

NARROMINE

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY CONDITIONS



Northern
Basin
Review



Narromine and surrounds, What the research tells us

- Population
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- Employment
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- Water availability

Narromine and surrounds, From the locals' point of view

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The Narromine community is influenced by its proximity to Dubbo and activity within the agriculture sector (which is based on a mix of grazing, cropping and irrigation). While the area's population has been increasing since 2001, differences have arisen in the town and farming areas. The population in the farming area increased between 2001 and 2006 then fell after 2006. The town population grew after 2006.

Employment in the Narromine community was growing across each of the sectors between 2001 and 2006. Beyond 2006, employment in the agriculture and agriculture supply sector fell while jobs in the non-agricultural private sector and government services sector increased.

The general social and economic conditions are quite sound in Narromine. While the community has reasonable capacity for adapting to change, there is the potential for water recovery to date to have an identifiable effect. A large proportion of the water recovery was derived from the Australian Government investment in local irrigation infrastructure.

NORTHERN BASIN



A photograph of a large flock of sheep in a metal pen. In the background, several people wearing hats are standing near more sheep. The scene is outdoors with trees and a clear sky.

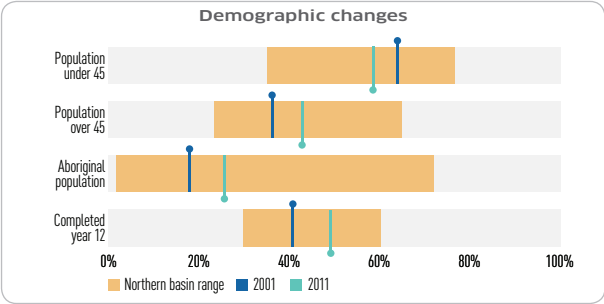
Narromine and surrounds

What the research tells us

POPULATION

	2001	2006	2011
Total area population	4,580	5,137	5,196
Total town population	3,545	3,599	3,788

Between 2001 and 2011, the Narromine area population increased by 616 people (13%). During this time, the town population increased by 243 people (7%). Most of the change in the town occurred between 2006 and 2011. The population in the farming part of the Narromine community increased by 413 people between 2001 and 2006 and fell by 130 people between 2006 and 2011. In 2011, 25% of Narromine’s town population identified as Aboriginal.



In 2001, 36% of the town population was 45 years or older. This increased to 42% by 2011. The change in population includes a 25% increase in the number of people aged 45 years or older and a 4% decrease in the number of people under 45. Most of this change occurred between 2001 and 2006.

EDUCATION

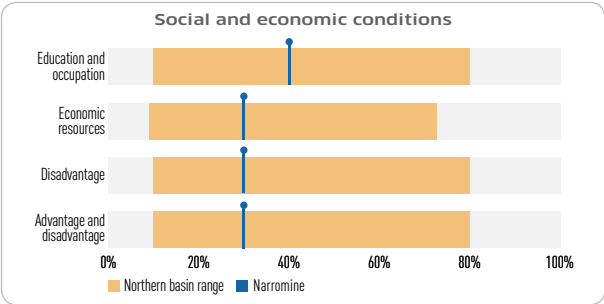
In 2011, 48% of people in the town (aged over 15) had completed year 12 and 26% had completed some post-school qualifications. The latter is an increase from 21% in 2001.

In 2011, Narromine town had index scores of 4 for education and occupation and 3 for disadvantage, advantage and disadvantage and economic resources.

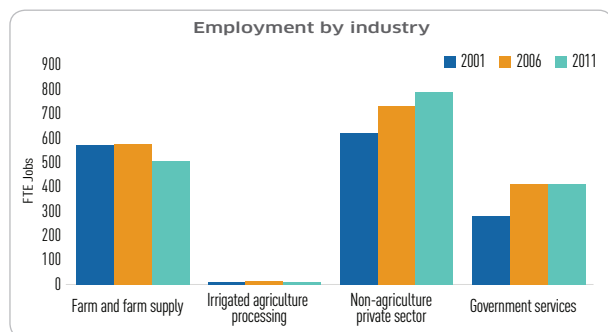
For 2006, Narromine town had index scores of 4 for education and occupation and for

advantage and disadvantage, and 3 for disadvantage and for economic resources.

General social and economic condition



EMPLOYMENT



In 2011, there were 1,775 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs in Narromine (excluding seasonal workers). This represents a 19% (291 FTE) increase in jobs since 2001. Most of this

change occurred between 2001 and 2006. The unemployment rate in the town of Narromine was 8% in 2011.

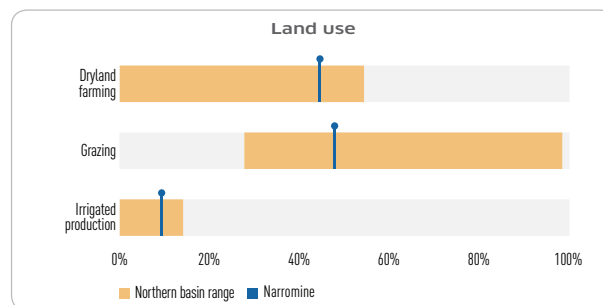
The non-agriculture private sector dominates the Narromine economy, representing 44% of all jobs in 2011.

Between 2001 and 2011, employment in the agriculture and agriculture supply sector fell by 11% (70 FTE), all between 2006 and 2011. During this time, employment increased by 26% (165 FTE) in the non-agriculture private sector and 68% (192 FTE) in the government services sector. The largest changes were between 2001 and 2006.

LAND USE

Land use in the Narromine area is a mix of dryland grazing, (47%) and dryland farming (44% of the area). The maximum area developed for irrigated production is 9% of the land area, with cotton, grapes and citrus the dominant irrigated crops. Other agricultural outputs include sheep, cattle, wool and dryland crops such as wheat, barley, oats, canola, sorghum and lucerne.

The irrigated area has varied between 2,200 and 14,000 hectares. The maximum area developed for irrigation equates to 3 hectares of irrigated area per person.



IRRIGATION WATER AVAILABILITY

Water in the Narromine area is sourced from the Macquarie–Castlereagh catchment. The main water sources are regulated and unregulated surface water and groundwater.

The availability of groundwater allows irrigators to produce irrigated crops, even when surface water allocations are very low. The 2004 *Water Sharing Plan for the Macquarie and Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source* introduced changes to the volume of supplementary water able to be extracted by irrigators.

Prior to 2008–09, irrigators held 40 GL of surface water entitlements. Since 2008–09, around 32% of those entitlements have been recovered through purchase and infrastructure investment by the Australian Government and state governments. Most of the water purchase occurred in 2009–10.

Water savings accruing to irrigators from infrastructure investment, such as the NSW State Priority Project – Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program, are around 12% of the entitlements. The net effect is a 20% reduction in the volume of surface water available for production.



Narromine and surrounds

From the locals' point of view

Looking back

The main west railway line extension between Dubbo and Nevertire, which included Narromine, was officially opened 60 years after explorer John Oxley first surveyed the area. The railway helped the area develop and by Federation, Narromine had a population of 2,228.

Agriculture has long been the mainstay of this district, and the Narromine Shire is well known for its sheep, cattle and wool production.

However, improved conservation farming practices in the 1960s and 70s saw many farmers around the district diversify into growing crops. During the last 40 years, farmers have been growing wheat, barley, oats, canola, soy beans, chickpeas, sorghum and lucerne in the area.

Local farmer Ross Elder said profitably was the driver for this change and said that his family also moved out of sheep and into cropping in the 1970s.

'Irrigation from Burrendong Dam came in the early 1970s and it changed the practice of farming right across the district. Extra water was available for drought proofing properties and the irrigation of crops.'

Ross Elder

Like a number of farmers around the district, the Elders began growing cotton in the 1990s. Ross's crops have been grown using bore water, as the allocation from the Macquarie system wasn't adequate enough to grow his intended area.

'Those who haven't got irrigation bores and rely on Burrendong Dam would find it rather difficult. They haven't had enough water and have had the driest cycle.'

Ross Elder

Ross said that during his time in the district, he has seen the aggregation of many properties.

'They (farmers) may have sold because of bank pressure, they couldn't make a profit on the farm, or their holding was just too small.'

Ross Elder

Over the years, this town has built a solid reputation for its aviation attributes. This area was a training base for pilots during World War II, and instruction for Qantas pilots. In 2002, the Narromine Aviation Museum

was opened by pioneer aviatrix Nancy-Bird Walton. It claims the country's oldest regional aero club.

Narromine is considered the best gliding area in Australia and the local economy has benefited from the growth in this field, regularly hosting state and national championships.

In Narromine, the population has bucked the trend of many smaller rural towns, with an increase of 27% from 1981 to 2011.

Narromine Shire Council General Manager, Greg Lamont said the proximity of this town to nearby Dubbo, has made 'rural residential blocks' very appealing, as people can work in Dubbo, but choose a rural lifestyle in Narromine.

'These are 5 acre blocks. You can have a job in Dubbo and the kids can go to our local schools. They can have a sense of ruralism. That is our potential.'

Greg Lamont

Managing change – a business owner's view

Michael Burke has been running his family owned business for the last 14 years. The business was started by his father in 1972.

With the growth of Narromine, they have changed the business from predominately livestock based to property sales and management.

Since the mid 1990s, Michael said their rental roll has grown from 80 homes, to more than 250.

'Narromine has changed. When I left school, we were mainly stock and station agents, and we could walk through livestock paddocks (on the edge of Narromine). Now these paddocks have houses all over them.' Michael Burke

Michael explained that property investment confidence in Narromine is solid. He said many buyers come from Sydney to invest.

'They don't even come out and have a look. They say they would rather buy a couple of houses or flats in Narromine than spend their money buying one house for a million dollars in Sydney.' Michael Burke

David Floyde and his wife Julieanne bought the Peppercorn Motor Inn in Narromine in 2010. At that stage, they said the Peppercorn had a 40% occupancy rate.

David said that they worked hard to improve the Motor Inn, by upgrading facilities in all the

rooms. He said they lifted the occupancy rate to 80%.

But David said a decision to allow B-double trucks to drive past his Motor Inn in 2012 has had a devastating effect on his business.

'The road is deteriorating and the trucks make a huge noise in the middle of the night. Our occupancy rate has dropped 50% since then.' David Floyde

He said that they are ready to leave. He put the business on the market a few months ago, but 'didn't get any nibbles'.

David said since taking over the business, he has decreased his staff numbers from 5 to 3 staff.

What is happening now?

Greg Lamont of the Narromine Shire says the future for economic growth in the Narromine Shire looks bright and they have a prospectus to attract new businesses to town.

Over the last 4 years, Greg said there has been \$50 million worth of development within the Narromine Shire.

While Coles is the only supermarket in town, retailer IGA purchased land in Narromine several years ago, with the intent of constructing a second supermarket.

Greg says plans for the inland rail project is a major plus for the town and helps with business confidence. He also said that the sale of Council's Industrial land on the Mitchell Highway to local developers is also progressing well, with 3 businesses ready to move in.

There are also plans to extend the Narromine Aviation Museum, and the proposed expansion of the Tomingley Gold Operations mine.

'I want to see it to continue to be a responsive, dynamic rural shire that can provide value for money for ratepayers. There is an opportunity to resource share to get the best bang for our buck.'

Greg Lamont

In town, all 4 schools in Narromine have seen an increase in student numbers over the last 10 years.

The local high school reported that its student population of 230 fluctuates slightly and they attract several students from Dubbo. At the Narromine Christian School, numbers have grown significantly, with student numbers going from 30 to more than 100 in ten years.

President of the United Services Memorial Club, and former CEO of local aged care facility, Timbrebongie House, Tony Barlow, says, Narromine is driven by the rural scene.

'I go back to my days as the manager of the State Bank – and you see the financial situation of farmers. If they have a good year, that only stabilises them. You need 3 or 4 years to make them purr. We haven't had a good run for some time. If that ever happens, then things will improve.' *Tony Barlow*

Former Narromine Mayor, Bill McAnally, says 'Narromine gets by because of its close proximity to Dubbo'.

'Businesses in town that have an established business plan go very well. We have had a lot of businesses open up and they are going well.'

'Farming in the Narromine Shire is strong when it is strong, but we do suffer from the vagaries of weather and government policy.' *Bill McAnally*

Over the last few months, the local farming community was tested by the weather.

Widespread, heavy rain during late autumn and spring devastated crops in central western New South Wales, including the Narromine district.

Few farmers would complain about rain, but there is such a thing as getting too much and at the wrong time.

Record rainfalls in 2016 have severely damaged and killed winter crops such as wheat, barley and chickpeas.

The Department of Primary Industries said it had been the third wettest winter on record.

Greg and Kate Broughton have lived on their property, 'Jamea', north-east of Narromine for around 2 decades. The Broughton's 3 children are the sixth generation of Kate's family to live in the district.

Now, their mixed farming business is under enormous stress, because their access road has been closed since April this year due to flooding.

The waterlogged Jamea Road has stopped them from getting cattle and sheep to market. It has stopped the delivery of fuel and essential farming supplies. Kate said they are unable to get grain out of silos to make room for this year's harvest.

At this stage, Kate said they have lost about 75% of their winter crop due to water logging.

Like many business owners we spoke to, Kate Broughton said the maintenance and improvement of local roads in the area is critical to success of their business. Kate said 'it's the biggest issue'.

'We can plan for floods and drought and work around it. We know it's part of our business and we know we have to manage those risks. But you just can't manage the road. It is our only access.'

Kate Broughton

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