West.

The university sector is already in Roma and the region, as illustrated by USQ and USC with the PL Hub and USQ, QUT and UQ being involved in a range of research projects. Negotiations could be initiated to see if Queensland metropolitan and regional universities would wish to be linked to the TAFE facilities in a virtual ‘Universities Centre’.

CSU is a multi-campus institution and is considered to be the University of the Murray Darling Basin (MDB) and could be very interested in such an arrangement. Specifically, as a research base for the ILWS working on the integrated catchment and wetlands management, safe domestic water and ecosystems services projects in collaboration with NGOs such as the Queensland Murry Darling Committee (QMDC). And the SEGRA Foundation could be interested in delivering seminars and forums on sustainable regional development from TAFE facilities, in collaboration with ILWS-CSU.

Operationally, universities could use the TAFE facilities in Roma to deliver ‘intensive courses’ and flexible learning in the regions. That is, use a session approach and achieve more rapid completion of programs. For example, a three year bachelors program can be delivered in two years and a two year masters in one. Experience has shown that this is most appealing to mature age students. And having them, would be a boon to a regional centre such as Roma.
Industry linkages are essential to provide a strong workplace-training nexus. For example, in collaboration with the Hope Project (Queensland Health) TAFE are developing a program in Charleville and Cunnamulla that identify local businesses as possible venues for the delivery of qualifications. Also, The QATC commenced operations on 1 July 2014, as a statutory authority responsible to the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries (AFF). QATC are now providing technical and professional development in the agricultural sector, using former DAFF facilities in Roma.

**Independent review into regional, rural and remote education (IRRRE)**

This *Pre-feasibility Assessment* coincides with a broader Australian Government review to address issues relating to regional, rural and remote education. The review is being undertaken by Emeritus Professor John Halsey from Flinders University and is expected to report to the Federal Minister for Education and Training by the end of 2017. The Review aims to identify innovative and fresh approaches to support improved access and achievement of students and their transition to further study, training and employment.
MRC has made a submission to the IRRRRE stating that the approaches taken in the Discussion Paper released to support the IRRRRE are generally supported by Council. And MRC see the section on ‘Entrepreneurship and schools’ as ‘being very encouraging’.

Further, Council state in their submission that:

*Under the “Connected Futures” umbrella, we are nurturing an economic development model which sees the combination of local jobs and quality lifestyles as the foundations for sustainable communities. Our definition (in the Maranoa) of sustainable communities is based upon adaptability and responsiveness to changes in external markets, environments and technology.*

Details on the IRRRRE are to be found on [https://www.education.gov.au/independent-review-regional-rural-and-remote-education](https://www.education.gov.au/independent-review-regional-rural-and-remote-education). And the Discussion Paper scopes the key issues that are being confronted in Roma and the Western Rivers Region.

5. NEXT STEPS

**Decision support, commitment and endorsement**

This *Pre-feasibility Assessment* is designed to support a decision by MRC whether or not to a decision to proceed with catalysing the development of a high quality training hub in Roma to serve local and wider regional needs. Saying yes could initiate a set of actions by Council and education sector backers that:

- embed unswerving commitment to the delivery of the desired and agreed outcomes
- entail collaborative planning by local and regional stakeholders (governmental, NGOs, not-for-profit, private sector)
- require adequate resourcing (cash and in-kind) from public and private sources
- build enduring partnerships with industry, business and communities of interest for the delivery of high quality education, training and professional development

Harnessing political will and proactive support is essential and this encompasses engaging with elected members in participating LGAs and politicians representing the region at State and Commonwealth levels. A key focus of engagement and lobbying could be on:

- Gaining endorsement for the initiative
- Identifying and accessing funded programs
- Further mobilising institutional resources

**Moving forward**

As the principle advocate for the community, MRC could have a pivotal role to play in stimulating the ‘take up’ of the idea of ‘growing’ a regional training hub that optimises the available education and training facilities and funding sources. To this end, the next steps could be:
1. Council to convene a meeting of representatives of government institutions delivering education and training in Roma (DET, TAFE, QATC, Roma State College and the PL Hub) to share and obtain feedback on the ‘testing of the idea for a high quality training hub in the Maranoa’ as documented in this pre-feasibility assessment.

The meeting would allow Council to obtain an appreciation of the opportunities for and challenges to delivering a more collaborative and integrated approach to vocational education and skills provision.

2. Based on the outcome of the inter-institutional meeting, Council to facilitate an Education and Training Forum to introduce the proposition to a broader population of providers, industry, business NGOs and the community with the aim of gaining buy-in and support to move the collaborative initiative forward.

Together, these two steps should provide the impetus for establishing an appropriate regional inter-institutional integration and coordination processes. Notionally, this could provide the integrating mechanism need to bring together the public and private sector education and skills providers who are or would wish to work in the region. State and local government together with industry and business and NGOs would need to be represented in such a process.

**Leading by example**

MRC purchases the services of apprenticeship and traineeship providers to meet operational needs of Council. To demonstrate leadership by example MRC could seek to ensure that these are provided by local suppliers and that all effort was being made to help optimise the facilities offered by TAFE Queensland and the capabilities of other local and regional education, training and professional development sources.

**Planning future steps**

On securing agreement to move forward with the proposal priority planning tasks to be undertaken by the partners could include (for example):

- Establishing regional inter-institutional coordinating processes
- Confirming key topics for the feasibility study
- Identifying and negotiating formal partnerships and institutional resourcing
- Initiating community engagement and implementing a communications strategy
- Reviewing operational options and linkages and proposing possible governance arrangements
- Auditing education and training resources, assets and levels of utilisation
- Determination of possible student numbers and where they will be drawn from
- Confirming the economic viability of integrated delivery and funding projections
- Addressing staffing realities in the context of new ways of delivering education and training
- Undertaking risk analysis and contingency planning
Resources

Funds and in-kind resources will need to be identified and committed to initiate the project early in the 2018 calendar year. The first tranche should be allocated to facilitating the planning tasks outlined above. Personnel could be engaged from an appropriately experienced research institution or from a governmental body involved in the education sector.

Long term resourcing should commence in FY 2018-19. Sources of such resources are yet to be determined.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Testing the idea for developing a high quality training hub in the Maranoa is the essential first step in making the aspiration a reality. This pre-feasibility assessment sought to provide MRC with the knowledge and information to support future decisions on how Council could help catalyse education, training and professional development activities.

Specifically those identified as being necessary to ensuring that the environment, the economy and the society of the Maranoa region are self-sustaining.

A decision to proceed with confirming the feasibility of developing a high quality training hub is an important step towards enabling MRC to be a leader in:

- facilitating self-sustaining economic and community development
- optimising the opportunities offered by regions natural and human resources
- addressing and mitigating natural and human caused risks and challenges
- delivering sustainable project outcomes for existing, new and innovative economic activities

From the material reviewed in Table 1, Roma is shown to be relatively well endowed with education and training facilities. In the context of the background to the project, this begs the question: could a high quality training hub along the lines of the ‘Olds College’ be developed in the Maranoa?

On the basis of this Pre-feasibility Assessment the answer (with due regards to education administration structures, budgetary requirements and operational processes) is ‘yes’. However, this is Queensland Australia and the statutory educational framework, infrastructure provision, funding mechanisms and institutional arrangements are different to those in Alberta, Canada.

That said, the scope of education, training and professional requirements in the towns of Olds and Roma are similar. Further, in the context of the shared history of the oil and gas and primary industry mix, the aspirations of the two communities resonate. As well, there are lessons to share and this Scoping Brief is a contribution to informing this process.
Roma and other town’s the Western region face their own socio-economic and cultural challenges when deliberating on what form a high quality training hub could take. Education, training, professional development and outcome focused research to foster, facilitate and support existing and new jobs should be reflective of the mistakes of the past and highly cognisant of the emerging opportunities of the digital age.

Collectively, the informants to this *Pre-feasibility Assessment* have said that the time has come to mobilise community support, optimise the educational infrastructure, harness the skills and experience of the educators and trainers and focus researchers on real world issues. They say, this must be done sooner rather than later if Roma is to be a key regional centre for education, training and professional development.

Yes, possibly a high quality hub along the lines of the ‘Olds College’ but one on multiple campuses and tailored to local and regional realities and with collaborative, adaptive and responsive governance and funding.
AN OUTCOME FOCUSED APPROACH

Goal----------
Maranoa Regional Council (MRC) to be a catalyst

‘FOR’
Enabling the Provision of Institutional Capacity Building Infrastructure
Teaching-Learning-Research
Physical Virtual

‘SAY FOR’
Enhancing Skills, Professional Development and Research Capabilities

‘THROUGH’
Generating and Wisely Applying Knowledge

‘TO’
Optimising the Regions Natural and Human Resources & Development Opportunities

‘AND’
Address Natural and Human Caused Risks and Challenges

‘FOR’
Land, Water (Surface & Ground) and Biological Resource Opportunities

PRODUCTIVE DRY&WETLAND CATCHMENT SYSTEMS

Changing Climatic Conditions
Potential Impacts on Aquifers
Horticulture—Agriculture--Grazing Ecosystems Services

Collaborative Institutional Arrangements & Articulated Programs

Deliver Sustainable Project Outcomes for Existing and New Economic Activity

ENHANCED LIVELIHOODS & LIFESTYLES
Attachment 2

Organisations and persons consulted

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The Darling Downs South West Region Professional Learning Hub is one of four professional learning hubs (PL Hubs) that have been established, under the Teacher Education Centres of Excellence (TECE) program. The ‘hub’ initiative seeks to enhance the recruitment of quality teachers to regional and remote locations in Queensland. PL Hubs are to provide enhanced support of beginning, experienced and preservice teacher capability and development in high priority locations.

The Roma PL Hub was opened on 23 June 2017 and is located at the Roma State College. The well resources facility is operating in partnership with the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

The other PL Hubs and their locations are as follows:

- Ipswich Professional Learning Hub, Silkstone State School
- Rockhampton Professional Learning Hub, ‘The Hall’ State School
- Mount Isa Professional Learning Hub, Mount Isa Central State School

PL Hubs will coordinate and deliver professional learning programs to support teachers within their local context.

The overarching focus of the PL Hubs is on:

- increasing existing teacher capability in the local area and context
- supporting beginning and experienced teachers in identified high priority locations across Queensland state schools
- enhancing the existing Mentoring Beginning Teachers program in high priority locations to develop professional capability for new teachers intending to work in regional areas
- partnering with existing Teacher Education Centres of Excellence (TECE) programs to develop a preservice teacher experience and development program to build capability for employment in high priority locations

Additionally, Griffith University has a Professional Learning Hub (PL Hub) that provides access to the School of Education and Professional Studies (SEPS) and is a one stop shop for a range of PL needs.