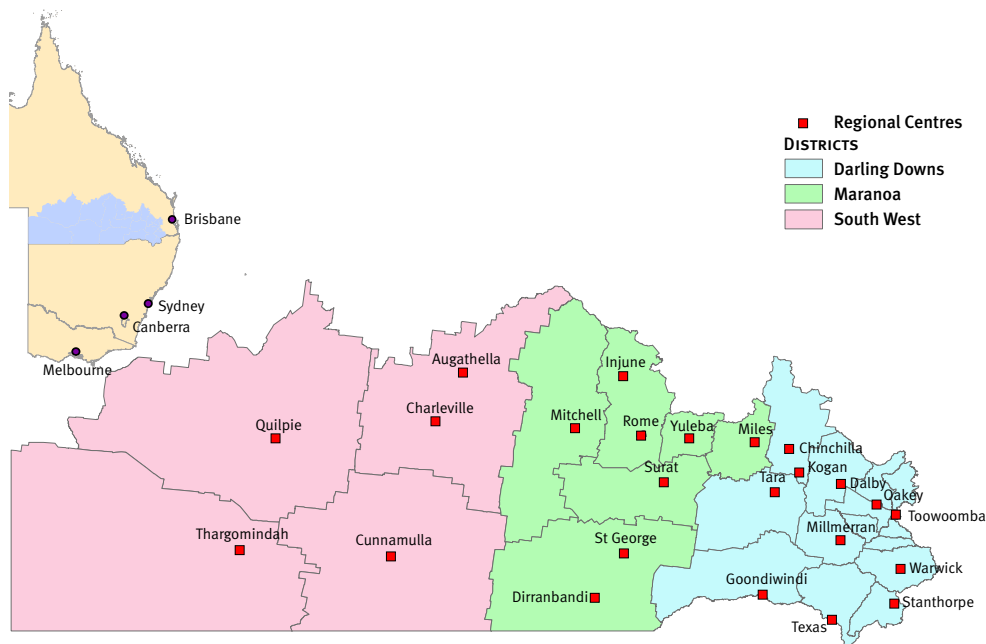


The Darling Downs and South West Queensland – an industry snapshot

This region of Queensland covers almost 400,000 square kilometres stretching from the Great Dividing Range west to the South Australian border. The region has three distinct sub-regions - the Darling Downs, Maranoa and South West.

1. The Darling Downs includes one of Queensland’s largest regional urban centres, Toowoomba, which is the business and service hub for the entire region. The rapidly expanding energy sector in the Surat Basin is changing the employment profile and driving new investment in transport and telecommunications.
2. The Maranoa sub-region boasts agricultural innovations – developing new farming practices to respond to the changing dynamics of climate and markets. The sub-region has strong historical links to the cotton and pastoral industries and an emerging energy sector in the Surat Basin.
3. The South West is sparsely populated and has built its reputation on primary industries. It also has significant reserves of oil and gas. The vast geothermal energy reserves of the South West remain untapped at present. The sub-region is developing education tourism opportunities based on its natural and cultural landscapes.

Darling Downs and Southwest Queensland - Regional Map



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 Map elements kindly supplied by the Department of Natural Resources and Water and the Department of Local Government, Planning Sport and Recreation.

Darling Downs and South West Queensland has a population approaching a quarter of a million people (about six per cent of Queensland's total population) and generates about 25 per cent of the State's agricultural production. The rapidly expanding resources sector is driving regional unemployment to record lows – below state and national levels – and is increasing the demand for skilled professionals and tradespeople.

The region's strengths include:

Natural assets:

- Significant reserves of natural resources (gas, crude oil and coal)
- Soil and climate highly suited to diverse agricultural production including wool, beef, grain, cotton, horticulture and viticulture

Infrastructure and services:

- Access to major South East Queensland and interstate markets through its strategic location and transport links
- A broad network of infrastructure in telecommunications, transport and energy
- Strong linkages between industry, university, government and business
- Community leadership and services
- Comprehensive education and research facilities to support industry particularly the agriculture and fibre composite industries

Strong social fabric:

- Experienced and stable workforce
- Strong leadership, governance and entrepreneurial capacity at local government level
- Strong communities built upon principles of self reliance and innovation, with capacity to support economic development
- The facilities and lifestyle to make this diverse region an attractive place to live, work and play for business migrants, and potential investors

Broad industrial and business base:

This is a significant strength of the region, offering strategic value and opportunity to current and potential investors in the areas of:

- **Energy resources and production**
The region has the majority of the State's crude oil, natural gas and coal seam gas, and significant accessible coal reserves. There is recognised potential to develop geothermal and biofuel energy in the region.
- **Transport and logistics**
The intersection of major national road and rail routes creates the opportunity for transport distribution centres.
- **Metal and machinery manufacturing**
This sector provides support to the agriculture sector as well as export markets in foundry, fabrication and assembly activities.
- **Fibre composites**
This emerging industry sector has capabilities in research and development, manufacturing and exports for the civil construction, aviation, aerospace, marine and automotive sectors.
- **Agribusiness, food processing and related services**
This is the major employer in the south west of the region.
- **Education**
The region has recognised expertise in distance education and e-learning, specialty training and technical skills education, notably in agriculture and engineering.
- **Tourism**
The strong tourism sector is largely based on the region's long term connection with farming.

Strategic industry planning:

- Strategic leadership and planning capacity exists in partnerships across the region. Building on these partnerships, regional leaders participated in the Leading Smart Regions initiative to develop a vision for the region and identify priority industry sectors.

Building opportunities from industry strengths

The Darling Downs and South West Queensland have significant infrastructure and existing industries to lay the foundations for further investment and business growth.

Infrastructure for growth

The region has solid transport, communications and power infrastructure with strategies to plan for its future growth needs.

Transport

The region has access to significant road routes, including major highways leading east to Brisbane and south to Sydney and Melbourne. The map opposite shows the region's extensive network of highways and development road links to mining and agricultural centres such as Mt Isa and Longreach.

Major infrastructure projects which enhance transport capability are underway. These projects will improve transport facilities and enhance opportunities for development of all sectors of the economy including resources, food processing, agribusiness and manufacturing. For example, the Premier of Queensland has stated the Government's support for a joint venture to develop the Dawson Valley Railway, a 207-km link between Wandoan and Banana which will complete the rail link to Gladstone. If it goes ahead, the railway will provide economical access to ports for coal producers in the region for the first time.

Telecommunications

The region is well serviced by the public telephone network and most populated centres have broadband access. Mobile telephone services and 3G, GSM and CDMA are available in settled areas of the region. Data services are available via two-way satellite, ADSL, wireless broadband and ISDN. A joint State and Commonwealth initiative is currently assessing the region's future ICT needs.

The State Government continues to encourage advanced telecommunications infrastructure by leveraging expenditure to stimulate carrier investment in areas such as mobile towers and broadband. The State's major energy supplier is deploying optic fibre infrastructure for energy management and improved supply to consumers. Excess telecommunications capacity is available to other carriers and this provides an opportunity for improved access to service throughout the region.

Energy

Power is generated within the region from its substantial coal and methane reserves, as shown in the map on page 8. The region is connected to the national power grid, with a link to generation capacity in New South Wales. A further power station, Kogan Creek, is being constructed with an investment of \$1.2 billion. Further capacity will be available as gas-fired power stations are developed near Dalby and Roma.

Education

The region has well-established education providers, experienced in delivering training and technical skills to remote locations. The region's research facilities have strong links to industry, business and government.