

# TRANGIE

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY CONDITIONS



Northern  
Basin  
Review



## Trarie and surrounds, What the research tells us

Population

Education

Employment

Land use

Water availability

## Trarie and surrounds, From the locals' point of view

Looking back

Managing change

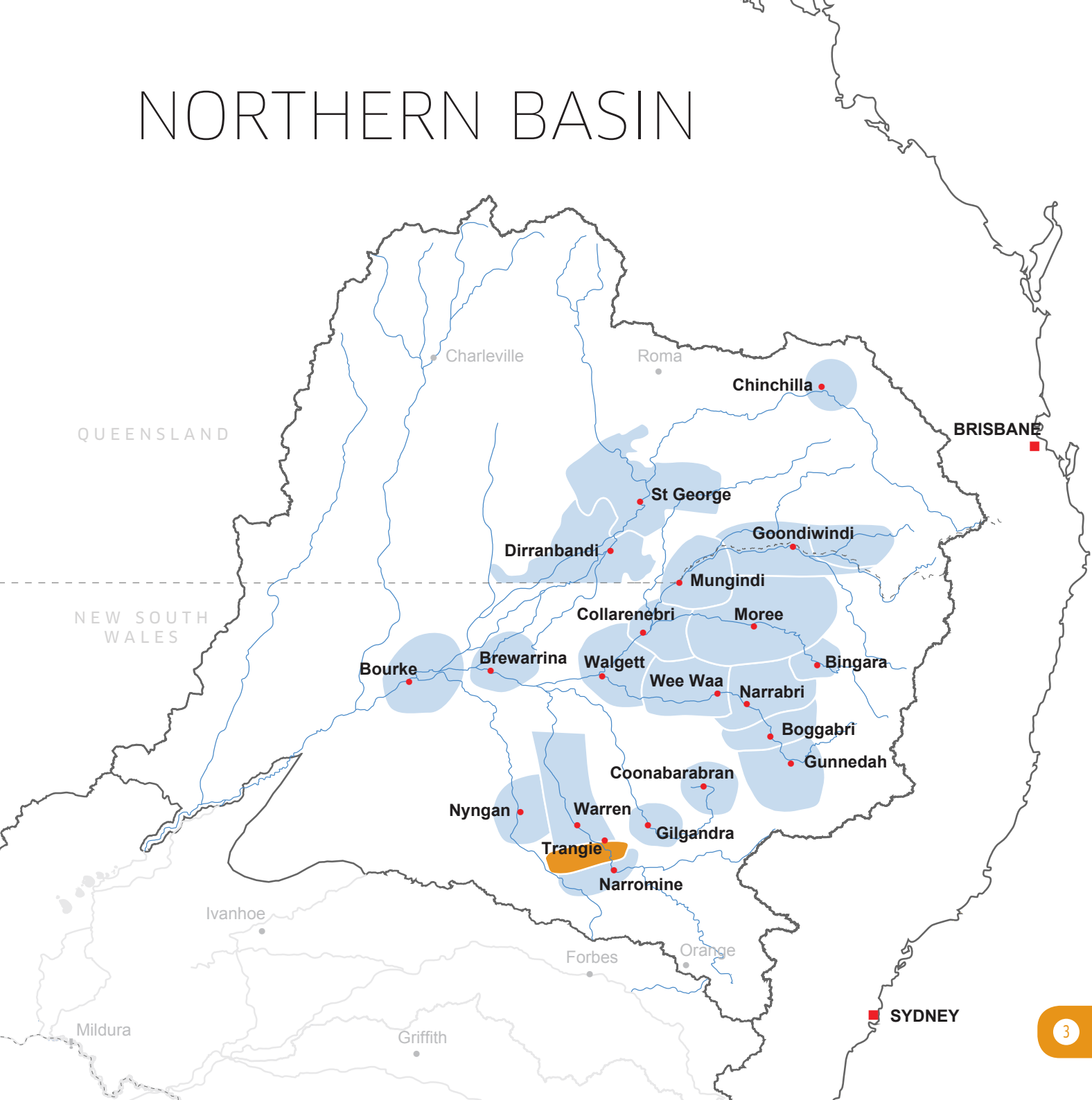
What is happening

Trarie is a small rural community to the west of Dubbo. Largely as a consequence of the 2002–03 drought, there was a large decline in the population of the farming area around Trarie town, and a smaller decline in the town population between 2001 and 2006. The number of jobs fell considerably and people said that a number of agricultural service businesses closed during this time.

The period 2006 to 2011 saw some recovery in the farming population and employment in the local economy. Beyond these changes, the general social and economic conditions in the Trarie community indicate the extent of the challenges the community will face in adapting to further changes.

Since 2011, further drought has followed across 2014 and 2015, and the water recovery processes have reduced the volume of irrigation water available to farmers by around 20%. As yet, there has not been an opportunity to observe the benefits to the community from the Commonwealth investment in upgraded irrigation infrastructure.

# NORTHERN BASIN





# Trangie and surrounds

## What the research tells us

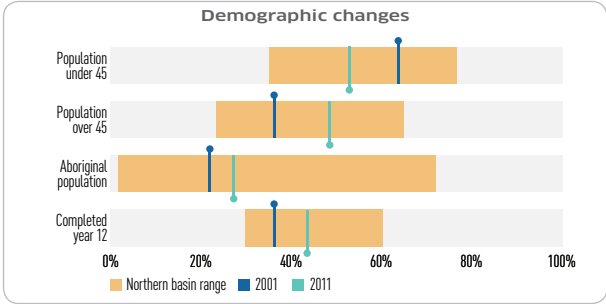


# POPULATION

	2001	2006	2011
<b>Total area population</b>	1,517	1,090	1,219
<b>Total town population</b>	945	867	850

Between 2001 and 2011, the Trangie community population fell by 298 people (20%). This change to the population included a fall of 427 people (28%) between 2001 and 2006 and an increase of 129 people (8%) between 2006 and 2011.

Between 2001 and 2011, the town population declined by 95 people (10%). Most of this change occurred between 2001 and 2006. While the changes for the town are important,



the more significant changes were associated with the farming community between 2001 and 2006. In 2011, 27% of Trangie's town population identified as Aboriginal.

In 2001, 36% of the town population was 45 years or older. This increased to 48% by 2011. The change in population includes a 20% increase in the number of people aged 45 years or over and a 27% decrease in the number of people under 45.

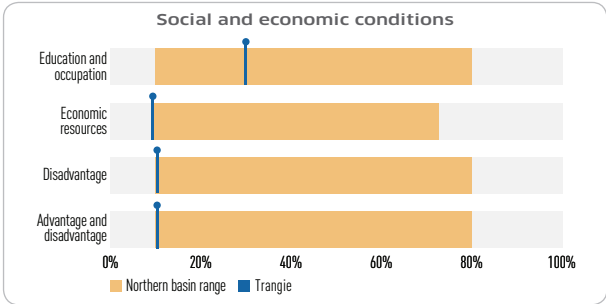
# EDUCATION

By 2011, around 43% of people in the town (aged over 15) had completed year 12 and 22% had completed some post-school qualifications. This is an increase from 18% in 2001.

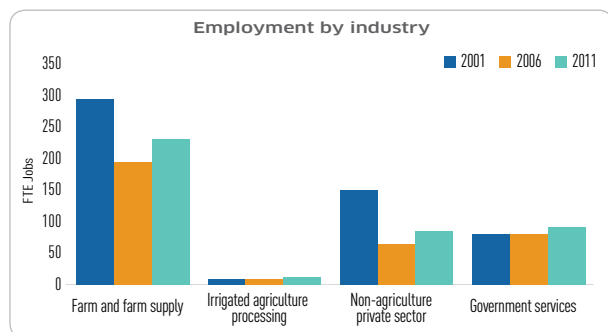
In 2011, Trangie town had index scores of 3 for education and occupation, and 1 for disadvantage, advantage and disadvantage and economic resources. For 2006, the index scores were the same for 3 of the measures,

the difference being an index score of 2 for advantage and disadvantage.

## General social and economic condition



# EMPLOYMENT



In 2011, there were 417 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs in the Trangie community. Employment in 2011 was 22% (115 FTE) below the 2001 level. The changes to total employment included a 35% decrease in jobs between 2001 and 2006, and a 13% increase in jobs between 2006 and 2011.

Unemployment in the town of Trangie was 9% in 2011.

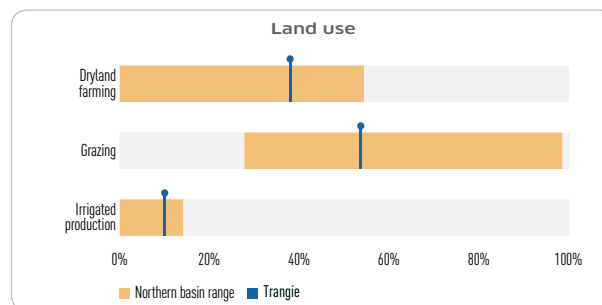
The agriculture and agriculture supply sector dominates the Trangie economy accounting for 55% of total jobs in 2011. Between 2001 and 2011, employment in the agriculture and agriculture supply sector declined by 22% (64 FTE), noting a 34% decrease between 2001 and 2006 followed by a 12% increase during 2006 to 2011.

Between 2001 and 2011, employment in the non-agriculture private sector fell 44% (65 FTE), with a 57% decrease between 2001 to 2006 and increase in jobs for this sector of 13% between 2006 and 2011. Employment in the government services sector was constant between 2001 and 2006 before the number of jobs increased by 14% (11 FTE) between 2006 and 2011.

# LAND USE

Land use in the Trangie community is a mix of dryland grazing (covering 53% of the land area), with a further 37% of the land used for dryland farming, predominantly wheat. The maximum area developed for irrigated production accounts for 10% of the land area, with cotton the main crop grown when water is available. Other agricultural outputs include sheep, wool, canola, barley, oats, fava, sorghum and chickpeas. The volume and mix of production varies significantly from year to year.

The irrigated area has varied between 100 and 9,300 hectares. The maximum area developed for irrigated production equates to 6 hectares per person.





## IRRIGATION WATER AVAILABILITY

Water entitlements held in the Trangie community are sourced from the Macquarie-Castlereagh catchment. The main water sources are regulated and unregulated surface water, and groundwater. 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 and created general security water entitlements for the environment.

Prior to 2008-09, irrigators in this community held 48 GL of surface water entitlements plus 8 GL of groundwater entitlements. Since 2009-10, around 34% of the surface water entitlements have been recovered from the Trangie community through purchase and infrastructure investment by the Australian Government and through the state water recovery process. Some of the water savings accruing to irrigators from the infrastructure investment, such as the NSW State Priority Project – Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program have had the net effect of reducing the surface water available for production in the Trangie community by around 20%.





# Trangie and surrounds

## From the locals' point of view

### Looking back

Historians say Trangie was established in the 1830s on 'Weemaabah Station'.

This area is thought to have been occupied by the Wongaibon Aboriginals prior to white settlement. Trangie is an Aboriginal word said to mean 'quick'.

In 1882, the railway arrived and locals say this improved transportation for wool growers. This was the start of the development of Trangie and the wool industry.

In 1915, a 4,000 acre experimental farm was established and was at the forefront of technological changes which came to the district. Today research is still conducted at the Trangie Agricultural Research Centre (TRAC). Local Narramine Shire Mayor, Bill McAnnally told us that at its peak, the research station employed more than 100 people.

An Angus beef cattle stud was established here in 1929. Saleyards were built in the 1940s.



As technologies improved in the grain industry, farmers began to put in crops and broad acre farming emerged in this area. The first wheat silo was erected in 1962.

Local agriculture flourished when Burrendong Dam was completed in 1967.

Local farmer and managing director of 'Agriland', Paolo Cavazzini, was here when the irrigation industry started to take off. He put in his first cotton crop in 1977.

Agriland is 20,000 acres in size and Mr Cavazzini said he has 7,000 acres developed for irrigation. However, because of low water allocations over the last few years, he has only had very small cotton crops of 200 and 700 acres. Staff numbers have reduced from 20 to just eight.

---

*'It was a lot more exciting here 20 years ago. Things were happening and people were developing country.'*

*'When I was on the Board of Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD), it was obvious that the only towns that were prospering out here were those associated with the irrigation industry and cotton.'*

*Paolo Cavazzini*

---

When wool production declined in this area during the late 80s and early 90s, cotton production helped fill the void in the job

market. Cattle numbers also increased as some farmers slowly changed their operations.

However, locals say the introduction of Bollgard cotton, government water policy and the introduction of round balers slashed the number of seasonal and permanent workers needed here during the cotton season, and the impact has been felt among local town businesses ever since.

Geoff 'Kooka' Cahlenberg has owned the Imperial Hotel in town for more than 20 years. He told us that things are now very 'quiet'.

---

*'There are 3 pubs and 2 clubs in town and we have 900 people.'*      *Geoff Cahlenberg*

---

Kooka says profits have halved since he bought the pub. He told us that the cotton season used to bring more than 600 backpackers and seasonal workers into the town throughout the year. Kooka says there is now just one backpacker in town and she is serving behind his bar.

The publican told us he has had enough and he has put the hotel on the market.

Local Narromine Shire Councillor, Craig Davies, said Trangie has lost its workforce and it is having a dramatic effect on the social structure of the town.

---

*'So many people have been laid off because our water allocations have been dramatically cut. Those who were good workers have had the initiative to move where the work is.'*

*'We have become a social security town. All these empty houses are attracting social security recipients because rent is cheap. We are seeing the drug ice in this town and it is devastating.'* Craig Davies

---

## Managing change – a business owner's view

Dave Duggan runs Delta Agribusiness in Trangie. This business supplies chemical, fertiliser and seed to farmers around the region.

Dave told us that in order to survive here, he had to completely change the business structure of the operation over the last five years, because irrigators haven't had reliable water.

---

*'Burrendong Dam was the safest dam in the eastern states. Now it is mostly one of the most unreliable.'*

*'We are surviving and if we had a full allocation year, we would put two more agronomists on. We would be spending another \$250,000 on staff.'* Dave Duggan

---

Dave told us a lot of people would only be treading water now waiting for cotton to come back. Even with the recent rain and Burrendong Dam full, people are nervous about any future government policy decisions which will affect their investment.

Andrew Cayzer and his wife moved from Geelong in February last year and bought the rundown caravan park. They have spent more than \$500,000 upgrading the park and focussed on marketing the town as a stopover destination.

Now more than 2,000 visitors stay at his park annually and he actively encourages them to visit other businesses around the town during their stay.

---

*'The business does extremely well. If I don't double my sales figures next year, I will be very surprised. If they are not talking about you on the internet, then no-one knows you are here. We have made videos and have our own website and its becoming more and more popular.'*

Andrew Cayzer

---

## What is happening now?

Mike Welsh has run the local IGA Supermarket in town for more than 20 years. He told us that things here are fairly 'steady' because there hasn't been a lot of

cotton grown in the last few years. Mike told us that profits are down as the population has diminished over the last 10 years.

---

*'If the rural side is going ok, the rest of the businesses here feed off the farmers. If they (farmers) have money in their pockets, and they want work done, it generates money.'* Mike Welsh

---

Mike says competition from the big supermarket chains such as Woolworths and Coles is having an enormous impact on this business.

---

*'We are a bit more careful about what we buy and we don't sell too many lines in case you don't sell them.'* Mike Welsh

---

Mike says a large percentage of their customers these days are pensioners and they have tightened their belts. They are not 'brand loyal' anymore and most of the sales here are from the weekly specials catalogue.

At Trangie Central School, numbers are on the increase with parents from surrounding villages choosing Trangie to educate their children. Trangie Central School now boasts 220 students.

Keith Milgate has also been around the district most of his life. He runs a trucking

company in Trangie, servicing the livestock, grain and cotton industry. Around the district, farmers have sown wheat, barley, chickpeas, lupins and canola.

While he told us that he has had some 'lean' cotton seasons over the last few years, his business is doing well and he now has eight trucks on the road. Keith currently employs six staff.

Just outside town, Julie Black runs Rebel Ag, an aerial spray contracting business. Since taking over the business five years ago, Julie said things here have been tough with each cotton season getting smaller and smaller.

At its peak, Rebel Ag employs more than 25 permanent people. However Julie said, at times, she has had the business operating with minimal staff of just twelve.

However, with the recent rain in the area, business has picked up considerably because grain growers can't get onto their country to spray crops and need to do it by air. Without this rain, Julie said things were looking a bit 'dicey' and she was looking to lay more staff off.

Winter crops aside, and with Burrendong Dam now full, Julie said she is now confident to put more staff on.



---

*'I know I can offer people permanent positions now – without cotton, I don't know what is in front of me.'*

*'I know I have a couple of good years coming, provided there is water for irrigation. Optimism is back in the valley.'*  
*Julie Black.*

---

While Julie said things are looking up for irrigators, people are nervous about what will happen with water allocations and they need certainty.

---

*'People want the security that they can pay their mortgages, buy their groceries, educate their children and save for their retirement. At the moment, in rural Australia, that security is not there.'*  
*Julie Black*

---

This sentiment was reflected by most of the business owners we spoke to in Trangie. Local Mayor Bill McAnnally said people are 'under massive pressure and they have the banks knocking on their doors'.

---

*'I would like to say I would hope that they (the government) go back to their initial news release that said there was going to be a triple bottom line. I don't think they took the community, and other industries that rely on the cotton industry for survival, into account.'*

*'They did not give them enough credit about what would happen if you took water out of that. The human element should have had a bit more sway.'*

*'We can accept fighting bushfires, floods and drought. But what people can't accept is people making decisions about things they don't know about.'*

*Bill McAnnally*

---

**Published by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (November 2016)**

GPO Box 1801 Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6279 0100

Web: [mdba.gov.au](http://mdba.gov.au)

MDBA publication no: 30/16

ISBN (online): 978-1-925221-26-8

© Murray-Darling Basin Authority 2016



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



/md\_basin\_auth



/mdbauth



[getinvolved.mdba.gov.au](http://getinvolved.mdba.gov.au)



[engagement@mdba.gov.au](mailto:engagement@mdba.gov.au)

