

BUILDING A WORKFORCE FOR THE NAMOI'S FUTURE.

Namoi Workforce Attraction and Retention Strategy.

Prepared for
Namoi Unlimited
October 2023

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PROJECTSJSA ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE NAMOI REGION AND PAYS RESPECT TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING.

WE CELEBRATE THE DIVERSITY OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND THEIR ONGOING CULTURES AND CONNECTIONS TO THE LANDS AND WATERS OF NSW.

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SUMMARY.

The Namoi region's growth and development relies on the attraction and retention of new workers to build new capability, capacity for industry growth and to ensure the delivery of essential services to the community.

Local government, working with others in the region, can play an important role in worker attraction and retention. This strategy provides Namoi Unlimited with a pathway to do just that.

THE OPPORTUNITY.

The Namoi economy is growing as key sectors expand and newcomers join the region's 40,000 strong workforce. The demand for workers has outstripped supply, with vacancies tripling in the last four years.

Future growth will be driven by further expansion in the health and education sectors, new investment in the agriculture value-add sector and the arrival of a clean energy workforce to build projects in the New England Renewable Energy Zone.

As the regions grows it is also becoming more diverse with new and recent migrants from the Pacific and Asia the most important single source of new temporary and permanent workers in the region.

Better meeting industry demand for workers through attraction and retention brings the opportunity for a stable and growing population, a more diverse and prosperous community and acts as a magnet for further investment in the region.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES.

The strategy is built on comprehensive background research, data analysis and consultation with local stakeholders which is captured in a supporting **Research and Engagement Report**.

Five strategic imperatives emerged from this research and engagement that have shaped the design of the strategy:

1

Attracting and retaining more new or recent international migrants is the highest priority. Migrants have been the most significant driver of recent workforce growth and are needed to staff the region's priority sectors.

2

Welcome and settlement is a key opportunity for local government and community leadership in attraction and retention. Unlike many other issues in attraction and retention, this is firmly within the scope and responsibility of local government.

3

Targeted support for employers and key industries can assist the Namoi business community to be more successful in workforce attraction and retention.

4

Supporting investments and policies are needed for the region to reach its true potential. Housing, commuting infrastructure, regional migration policy and regional development funding support are all crucial to the strategy.

5

There are a range of networks and organisations that can assist Namoi Unlimited in strategy implementation. This enables different groups to take the lead in their areas of responsibility and ensures Namoi local governments can focus on leadership and core capabilities.

Photo: Fiesta La Peel, Tamworth

THE STRATEGY.

The strategy recommends Namoi Unlimited coordinate and lead the establishment of initiatives in four interconnected areas.

NAMOI NEW MIGRANT INITIATIVE

The Namoi New Migrant Initiative aims to position the Namoi region as a higher profile destination for new and recent migrants. It will establish the Namoi as a leader in migrant support and integration in regional Australia, providing a pathway for future workforce growth and community development.

The initiative brings together promotion and relationship development with key international source countries, migrant focussed welcome and settlement support, local services to provide access to independent advice on workplace issues, skills recognition, and an employer excellence program.

LIFTING REGIONAL ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Three initiatives to lift attraction across the local economy:

- A promotional campaign to lift the number of potential workers considering relocation to the Namoi.
- The establishment of a Namoi Welcome Network with nodes in each local government area to lift retention and drive connections between the existing community and newcomers.
- Investment in targeted support for businesses to lift their skills and success in worker attraction and retention.

These initiatives will support both the strategy's focus on new migrants and ensure promotion, welcome and settlement, and business support is available across the economy and newcomer workforce.

SECTOR SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

To align the strategy to the forecast areas of workforce growth, a small number of dedicated initiatives in priority sectors are recommended to complement the New Migrant Initiative and Region Wide Attraction and Retention Strategies. This includes:

- **Agriculture Value Add:** Welcome and settlement support for temporary migrants working in the sector, support for businesses skills in recruitment and retention and making training packages available in languages other than English.
- **Health and Education:** Better facilitation of student placements in the region to encourage new teachers and nurses to join local Health and Education services as well as engagement with the sector to drive the best outcomes from available workforce incentives.
- **Clean Energy:** Coordination of workforce and housing needs in the Namoi and development of dedicated education and training that can assist newcomers to access opportunities in the region.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

Four supporting actions will enable workforce attraction and retention:

- Implementation of housing strategies and coordination of temporary housing needs
- Investment in commuting Infrastructure to better connect the Liverpool Plains to Gunnedah and Tamworth
- Continued investment in liveability within the region
- Aboriginal engagement to support community cohesion as the region grows.

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INTRODUCTION.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Namoi Workforce Attraction and Retention strategy provides a pathway for Namoi Unlimited to bring government, industry and community stakeholders in the region together to encourage an influx of talent.

The strategy is focussing on opportunities to attract workers needed by the Regional Jobs Precinct, Renewable Energy Zone and the Health and Education sectors.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

The strategy is underpinned by targeted background research and data analysis.

Background research included a review of relevant literature on regional attraction and retention strategies and strategy examples from other Australian and overseas regions.

Relevant local strategies in the Namoi that identify economic development and workforce related initiatives and targets as well as relevant reports and strategies for each of the target industry sectors were also considered.

Data analysis focussed on bringing together insights from available national data sets, including ABS Census (data on industry, workforce and population characteristics of the Namoi region) and labour market data from Jobs and Skills Australia.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Two phases of engagement have underpinned the development of the strategy. The discovery phase engagement included six themed workshops with local employers and other stakeholders in the region, a group discussion of the project and priorities with the Namoi mayors, and one-on-one interviews with other stakeholders, including employers in target sectors as well as other community, government and training organisations based in the Namoi.

The second solution phase included convening a regional workforce forum in Tamworth to workshop strategy options with business and community stakeholders, targeted one-on-one and small group discussions to refine proposed solutions and a newcomer survey to seek direct input from workers who have moved the region in the last 5 years.

The findings of the research and engagement phase of the project are detailed in the accompanying ***Namoi Workforce Attraction and Retention Strategy: Research and Engagement Report.***

THIS STRATEGY IS OUTLINED IN FOUR SECTIONS.**1**

The Opportunity details the areas of impact and outcomes.

2

The Strategy outlines the imperatives, framework and key recommended initiatives to drive attraction and retention.

3

Implementation outlines the practical next steps to action the recommendations (to be developed).

4

Appendices provide additional detail on key initiatives.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES.

MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS AND REDUCING PRESSURES ON LOCAL BUSINESS.

The Namoi workforce is over 40,000 people strong with recent growth driven by the healthcare, education, construction and mining sectors. Unemployment in the Namoi has reduced, and online vacancy rates have tripled, indicating a region which is very short of workers. Vacant positions include a range of skills with high skilled, degree qualified work the most common at 33% of vacancies. Health and caring roles are the most common types of vacancies.

A successful strategy will reduce the pressure in the labour market and make it easier for businesses to hire in the future.

SECURING GROWTH IN KEY INDUSTRIES, ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESSES & INVESTMENT

The Namoi has clear future growth opportunities that will drive workforce demand in key sectors.

Additional investment in the agriculture value add sector will require workers to support the operations of new facilities. The Renewable Energy Zone will require thousands of construction workers and provide opportunities for wider growth. Health, caring and education roles will continue to expand.

If these workforce demands can be met and the region can demonstrate it has the ability to attract and retain further workers, it will support further investment, business relocations and help to secure long term growth.

BUILDING A MORE DIVERSE AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

A more diverse community enriches community life, creates new links with the world and opens up opportunities for new business. Most new Namoi workers come from three sources: overseas, the Hunter region and Sydney. Overseas workers were the most important source of new workers despite the disruption of the COVID pandemic.

The last decade has seen the local South-East Asian, South Asian and East Asian population in the region grow rapidly. Whilst the regions proportion of overseas born residents is still relatively small (7%) compared to Australia as a whole (29%), overseas born residents accounted for one-third of population growth in the region between 2011-21.

If the strategy can support further diversity, whilst building social cohesion, the region will be positioned to thrive both socially and economically in the future.

DRIVING FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH AND BUILDING A YOUNGER WORKFORCE

Inland regions in Australia have been characterised by an older population and declining share of people in prime working age. However, the Namoi region has been successful in growing its younger workforce with 25–39-year-olds both the largest group in the current workforce and the strongest source of growth in workers.

If the attraction and retention strategy can continue this trend of younger people joining the local workforce and retain those already here for longer, there is an opportunity to stabilise populations in rural areas and achieve sustained growth in the region.

THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES.

Five strategic imperatives that guide the strategy.

1. Attracting and retaining more new or recent international migrants is the highest priority.

The Namoi's most important source of new workers is international workers. The next most important source - Sydney – is also a hub for recent migrants from diverse communities.

This flow of new workers over the last decade has seen the establishment of new communities in the Namoi with people from the Pacific and Asia becoming an important part of the region's economy and communities.

Both permanent and temporary migration is crucial for priority sectors including health, agriculture value-add and clean energy.

The strategy can respond to this clear trend by proactively promoting the region to potential new workers overseas, and in Australia. The region can also distinguish itself as a destination for migrants by creating a unique welcome, settlement and support approach. This will help to retain newcomers for longer and drive word of mouth within migrant communities outside of the region.

Whilst other regions in Australia are experiencing similar trends, few are really leaning into the opportunity this creates and the Namoi has an opportunity reap the benefits of leadership in this area.

2. Welcome and settlement is a key opportunity for local government and community leadership in attraction and retention.

The success of relocation is shaped by the ease with which newcomers can settle into their new community, make connections with others and build a lifestyle that they enjoy.

Community and local government leadership in welcome and settlement is a key opportunity for Namoi Unlimited and should be central to the role local government takes in strategy implementation.

3. Targeted support for employers and key industries can assist the Namoi business community to be more successful in workforce attraction and retention.

Employers ultimately decide who relocates to the region.

Their decisions on who to hire, salaries and benefits, and other workplace conditions are the fundamental driver of attraction and retention. Engagement revealed demand for initiatives to improve recruitment and retention by Namoi employers.

Education is also a key driver for people in relocating and for international migration. Targeted workforce development can better support newcomers to thrive and grow in the region.

If the strategy can lift the success of key employers in attraction and retention and increase the draw of the local education system for newcomers, this will deliver wider benefits for the community.

4. Supporting investments and policies are needed for the region to reach its true potential.

The region will require additional resources and policy support to reach its true potential in workforce attraction and retention.

Infrastructure investment, coordination of planning and approvals, education and training investments and migration policies will all impact on the ability of the Namoi to attract and retain the workers it needs.

Targeted advocacy by Namoi Unlimited can assist the strategy to extend beyond what is possible working purely with local resources and readily available funding pathways.

5. There are a range of networks and organisations that are willing to assist Namoi Unlimited in strategy implementation.

Namoi Unlimited members have limited resources and capacity to deliver the full scope of effort required by the strategy. **Local government's key role is in leadership and coordination, welcome and settlement support, and advocacy for investment and policy changes.**

Alongside Namoi Unlimited, the strategy can draw upon existing and emerging local networks and organisations including:

- Multicultural Tamworth
- Primary Health Network
- Greater Northern Skills Development Group and University of New England
- Department of Regional NSW

STRATEGY FRAMEWORK AND KEY INITIATIVES

The strategy (Figure 1) revolves around four areas of action:

1. The Namoi New Migrant Initiative.

A package of initiatives dedicated to the attraction of temporary and permanent workers from overseas and new communities in metropolitan areas.

2. Lifting regional attraction and retention

Includes initiatives to promote the region in Australia and overseas, a region-wide welcome network, business support, and newcomer education initiatives.

3. Sector strategies

Builds on the regional attraction and retention initiatives with specific initiatives for the agriculture value add, clean energy and health and education sectors which will be the drivers of future job growth for the Namoi.

4. Supporting strategies

Identifies initiatives in housing supply and commuting infrastructure that will increase the regions basic capacity to house and connect its workforce.

The following sections outline each area of the strategy, key recommendations, responsibilities and action areas.

THE NAMOI NEW MIGRANT INITIATIVE.

Recommendation:

“That Namoi Unlimited lead the establishment of the Namoi New Migrant initiative in partnership with Multicultural Tamworth, local migrant community leaders, the NSW Government and other stakeholders”.

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At the heart of the attraction and retention strategy is a focus on engaging and welcoming new migrants and diverse workers to the region. The Namoi New Migrant Initiative will create a distinctive approach to the attraction and retention of new migrants. It is designed to make the Namoi a subject of positive conversation, a destination of choice for new migrants and to position the region as a leader in developing the next generation of regional migration policies.

PROMOTION:

The promotional strategy (see New Worker Communications and Promotion Strategy below) recommends a focus on outreach to potential new migrants overseas and to recent migrants in Australia to increase the number of people considering the Namoi and its specific job opportunities. By targeting countries with growing communities in the Namoi, working with migration agents and others the aim is to position the region as a destination of choice for migrants with the skills the Namoi needs.

NEW SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIPS TARGETING WORKER ATTRACTION.

Across Australia, regional towns and cities have developed ‘Sister City’ relationships with cities in overseas countries for a range of mutual benefits. Whilst the focus of these relationships has tended to be business connections and trade, there is an opportunity to refocus some of the Namoi’s relationships towards key source regions for workers.

Gunnedah has led the way in this regard as, on June 24, 2022, the Gunnedah Shire and Kolomotu’a in Tonga, signed a Sister City Agreement. The agreement was the Kingdom of Tonga’s first Sister City relationship, indicating a desire for more such activity. Gunnedah and Kolomotu’a’s partnership is focused on four key areas - arts and culture, sports, education and employment, and the economy. In December 2022, Gunnedah hosted a Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme workshop to introduce local employers to the Federal Government program. The workshop was open to local Australian employers looking to fill labour gaps with reliable workers from the Pacific Islands or Timor-Leste.

It is recommended that each LGA in the Namoi create a similar relationship to Gunnedah’s. Building deeper ties with priority countries will increase the capacity of the region to promote itself and develop mutually beneficial relationships.

NEW MIGRANT SUPPORT PACKAGE

The creation of a dedicated welcome and support package for new migrants to the region is recommended as a core focus of the Namoi Welcome Network (see *Namoi Welcome Network below*)

Working locally in partnership with Multicultural Tamworth and leaders from the Namoi’s emerging migrant communities will build connections for newcomers with people from similar backgrounds alongside fostering welcome and settlement connections with the wider Namoi community.

Namoi Unlimited should also engage with Multicultural NSW to investigate the option of piloting a community led welcome and settlement initiative for skilled and temporary migrant workers, building on the existing refugee welcome services in the wider region. This pilot should include:

- **Migrant Support Service:** Exploitation is a big risk for migrants moving to work in Australia. To provide assurance for those moving to the Namoi, a local migrant support service should be established to provide newcomers with an independent source of support and advice for any issues experienced within the workplace or wider community. This will build the confidence amongst migrants in relocating to work in the region.
- **Skills Recognition Advice:** Migrants often work in jobs that do not reflect the skills they bring from work overseas. Namoi Unlimited should work with TAFE NSW to provide a free skills recognition assessment to help migrants identify opportunities for skills recognition and take advantage of local educational opportunities. Investigation of options for assessing migrant skills offshore should also be made to help migrants and employers make good matches prior to relocation.

- **Access to training in key languages:** Alongside promoting local English language courses, Namoi Unlimited should work with the Greater Northern Skills Development Group, and employers to widen the availability of training materials in the languages other than English that many Namoi migrants would value. This will increase the capacity of the local workforce development system to deliver training to migrants who are improving their English proficiency.
- **Advocating for a next generation Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) for the region:** Regional Development Australia Northern Inland and Namoi Unlimited developed a DAMA proposal that is unlikely to proceed under new migration reforms being introduced by the Australian Government. Namoi Unlimited should work with the NSW Government to advocate for a new regional agreement approach bringing together migration policy flexibility, welcome and settlement, and workforce development initiatives to drive a next generation of regional migration policy.

MIGRANT EMPLOYER EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

The experience of new migrants in the region is driven by their workplace culture as well as community experience. More employers in the Namoi will also need to bring people from diverse backgrounds into their workforces. Namoi Unlimited should support and celebrate employers who succeed in building diverse workforces.

In partnership with Business NSW/Local Chamber of Commerce and Training Service NSW, Namoi Unlimited should:

- Develop a specific award within local business awards to recognise outstanding employers of migrants in the region.
- Provide access to relevant training and support for employers to understand how best to integrate people from different cultural backgrounds into their workplaces.
- Promote migrant employment, understanding of migration process and connections to high quality migrant agents and intermediaries to increase the consideration of this attraction and retention pathway across the Namoi business community.

CASE STUDY:



SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES SEEKING TO EMPLOY WORKERS FROM OVERSEAS.

This case study reflects a well-considered suggestion from one employer of what is really needed to help businesses find, engage and settle new workers from overseas.

Realising the potential benefits of the attraction and retention strategy demands a holistic approach, especially when it comes to employing workers from overseas. A dedicated overseas recruitment and settlement service is needed; one that focuses on jobs in this region and becomes the conduit from potential workers to the employer.

The approach must include:

- 1. Targeted promotion of work opportunities and employers in the region.*
- 2. A central place for employers to register job vacancies.*
- 3. Wrap around support for the new worker, their family and the business through the whole process.*

An integrated local welcome and settlement process must also:

- prioritise housing and accommodation for new arrivals.*
- facilitate enrolment in schools and/or childcare.*
- provide support for the spouse/partner to find work.*
- ensure the family is registered at local GP clinic.*
- conduct an orientation program such as a tour of the region.*
- extend an introduction to local business owners e.g., local supermarket, chemist etc.*
- bring sporting clubs, school principals, religious institutions, leaders in the migrant community and civic leaders into the process.*

From a local government perspective, inducements such as discount rates (similar to pensioners), and 12 months free entry to Council-run facilities and events would affirm their support. A cultural hub (possibly located in the Botanical Gardens) with space set aside for new arrivals to grow their own produce to celebrate how the region embraces their contribution.

The vocational education and training system could deliver Australian workplace-ready credentialing such as white card, WHS and induction programs and provide an easy to navigate skills recognition and upskilling programs.

Across the broader business community, a discount card or relocation passport and welcome stickers in shop-front windows would make it easier for new arrivals to integrate into the community.

The goal is to support new people when they arrive, encourage them to stay and be part of the community; it's a lot more than relocating just for the job.

MIGRANT COMMUNITY PRESENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION INITIATIVES

Namoi Unlimited should work with **Multicultural Tamworth** and national cultural groups to build a new phase of migrant community presence and leadership in the Namoi.

As migrant communities grow, local leaders from different communities can play a larger role.

Opportunities for new events and initiatives to bring together new migrant groups with the wider Namoi community should be pursued.

LIFTING REGIONAL ATTRACTION & RETENTION.

“Lifting regional attraction and retention requires the Namoi to promote the region to potential new workers, provide a consistent and high-quality welcome and settlement experience and support business and the education sector to play their roles alongside local government”.

RECOMMENDATION:***Namoi Unlimited should lead the establishment of a
“Namoi Welcome Network”.***

Relocating to a new community for work is one of the biggest decisions people make in their lives. There are a multitude of changes, both professionally and personally when relocating for work and lifestyle. The degree of welcome experienced by newcomers in their new community impacts retention prospects from day one.

Welcome and settlement support are crucial opportunities for local government and the community to make a difference to workforce attraction and retention. This should include well-designed support initiatives and interventions that are flexible and aware enough to cater to newcomers of varying: Ages and life stages, cultural backgrounds, levels of agency and marginality.

Community welcome initiatives across the Namoi will better leverage existing community strengths if delivered in a consistent, consolidated approach.

The Namoi Welcome Network (Figure 3) is proposed to include:

A network of Place-based Welcome Initiatives across the 5 local government areas of the Namoi region:

Welcome should be community-led, harnessing local expertise, existing resources and personnel into a consolidated region-wide solution.

A flexible Welcome Framework and Toolkit be developed specifically for the communities across the Namoi:

A set of resources, tools and processes is needed to enable each Local Government Area to establish its own right-fit Welcome Initiative.

A Welcome Activator role be created to coordinate the network. A central community development role, working with stakeholders to drive the establishment of Welcome Network nodes across the Namoi LGAs. Once each node is operational the Welcome Activator would provide ongoing support across the network, manage reporting, governance, resource and information sharing, manage stakeholders and supporting workforce attraction efforts across the 5 Local Government Areas.

Collaboration with Multicultural Tamworth and the NSW Government to provide a new/recent migrant specific approach to welcome.

Multicultural Tamworth [MCT] have over 45 years' experience in community welcome, settlement support and responding to the needs of diverse newcomers. Their networks and capacity will be central to building migrant support into the welcome network.

THE WELCOME NETWORK NODES

A network of Place-based welcome initiatives across the 5 local government areas of the Namoi region.

Each Local Government Area should establish a community-led welcome Service (*Figure 4*) to build inclusion and welcome for newcomers from any background.

Community participants and professionals collaborate, making the decisions on service delivery, considering community capacity and resources.

- A Welcome Service that local employers, sector and industry groups, community groups and individuals can refer newcomers.
- Newcomers already in-region, struggling to make the connections they need, whose retention may be at risk can be engaged and benefit from a sense of inclusion.
- Established with the support and facilitation of the Welcome Activator, drawing on the CALD expertise, and mature networks of Multicultural Tamworth.
- Community participants provide flexible one-to one Welcome Ambassador engagement for newcomers.
- Local Council- community development and Visitor Information personnel support and facilitate where appropriate, according to their capacity.
- Respectful engagement with local First Nations communities to create where possible, appropriate, connections between newcomers and First Nations people, to lay the foundations for cohesion to keep pace with Community growth and expansion.

Figure 4: Welcome Network Nodes | Concept

THE NAMOI WELCOME FRAMEWORK

A flexible Welcome Framework and Toolkit developed specifically for the communities across the Namoi.

Comprehensive suite of resources and tools, designed to take a community led working group through the stages of awareness and understanding, enabling, service design and planning, resourcing, testing and delivery. Including:

- Guiding principles and a simple, accessible Theory of Change
- Stakeholder and Community mapping recommendations
- Welcome and settlement infrastructure recommendations.
- Roadmap and resources for Welcome Network Node establishment
- Simple accessible service level design and planning tools
- Operational collateral, assets and procedural recommendations
- First Nations engagement recommendations.
- Reporting and information management strategy recommendations
- Governance and compliance recommendations.
- Community specific value-add and ancillary support recommendations.

Figure 5: The Namoi Welcome Framework

THE WELCOME ACTIVATOR

The Welcome Activator leads and coordinates welcome and settlement services across the Namoi.

A new role supporting the welcome network and the nodes in the 5 Local Government Areas.

- Facilitating each community to develop their own Welcome Network Node or iteration of the Namoi Welcome framework.
- Driving community mapping efforts
- Plugging in resources and supports as required by each community.
- Leading on Information management, collateral and information provision
- Convening working group and stakeholder meetings
- Gathering case studies and content to tell the story of the Welcome Network and support ongoing workforce attraction and retention.
- Leading on reporting, risk management and governance.
- Working alongside Multicultural Tamworth to meet the needs of newcomers from diverse backgrounds.
- Setting up systems and protocols to enable the 5 nodes to be networked across the region.

The Welcome Activator would be engaged by Namoi Unlimited. The role could be part-time initially, scaling up as each node is established and the demand from Newcomer influx grows.

DEDICATED SUPPORT FOR NEW MIGRANTS

Partnering with Multicultural Tamworth to provide dedicated welcome support to new migrants joining Namoi communities.

Multicultural elements of the Namoi welcome would be additional to the standard welcome network approach, focussing on connecting newcomers with other new migrants from similar backgrounds as well as local support services and networks.

Multicultural Tamworth holds a high-level understanding of the current demographic breakdown, and presence of diverse populations in Tamworth, populations that can be built upon in terms of WF attraction efforts and community growth.

Their reputation for efficacy and expertise extends into metro-based settlement and multicultural organisations, who in turn have access into mature metro-based networks of potential newcomers from diverse backgrounds.

Multicultural Tamworth is effectively the “diverse community go-to” in the Namoi region. Their proven domain expertise is integral and a huge advantage in setting up for migration and diverse influx. They are a natural key partner to the Namoi Welcome Network and would be a significant guiding resource throughout the set-up of each of the Welcome Network Nodes.

Having Multicultural Tamworth at the centre of the Namoi Welcome Network would also provide a valuable opportunity to support ongoing sustainability and succession planning for this unique and valuable grassroots movement.

NEW WORKER COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION STRATEGY

Recommendation: Namoi Unlimited support the development and implementation of a dedicated new worker promotion strategy

A dedicated promotional campaign to engage and attract new workers to the Namoi will market the region to a set of key international and domestic locations, prioritising employment opportunities in growth sectors.

IN DOING SO THE CAMPAIGN WILL:

- Promote the benefits of living in the region to potential migrants, through localised connection and local stakeholder engagement.
- Focus messaging on what drives newcomers to relocate to the region, which may differ from the key drivers for tourism and the perspectives of long-term locals.
- Assist in communicating targeted welcome and settlement support activator and framework to assist new workers to settle in the region and find suitable housing and social support systems.
- Engage business and industry, helping to develop communication and marketing materials.
- Provide local people with opportunities to participate, including education and training organisations and local business and industry.
- Result in a significant reduction in unfilled positions

OVERARCHING CAMPAIGN NARRATIVE

- “Tucked away in Australia's heart, the Namoi region has unique opportunities for individuals and families looking for a new place to live”.
- “Here, we're building a region where growth is inspired by local aspirations, stories, and shared endeavours”.
- “With a wide array of skills in demand in our region, ranging from industry and construction, to care based jobs in nursing and education, we have a range of opportunities for newcomers seeking a career opportunity and a great lifestyle”.
- “The Namoi is growing through migration. New communities from the Pacific, South-East Asia, South Asia, and East Asia are bringing new energy to our industries and community”.
- “We actively welcome newcomers from overseas and Australia alike and can connect you with job opportunities, welcome and settlement support and a great place to live”.
- “In the Namoi you can be secure in the opportunities and dedicated support from our employers, local government and community groups”.

**“THE NAMOI’S JOURNEY IS A STORY OF RESILIENCE, UNITY, AND PROMISE.
JOIN US IN BUILDING THE FUTURE”.**

NEW WORKER COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION STRATEGY

AUDIENCE

Audiences for this strategy are broken into a number of key elements. To begin, there is a distinction between the local audience and the potential workforce.

The potential workforce is also broken into a number of key source countries, key occupations and subsidiary stakeholders in-country.

It may also be appropriate to identify priority regions within the key countries, especially where there is evidence of migration activity from these areas to regional Australia and/or the Namoi specifically.

LOCAL AUDIENCE:

- Champions for migration, local and national cultural groups from priority countries.
- Recruitment firms and migration agents
- Local businesses, industry and associations, training and education organisations and institutions
- Media across Namoi
- Local First Nations elders and nations

INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES:

- Potential workforce – key countries (or specified regions within) including India, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Philippines, Nepal, Vietnam
- Potential workforce – key industries including Nursing, Childcare, Construction, Energy, Meat processing.
- Other stakeholders including specialist migration and recruitment firms with links to key countries and priority workers, education peak bodies and the tourism industry.

Secondly, the campaign will reach out to potential workers overseas, through a variety of channels, with a significant focus on direct contact through social media.

KEY MESSAGES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN

- The Namoi region is flourishing, and we're eager to welcome skilled workers like you in a variety of fields, from healthcare and construction to energy and meat processing.
- You will find yourself at home in Namoi.
- When you choose to move to the Namoi region, you become part of a thriving community of businesses and workers contributing to our economic growth and prosperity.
- Much of this growth is driven by migration, and you will recognise yourself within our region and our people.
- Our region boasts a wealth of attractions, from diverse cultures and lifestyles to natural wonders, all within a laid-back lifestyle.
- Transitioning to a new place can be challenging, we are fully committed to helping you settle in smoothly with tailored welcome and settlement support programs.
- We acknowledge that labour and housing markets may be competitive, but we're confident that we can make it work for you, and your family.
- When you come to Namoi, you can rest assured that employers, local government and community groups are looking out for you.
- We're investing in essential infrastructure and community support to ensure long-term growth and prosperity, and we invite you to be a part of it.

“LIVING IN THE NAMOI REGION MEANS JOINING A THRIVING COMMUNITY OFFERING STRONG SUPPORT, EXCELLENT INFRASTRUCTURE, STABLE EMPLOYMENT, AND A VARIETY OF CULTURES AND EXPERIENCES”.

NEW WORKER COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION STRATEGY

- Your presence in the Namoi region can make a significant impact on our collective future. Join us in shaping the region's future.
- To skilled workers from across the Pacific, India and Southeast Asia, we extend a warm welcome to you and your family and invite you to become a part of our vibrant community.
- We're excited to collaborate with you, and to use your knowledge and skills to build a thriving community in our region.
- You're more than welcome to make your home with us, be it long or short term. Come and experience the Namoi region's charm and opportunities firsthand.

SUPPORTING DOMESTIC ATTRACTION MESSAGING

Promotion to domestic sources, particularly Sydney and regions around metropolitan hubs, focusing on the same key cultural groups and nationalities already living in Australia will complement and extend the impact of the campaign.

Similar collateral and messaging to that utilised in overseas promotion can support the domestic elements of the campaign, with some adjustment should support this extension to the overseas strategy.

MESSAGES TO SUPPORT COMMUNICATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING INDUSTRY, BUSINESS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION.

- We have developed a Workforce Attraction and Retention Strategy that focuses on supporting you and the growth of the Namoi region.
- Our growing economy has led to tight labour and housing markets, and the region needs additional workers to deal with these challenges and support our key industries.
- Success in attracting new workers involves recognising the key trends that are driving the region. For the Namoi, our ability to attract and retain new workers from overseas and from a range of different cultures has been the key to our success over the last ten years.

- Our strategy involves targeted promotion to build on this success as well as welcome and settlement support to connect newcomers with the existing community.
- We encourage you to be part of reaching out to people outside the region to encourage them to consider relocating and to be part of welcoming newcomers who have made the move.
- By working together and taking a proactive approach, we can drive prosperity for the region and continues to have a thriving community for all who live and work here.

Beyond these basic messages, the campaign will connect business and the wider community with specific opportunities to become involved with the strategy.

Reassurance that further migration will positively impact their lives, work prospects, housing and future for the community should also be considered within the detailed messaging.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROMOTION STRATEGY

Appendix 2: Communications and Promotion Strategy – Process and Implementation Guidance; provides an outline of key elements for a three-year campaign to implement the recommended promotional strategy.

This includes process goals and governance as well as a detailed channel and collateral strategy.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR BUSINESS

Recommendation: *A targeted business and industry support initiative be developed to support retention and attraction.*

A recurring message from the consultations was the need for a coordinated approach that will ultimately support businesses find, engage and settle new workers.

Feedback from industry shows that targeted programs would be welcomed by employers looking to employ workers from outside the region and overseas.

Larger firms are reasonably well organised in terms of established recruitment practice and provision of employee support. For these firms, complementary community and government led attraction and retention initiatives are the priority.

However, smaller firms looking to expand expressed a range of challenges.

Often cited during the consultation, were key outcomes from the ***Best practice in attraction and retention, an employer perspective workshop*** held in September 2022.

The workshop, convened by Training Services NSW, identified several business capacity building initiatives that would help underpin the attraction and retention strategy including:

- Leadership and other development programs for managers
- People management courses for supervisors
- A course that shows businesses how to build a respectful workplace culture.
- Social media skills focussing on how to promote the business/jobs.

These should be pursued in collaboration with the Greater Northern Skills Development Group.

In addition to these recommendations, specific courses aligned to successfully building teams with migrant workers should be implemented as described in the Namoi New Migrant Initiative.

CASE STUDY | OBIECO INDUSTRIES

Current vacancies – Auto Electricians, Metal Fabricators, Accessory Fitters.

SNAPSHOT

- OBIECO is very supportive of overseas migration to maintain and build their workforce.
- The business accesses training through TAFE Tamworth to fill skill gaps.
- Employs around 12 apprentices and strong focus on upskilling existing workers.
- Concerned that current system to attract and settle overseas workers is not holistic.

HOLISTIC SOLUTION / OPPORTUNITY

OBIECO seeks a **dedicated overseas recruitment and settlement solution** that focuses on regional jobs i.e., act as a conduit from potential workers to employer including:

1. Better promotion of work opportunities (and employers) in Australia to potential overseas workers
2. Central place to register job vacancies.
3. Provide support to new arrival, their family businesses through the whole process.
4. Integrated local welcome and settlement initiatives including:

- priority housing/accommodation
- enrolment in school, childcare
- support for spouse to find work.
- family registered at local GP clinic.
- introduction to local business owners e.g., local supermarket, chemist, fruit and veg.
- discount card/relocation passport and welcome sticker in supporting businesses shop-front windows.
- introduction to sporting clubs school principals, religious institutions and leaders in the migrant community and civic leaders.
- Council support – discount rates (same as pensioners?), 12 months free entry to Council-run facilities and events
- Easy to navigate skills recognition system incorporating upskilling opportunities.
- Australian workplace ready generic credentialling e.g., white card, WHS induction.

“OBIECO’S GOAL IS TO SUPPORT NEW ARRIVALS TO STAY AND BE PART OF THE COMMUNITY, NOT JUST THE JOB”.

CHALLENGES

- The RDANI migration program is not comprehensive enough i.e., only does part of the job.
- Visa requirements are a ‘minefield’ and turn many potential employers off.
- Lack of an integrated welcome and settlement process – too many disjointed elements.

EMPLOYMENT RELATED INITIATIVES (OBIECO INVOLVEMENT)

1. Member of the Greater Northern Skills Development Group Inc.
 2. Participated in Training Services NSW Attraction and Retention Workshop July 2022
 3. Planned for September 2023 - Engineering and Manufacturing Open Day and Recruitment Night (partnering with other employers including Belmore Engineering and Apollo Engineering)
- Open day at businesses to see work opportunities first-hand.
 - Information sessions including Manufacturing Skills Australia NSW ITAB, Training Services NSW and TAFE
 - Aptitude assessment of prospective candidates from 4PM
 - Recruitment night – open to the public - students meet with employers to discuss opportunities from 5.30pm.



TARGETING SUCCESS IN KEY SECTORS

“The strategy is focussed the needs of three key sectors which are expected to drive the majority of workforce growth in the coming years.

Specific benefits from the region wide strategy for each sector and additional initiatives are recommended for health and education, clean energy and agriculture value add “.

HEALTH & EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATION: SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS IN THE NAMOI CAN BE ENHANCED BY:

- *The Namoi Welcome Network in Gwydir, Walcha and the Liverpool Plains prioritising dedicated welcome support for new workers in the health and education sectors.*
- *Engagement of a coordinator(s) to work with Universities to arrange and support student placements in key facilities in the region and to build connections for these students in the local community.*
- *Namoi Unlimited support working groups led by the Primary Health Network to coordinate incentives and recruitment for health professionals.*
- *Ensure the region is leveraging the State and National incentives for health and education professionals and advocate for additional investment and innovation in this area.*

A PROMOTION AND WELCOME NETWORK SUPPORT PRIORITY

Health and education workers should be the key priority for promotion of opportunities in small towns in the region and the local welcome network nodes should work with local schools and health facilities to provide welcome to new workers in the sector.

STUDENT PLACEMENT AND SETTLEMENT COORDINATION

An important pathway for new teachers and health professionals into the region is student placements at local hospitals and schools.

Feedback indicates there are opportunities to enhance the coordination of placements between local schools/hospitals and Universities and add welcome and settlement elements to the placement experience in the Namoi.

The **University of New England** indicates that it is commencing a 6-month pilot program to provide wrap-around support services to nursing and education students. The aim of the project is to retain students in the region as professional workers once they have finished their studies. Key elements of the pilot include.

- Understanding what young people need to help them successfully complete their studies.
- Identifying gaps such as resources, tutoring support and social connection
- Leveraging industry links including retired nurses and teacher networks
- Facilitating connections to the broader community, and an 'in-house' mentoring and peer support initiative that links 4th year students with 3rd year students and so on.

Another aim of the UNE pilot is to help students understand the reality and demands of the workplace such as shift work. This will be achieved through a strategic work experience program.

Namoi Unlimited should work with UNE to build on this initiative and extend it to provide support and welcome to all student teachers and health professionals in the region.

COLLABORATION IN SECTOR ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

There are already a complex range of incentives and initiatives put in place by State and Federal Governments for the health and education sector (Appendix 3). These go well beyond the scope of what is feasible for locally led attraction and retention.

Namoi Unlimited should work with the Primary Health Network, Hunter-New England Health and the NSW Department of Education to ensure these programs are being fully utilised across the region and advocate for continued investment by State and Federal Governments in this area.

With supporting resources, Namoi Unlimited could take a real leadership role here, by establishing an alliance of education and health industry stakeholders.

Facilitating the group and working together to plan how the incentives and opportunities might be accessed and deployed is key. When required, councillors could utilise their connections and influence to maximise the uptake of incentives to benefit the whole region.

CASE STUDY | DR AHMED JAWED POYA, "JAWED"

Growing up in the Mazar region in Northern Afghanistan, becoming a practicing doctor in 2010, Jawed fled Afghanistan in 2012, due to threats to his personal safety and to remain alive. He entered Australia through Port Darwin in 2013. Jawed's family remained in Northern Afghanistan at this time, however the family have since fled to Pakistan [Islamabad].

In Australia, Jawed completed the qualification recognition process and began practicing as a GP in Tamworth in March 2018.

- In May 2023 he opened a Medical Centre in Gunnedah in partnership with 2 other Afghani Doctors, including **Doctor Farhad Dilyar**, who also entered Australia seeking protection with Jawed in 2013.
- In February 2023 Jawed applied for travel permission twice to visit his Parents in Pakistan. He was denied both times, the outcome stating he did not meet the criteria for compassionate travel permission.

The Family are now located in Pakistan, which is extremely unsafe for Afghani minorities. The Pakistani GOVT. has not extended the Family's Visa – and they live under the threat of jail and deportation. Jawed's Sister is a Gynecologist, Jawed feels his sister's skillset would benefit his community. His primary goal is to sponsor them and get them to safety in Australia. Jawed has made provisions so that he can take on the required financial responsibilities for his Family's care once they are in Australia, under the Family Reunification Visa stream.

In March 2023 Jawed became eligible to apply for Permanent Residency [PR], this would enable him to access the Family Reunification Scheme. He submitted his application but has not yet had an outcome or response. Effectively Jawed cannot access his parents or Family until his PR status is resolved, he also cannot visit his wife of 3 years in Canada, or bring her to Australia, despite having the resources.

Jawed indicates in the 6 years he has been in the Namoi, despite making friends, he has felt a sense of isolation, with the absence of family connections, and very few Afghans in Tamworth and Gunnedah. Jawed is committed to his current community and enjoys the life there, however, he would move to another location in NSW, or another state if there was an opportunity to expedite and secure PR. He has also considered emigrating to Canada on a GP Specialist visa pathway, with the goal to secure his Family's safety his priority.

Jawed continues to monitor his PR application and to consider other pathways or locations where his PR might be assured or expedited. He reports Doctor Farhad Dilyar, is also in the same position, weighing up options in the face of his need to bring loved ones to safety.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES:

Gunnedah community is in jeopardy of losing 2 doctors.

- The community is not equipped to support Jawed and plug in support that will enable his retention in the community.
- The fledgling GP practice in Gunnedah has been successful and the community has been very appreciative and welcoming, as is evidenced by the practice Facebook page.
- The practice is at risk and would not survive due to the costs of running a practice falling on one remaining doctor.
- Approx. 40 % of Jawed's client base are First Nations.

Jawed also offers Skin Cancer surgery.

- He has done upwards of 1000 Skin Cancer surgeries in the Namoi region.
- Many were life threatening if left untreated.
- The availability of these procedures in the region has made this level of healthcare more accessible.
- Patients have not had to seek specialist Melanoma treatment outside the community, avoiding the cost and logistical barriers to treatment.
- For community members experiencing financial duress, Jawed offers a bulk billing option, where they are bulk billed for a GP consultation.



CLEAN ENERGY

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Support for recruitment by local construction businesses*
- *Coordinate temporary housing.*
- *Workforce development*
- *DRNSW Working group.*



SUPPORT FOR RECRUITMENT BY LOCAL CONSTRUCTION BUSINESSES

A key point of pressure in the local economy during the renewables build in the New England Renewable Energy zone will be the local construction sector.

Firms in the Namoi already report shortages and an inability to take on work in these projects due to labour shortages. Pressure on these firms to retain their workers means that support for the industry should be a priority in the promotion, welcome network and support for business.

COORDINATE TEMPORARY HOUSING

Coordination of temporary housing demand will be important as a significant pulse of temporary workers enter the local economy to support renewables projects.

Significant pressure will occur in the New England, but Tamworth and Walcha in the Namoi are likely to experience significant pressure on temporary accommodation and housing. These pressures should be dealt with as part of local housing strategies. A dedicated housing coordination effort in Armidale and Tamworth is recommended to manage pressures on local housing and accommodation.

TARGETED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

There is an opportunity to leverage the local vocational and university education capacity in the Namoi to support the attraction of new workers to the region.

The Greater Northern Skills Development Group, Training Services NSW, University of New England and the Department of Regional NSW should work to expand the availability of relevant qualifications as this will enable workers to relocate to the region and build relevant skills as well as supporting local workforce development to support the construction boom and provide local workers for the smaller proportion of on-going positions.

DRNSW WORKING GROUP

Coordination and investment should be led by a Department of Regional NSW working group that is being formed to bring together key government and community stakeholders to liaise with industry during the Renewable Energy Zone development.

The group can leverage the promotion and welcome network capacities as well as workforce development networks to respond to pressures as they arise.

AGRICULTURE VALUE ADD

RECOMMENDATION:

The Namoi New Migrant Initiative, Welcome Network, Business and Workforce Development Initiatives and Housing Strategies should be implemented in collaboration with the sector to support the attraction and retention of workers and the overall growth of the industry and attraction and further investment.

The agriculture value add sector is dominated by large firms who have sophisticated recruitment, migration and training strategies. The role of the attraction and retention strategy will be to provide supporting initiatives to assist these firms to attract and retain the workers they need.

The **Namoi New Migrant Initiative** is designed to provide targeted support to the sector in attracting and retaining new workers with a focus on new and recent migrants. It should be implemented in collaboration with the key local firms in the meat processing and wider value ag sector.

The expansion of **Training Packages Available in Relevant Languages** should also target specific skills and qualifications required in the sector to support training and skill development of new migrant and relocating workers in the region.

The recommended **Support for Business Migrant Employment** should also target support industries for the agriculture value add sector including local suppliers, farm labour and other key parts of the local value chain.

COLLABORATION WORKING GROUP

Namoi Unlimited should bring together key firms in the sector to coordinate the implementation of the key elements of the attraction and retention strategy that provide support for the sector's workforce.

CASE STUDY - TEYS TAMWORTH

Teys processes and packages beef with Woolworths being a major customer. The firm has comprehensive programs to engage, induct and settle new employees including:

- A four-week employment program delivered to new workers in partnership with Australian Training Plus at Tamworth.
- Introductory programs (Beef It Up Program) comprising 2 days for school students and 3 days for job seekers.
- A pre-employment medical is conducted for all new workers.
- Teys also provides a range of health, fitness and welfare services on site and in partnership with local providers.

While Teys expressed a preference to employ local people to build the skills base, they are also employing overseas workers under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme.

Training is readily provided in most aspects of the business including high risk activities such as forklift and working at heights.

This is a means of upskilling workers and by default, retaining people.



AGRICULTURE VALUE ADD CONTINUED..

CASE STUDY - BAIADA POULTRY PTY LTD

- Baiada has been processing poultry in Tamworth for more than 60 years.
- A second stage plant is to be built at the existing Oakburn site. This will increase production from one million up to three million birds per week.
- Due to its scale and value, the new plant is classified as State Significant and Designated Development.

In staffing the new plant, Baiada' preference is to retain and upskill the existing workforce and to employ local people from the region (Baiada employ over 7,000 people across all its operations).

Due to the sophistication of the new technologies, specialist contractors will be used for maintenance and repair work of these machines. Local trades such as electricians and fitters will be employed to repair and maintain other aspects within the plant.

Baiada face several challenges including specialist contracting companies poaching their good tradespersons.

They also find that staff in their late 20's and early 30's (mostly at the Griffith plant) leave town on weekends to go to larger centres such as Wagga or Melbourne.

They have concerns that this may be the same case for new arrivals at the expanded Tamworth plant. A lack of public transport options may be a deterrent to their attraction and retention endeavours.

Baiada plan to use suitable local training providers to deliver generic programs such as WHS, Food Safety etc.

They also intend to promote jobs at the new plant to Sydney residents as 'better job, same wages' and a 'state of the art workplace'.



SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

“Four areas of supporting investment and activity by Namoi Unlimited members will enhance the outcomes from the regional action agenda and sector strategies “.

HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Recommendation: Increase housing supply and support the local construction sector to grow to meet competing sources of demand.

A lack of housing supply and reduced affordability is challenging the Namoi's ability to attract and retain workers across the economy.

The implementation of housing strategies that expand the supply of new residential land and housing, provide pathways for the timely development of housing and approval of necessary temporary accommodation or key worker housing are crucial to ensuring the region has the capacity to house a growing workforce.

COMMUTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendation: Upgrades be prioritised by Local and State Governments for key roads between the Quirindi and Tamworth/Gunnedah to support commuting workers.

Table 1 provides an assessment of internal commuting by comparing Place of Work and Place of Residence data from the 2021 Census. This data shows that commuting is important for the Liverpool Plains workforce (3,236 people [1]), with 518 locals leaving the area for work in Tamworth and Gunnedah and 334 residents of Tamworth and Gunnedah commuting into the Liverpool Plains.

For attraction and retention of workers in the area, the ability for workers living in either Tamworth or Gunnedah to commute easily into the Liverpool Plains is essential.

Key commuting routes between Quirindi and Tamworth and Gunnedah include:

- New England Highway via Wallabadah Rd to Tamworth
- Werris Creek Rd to Tamworth
- Kamilaroi Highway to Gunnedah

These routes should be reviewed for safety and ease of commuting to support the attraction and retention of workers and residents in the Liverpool Plains and upgraded as required.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022, Liverpool Plains LGA - General Community Profile, Census 2021.

LIVEABILITY INVESTMENTS

A key factor in attraction and retention for newcomers, particularly those relocating from urban areas is the liveability of the local community.

Liveability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities.

Each Council has existing programs and projects related to local liveability and it is out of scope for this strategy to review and provide detailed advice on how these can be enhanced. However, continued investment by each Council in the liveability of their communities, based on community and newcomer feedback will be an important factor in future attraction and retention outcomes.

ABORIGINAL ENGAGEMENT

First Nations involvement in welcome is crucial to future cohesion in the Namoi.

It is recommended that the Namoi Welcome Network Working Group develop, within its Terms of Reference, guiding principles for First Nations engagement related to community welcome for newcomers, and for cultivating First Nations collaboration in the region wide initiative.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

A PROJECT-SPECIFIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First Nations people are their own people, and while they may build connections with Newcomers from diverse Multicultural backgrounds, their culture, language, and beliefs are respected as the traditional custodians of the lands across the Namoi.

A COMMITMENT TO

- Identify pathways to build connections between Newcomers and first Nations communities across the Namoi,
- Respect the capacity of First Nations organisations and community to be involved in the Namoi Welcome Network.
- Identify mechanisms to involve and centre first nations, perspectives in community welcome.

“ANY DELIVERY OF INFORMATION, EXPERIENCES, AND EVENTS FOCUSED ON FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL AWARENESS, HISTORY AND CULTURAL PROTOCOLS, SHOULD BE DONE BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE ON COUNTRY”.

It is recommended that each of the 5 local councils engages independently with local First Nation community groups and representatives to discuss their involvement in welcome.

In consultations with Aboriginal Partnerships Managers from the Department of Regional NSW, there was a clear indication of the opportunity for each Local Government Area to develop a First Nations cultural awareness program or training package, for newcomers, stakeholders, and the wider community.

This undertaking does not only provide culturally appropriate First Nations engagement opportunities for newcomers, but it would also provide a broader opportunity for:

- Economic development and entrepreneurial pathways for local First Nations community members
- Trust and collaboration between First Nations communities and the local councils
- Employment opportunities for First Nations people in cultural tourism and promotion, cultural practice and the wider arts and communications sectors.

The process by which to undertake this work, would need to be negotiated between each Namoi Council and local First Nations groups and representatives, with the support of Aboriginal Partnerships Managers [State Govt.] and other relevant Aboriginal liaison personnel.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Funding the Strategy

The priority for Namoi Unlimited in the initial phase of implementation will be to secure funding for key elements of the strategy. This may take up to six months.

A budget for implementation of the strategy is provided at Appendix 4. The strategy details, supporting information in the research and engagement report and recommended budget envelopes provide the foundation for developing funding proposals.

As this strategy has been funded by the NSW Government, it is recommended that Namoi Unlimited work with the Department of Regional NSW to seek core funding for the Promotional Campaign, Welcome Network and Migrant Initiative from the Regional Development Trust. The details for this fund are under development, with funding rounds expected to open in early 2024 [1].

Australian Government regional development programs are currently directed at infrastructure and precinct initiatives, which are not well aligned to supporting the strategy [2].

There have been a series of State and Federal programs targeting community cohesion projects. Future funding rounds may provide support for the Namoi Migrant Initiative. Namoi Unlimited should engage with Multicultural NSW and the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs to raise the awareness of the initiative and opportunities in forthcoming programs.

A tender for provision of Welcome Support to workers in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme is also likely to provide opportunities for funding elements of the strategy in 2024 once it is in place [3].

Philanthropic funding options should also be pursued, with a direct approach to the Scanlon Foundation which is dedicated to social cohesion and the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal recommended as initial steps.

A range of additional funding programs that may be accessed to provide supporting resources are noted in Appendix 5.

Other elements of the strategy are anticipated to be funded by existing funding allocations from State and Federal governments. In particular, the recommended training and development initiatives can be progressed in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, TAFE NSW, the Greater Northern Skills Development Group and local employer organisations.

Supporting strategies for housing, liveability, commuting infrastructure and Aboriginal engagement have not been costed. These are aligned to separate areas of Council activity, and it is assumed they would leverage the existing programs, engagement and funding opportunities relevant to each.

[1] See <https://www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-development-roadmap>

[2] See <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/regional-and-communityprograms#:~:text=The%20Australian%20Government%20has%20announced,Regional%20Precincts%20and%20Partnerships%20Program>

[3] See *Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme – Community Connections Program*, https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/worker-support#:~:text=Community%20Connections&text=This%20partnership%20provides%20support%20to,communities%20and%20improved%20cultural%20understanding_

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Roles and Responsibilities

The strategy should be implemented by Namoi Unlimited in partnership with other local organisations and stakeholders. The table below provides an overview of the suggested role of a range of local institutions, service providers and others in strategy implementation. Leveraging this joint collaborative capacity is the key to success for the strategy.

Working groups for each of the major elements of the strategy can be convened by Namoi Unlimited to coordinate implementation across the range of groups to be involved. These will be essential in the early phases of implementation to motivate and coordinate effort across the region.