



Theme

“Small Town Prosperity Through Building on Local Assets, Stories, Creativity and Community Connection”

Location

Western Queensland based in Longreach with Learning Excursions to a host of nearby innovative outback towns.

Dates

Sunday 6 September to Friday 11 September 2026

Preamble

Following on from another highly successful National Small Town Reinvention Conference in Kapunda, South Australia in 2025, plans are underway to convene the next such learning and networking event in September 2026. Through the support of the Longreach Regional Council and a range of Western Queensland Councils, businesses and community organisations, the 3rd National Small Town Reinvention Conference will be convened in Longreach, Queensland.

This Conference is being organised to provide an opportunity for Community Builders and organisations who care deeply about the future of small-town Australia, and who desire to discover renewed passion, and new skills, knowledge and resources about rural and remote small-town reinvention.

This Conference is not your normal come '*sit and listen*' event but has a strong focus on seeing and interacting with best practice initiatives and rural '*movers and shakers*'. Besides practical workshops, storytelling and sharing sessions facilitated by practitioners from across rural and remote Australia, this Conference will be the opportunity through three '*Learning Bus Excursions*' to spend time visiting and learning from eight Western Queensland communities bubbling with community creativity and innovation- Aramac, Barcaldine, Blackall, Ilfracombe, Isisford, Longreach, Tambo and Winton.

Looking for a week of fun, learning and networking, consider joining rural community builders in Longreach in September.

Cost and Registration

The Conference fee is \$1185 (GST incl) which includes most meals, three learning excursions (bus journeys), six cultural immersion experiences involving some of the most important national and outback discovery centres and wonderful social events. It excludes accommodation and travel to and from Longreach.

Registration is through the website of the [Bank of I.D.E.A.S. website](#).

Conference Organiser

[Bank of I.D.E.A.S.](#)

The Bank of I.D.E.A.S. has been committed since its establishment in 1989 to supporting the growth of enterprising, sustainable and vibrant small-town communities and economies. Their facilitation endeavours have involved 2000+ rural communities and project work in 67 countries.

Conference Sponsorship

Many thanks to the following sponsors that have enabled this Conference with its rich and interesting program to be held in Western Queensland at a reduced cost to participants. Your support is greatly valued!

Platinum Level



**Longreach
Regional Council**
Ilfracombe Isisford Longreach Yaraka



Gold Level



Winton
Shire Council



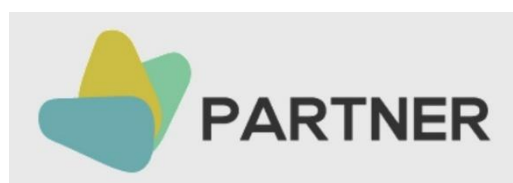
Silver Level



Blackall-Tambo
Regional Council



Bronze Level



A range of Conference sponsorship options exist for any other organisations wishing to support this Conference. Please [click here](#) to view.

Expressions of Interest to Share

The Conference Organising Team would welcome any expressions of interest from communities and individuals keen to present, facilitate a Masterclass or share a community case study.

Please note: As the Conference is not a commercial venture, and to minimise Conference fees, no organiser or presenter will be paid.

Please contact Peter Kenyon on Mobile: 0417183719 or Email: pk@bankofideas.com.au

Current Draft Program

Sunday 6 September

- 5.15pm Welcome Sundowner drinks and nibbles at “Chute 1,” 110 Eagle St (Mainstreet) , Longreach – opportunity to meet and connect with other Conference participants from across Australia and New Zealand.
- 7.00 pm Dinner at one of Longreach many mainstreet restaurants (cost not included in registration fee).

Monday 7 September

From 7.45am- 8.45am - Registration, coffee and muffins in the main Gallery of the Qantas Founders Museum (I Hudson Fysh Drive, Longreach) and an opportunity to view Museum collection with Museum staff.

- 9.00am Conference opening at the Rodney Seccombe Centre at the Qantas Founders Museum – Chaired by Councillor Tracy Hatch.

Welcome to Yiningayl Country by Tony Weldon.

Welcome by Tony Rayner, Mayor, Longreach regional Council.

Welcome by Dr Andrew Leigh – Federal Assistant Minister Responsible for Communities and Author of “reconnect: A community Builder’s Handbook” (by video link).

Opening Keynote Presentation: *“Small Towns, Big Futures: Backing the Local Power of Rural Australia”* – Natalie Eggleton, CEO, Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR).

Keynote Presentation – *“Banish the Bland- Getting WoW Factor Back in Our Small Towns ”* – Peter Kenyon - Director, Bank of I.D.E.A.S.

- 10.45am. Refreshments, conversations and networking.
- 11.15am *“Small town community innovation in attracting and retaining health care workforce”*– presentations and workshop facilitation by the Partner Network - Suzie Harte, Natalii Paczkowski and Kerry Leggett.
- 12.45pm Lunch, conversations and networking.
- 1.25pm Keynote Presentation: *“Protecting What Makes Our Communities Worth Living In: The future of our communities isn't protected solely by the decisions made in*

governments. It's protected by the decisions made in our paddocks, our backyards, our businesses, on our roads and at our borders every single day." – Susie Kelly, Councillor, Goodiwindi Regional Council and Queensland Biosecurity Ambassador.

- 1.50pm PechaKucha Session: *"Three Inspiring Stories of Small-town Change"*-
- Babinda, Queensland –Babinda District Community Association Team- Tanya Tuttle, Debra Quabba and Dalitta Wright.
 - Westonia, WA – Bill Price, CEO, Westonia Shire Council.
 - Laura, SA- Sue Scarman, Councillor, Northern Areas Council.
- 2.35pm Refreshments, conversations and networking
- 2.50pm Masterclass: *"Innovative Community -Led Models and Resources in Small Town Ageing in Place options."* – Helen Morton, Ageing in Place National Coordinator), Linda Doolan and Brad Grieve, Community Partnership Managers, Mable) and Sue Scarman (Laura Community Project Coordinator, SA.
4. 30pm Some Small-Town Inspiration to End the Monday Formal Program: *"The Balingup Experience- Creating a Progress Association That Works and Lives up to its Name"* – Wendy Trow- Balingup Progress Association, WA.
- 5 .00pm End of Day 1 formal program.
5. 15pm Board buses and travel to Thomson River for a traditional Stockman's dinner, entertainment and presentation by an extraordinary rural entrepreneur - Richard Kinnon (Founder of Outback Pioneers).
- 8.00pm Return to Longreach.

Tuesday 8 September

- 7.30am Learning Excursion 1: Bus departure from Longreach Railway Station for Aramac via Ilfracombe.



- 8.00am Breakfast at Machinery Mile and Heritage Precinct – one of Australia’s great outdoor museums.
- 9.00am Depart Ilfracombe.
- 10.00am Arrive Aramac and tour town and view their amazing community and economic development initiatives- led by Amber Coulton, Acting District Manager – Aramac and Murrumbidgee, Barcaldine Regional Council.
- 10.30am Refreshments, conversations and networking at Harry Redford Community and Sporting Centre.
- 11.00 pm Overview of Aramac initiatives including story of the Lake Dunn Sculptor Trail (Creator - Milynda Rogers) and the town “Adorables.”



- 11.30am “Amusing Stories of Bulls and Cows in Small Town Australia and New Zealand”
- 11.45am Presentation: “Co-operatives – a new/old way of doing things in Small Town - Stories, Practice and possibilities” –Peter Westoby, Consultant, Care Together, Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals”
- 12.10pm Case study: “The Cunderdin Co-op and its Role in Building Community and Economy” – Matt Matera, CEO, Cunderdin Farmers’ Co-operative.
- 12.30pm Lunch, conversations and networking.
- 1.15pm Café Conversation – opportunity to learn about four new community building initiatives or tools from six options including:
- Resources of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR)- Sarah Gradie, Grants Manager, South & West, FRRR.
 - Creating a Community Hub Information Centre -Paterson, NSW- Julie Overton, Paterson Community Builders.
 - Big Picture Australia (BPA)- a model for reinventing secondary education in small towns – John Hogan., National Coordinator, BPA.

- 2.15pm Refreshments, conversations and networking.
- 2.30pm Depart for Longreach.
- 4.15pm Arrive Longreach Railway Station.
- 4.30pm Dinner Options:
- Silver Tails Rail Sunset and “*Smithy’s Outback Dinner and Show*” or
 - Drover’s Sunset Cruise and “*Smithy’s Outback Dinner and Show*”.
- 8.00pm Return to Longreach.

Wednesday 9 September

- 7.30am Learning Excursion 2: Bus departure from Longreach Railway Station for Winton (Breakfast pack on bus).
- 9.30am Arrive at the award-winning “*Age of Dinosaur*” Museum (the world’s largest collection of Australian dinosaurs).
- Welcome and Dinosaur Canyon experience.
 - Morning refreshments.
 - Presentation - “*Story of Museum Creation and Lessons for Rural Reinvention*” (David Elliot OAM and Australia’s Local Hero in 2024 and Naomi Miles).
- 11.00noon Bus departure for Winton townsite.



- 11.30 pm Arrive Winton townsite for driving tour of heritage buildings (including Royal Theatre, North Gregory Hotel), progressive pub lunch and an overview of the wide diversity of community and economic initiatives including -
- Achievement of Australia's "*First Dark Sky Community*" status.
 - Town's "*First impressions and Signage Strategy*".
 - Outback Festival.
 - Crackup Sisters Arts Precinct- "*The Dustarena*" – first artist owned and led remote arts precinct in Australia'.
 - Musical Fence.
 - Opal Galaxy and Opal initiatives.
 - Qantas birthplace connections.
 - Recreational facilities.
 - Professional housing precinct.
- Winton Program and Lunch organised and sponsored by Winton Shire Council and coordinated by Lydia Evert, Economic Development Officer.
- 2.00pm Tour Waltzing Matilda Centre- the world's only museum dedicated to a single Song.
- 3.15pm Bus departure from Winton.
- 5.15pm Arrive at Darr River Downs-
- Presentation by Fiona Tindall.
 - Sunset nibbles and drinks at Boot Hill.
- 6.30pm Depart for Longreach.
- Evening Free to enjoy another Longreach eating destination.

Thursday 10 September

- 7.30am Learning Excursion 3: Bus departure from Longreach Railway Station for Isisford (breakfast pack on bus).
- 9.00am Arrive Isisford –
- Tour the Outer Barcoo Interpretation Centre- with Isisford.
 - Morning refreshments at Whiteman's Cafe and sharing of Isisford community initiatives, coordinated by Councillor Dale Bignell.
 - Case Study Presentation: "*The Wild Gravel Journey- creating a regional cycling event through the collaboration of six rural communities which is now generating year tourism attraction in the Wild Gravel Trail*" – Rory Murray, Gravel Tourism Consultant.
 - Tour of townsite to view public art and town statements.

11.00am Depart Isisford for Blackall.



12 Noon Arrive Blackall and lunch and welcome by Blackall community builders. Lunch, refreshments and events organised and sponsored by Blackall- Tambo Regional Council.

1.00pm Tour with commentary of Blackall and initiatives by Boyd Johnstone, the local lawyer and Shire Councillor - the most entertaining rural tour guide you will ever encounter!

2.00pm Presentations

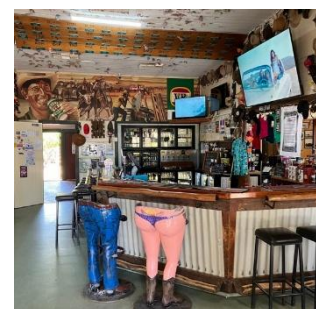
- The Better in Blackall Campaign (Lisa Alexander).
- The Historic Woolscour Project.
- Tambo Teddies (Alison Shaw).

3.15pm Refreshments.

3.30pm Bus departure for Ilfracombel via Barcaldine (Home of the Tree of Knowledge and the reputed birthplace of the Labor Movement in Australia).

6.30pm Arrive Wellshot Hotel –

- Welcome by Tracy Hatch, Wellshot Publican and Longreach Regional Council Councillor.
- Final Dinner and loads of fun in one of Australia's iconic outback pubs- interactive entertainment and knockabout acrobatics by the famous and hilarious Crackup Sisters from Winton who have prepared an original 20-minute comedy show on the themes of the Conference.
- Dinner Sponsored by Mable Community Partnerships.



8.30pm Depart for Longreach.

9.00pm Arrive Longreach.

Friday 11 September

From 8.15am Coffee, muffins and conversation at the historic Drover's Place, 69 Ilfracombe Rd, Longreach.



- 9.00 am Presentation: *"Big Picture Australia: is this the answer for enriching secondary education that our rural small towns have been looking for?"* – John Hogan, National Coordinator, Big Picture Australia.
- 9.30am Case Study Presentation: *"Re-imagining Pathways for Our Young People in Small Towns - the Kulin Story, WA"* – Gen Whisson, Kulin Community Animator.
- 10.00am Presentation: *"Re-imagining Pathways – How Small Towns and Universities Can Co-Create Futures for Young People"* – Dr Luke Webster, lead, School and Community Engagement, Curtin University.
- 10.30am Refreshments and Open Space session focussed on *"This is what I care about and who else cares?"*.
- 12.00noon Final Lunch and concluding Keynote Presentation: *"The Innovation and Creativity of Mallee Communities in Northern Victoria- whetting the appetite for the location of the 2027 Small Town Reinvention Conference"* – the Mildura Rural City Council Team. Sponsored by the Partner Network.
- 1.15pm Conference closure and departure from Longreach or the opportunity to stay and explore. A bus will depart at 1.15pm directly to Airport for those on afternoon flight.

Please note: Program is subject to change as new experiences and contributors are added.

For Further Information

[Click here](#) to follow for updated information.

For further information or any questions, please contact Peter Kenyon – Mobile: 0417183719 or Email pk@bankofideas.com.au Please Note Cancellation Policy due to commitments to local operators. Any cancelled registration can be fully transferred to another participant. 75% refund till 30 July 2026 and no refund after this date.