

Northern Rivers Regional Plan

vision to 2020

strategy to 2012



Regional
Development
Australia

NORTHERN RIVERS NSW

Connecting the Northern Rivers to Opportunities

community — environment — economy



An Australian Government Initiative



A NSW Government Initiative



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August 2010

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Lismore City Council

NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water

Northern Rivers Tourism

Regional Express

Tweed Economic Development Corporation

RDA – Northern Rivers would like to acknowledge the efforts and contributions of our members and staff in the development of this Plan. In particular, we would like to thank Roxy Lancaster, Robyn Fitzroy and Danielle Sheaffe. We would also like to acknowledge the work of Trish Evans and SGS Economics and Planning for the draft Regional Profile and the RIEP Data Update that has enabled this regional profile to be completed so thoroughly.

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Preamble

Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers’ respectfully acknowledges the Aboriginal peoples of the Northern Rivers - including the peoples of the Arakwal, Bundjalung, Yaegl and Gumbaynggirr nations - as the traditional custodians and guardians of these lands and waters now known as the Northern Rivers.

We pay our respects to Elders - past and present.

In devising this Regional Plan, we have taken the approach that Aboriginal peoples and communities should be included in - and as appropriate be at the forefront of - all relevant cultural, economic, social and environmental strategies across the Plan and our Region.

We commit our organisation to ensuring that the principles of sustainability, social inclusion, caring for country, appropriate development, accessibility, sense of place, respect for cultural heritage and diversity, underpin our work.

Summary

our regional plan...

The Northern Rivers Regional Plan is a tool for managing and embracing change occurring in our region. It provides a sustainable and achievable framework for our future development with a vision and outcomes that we can all work towards.

If you are a business, government agency, community organisation, or local resident from any walk of life this plan is designed to give you

- ~ a vision for our future; and
- ~ detailed information and data about the Northern Rivers

You can use this plan to:

- ~ understand what our region is like now and how it might change
- ~ find key stakeholders to help you
- ~ identify business ideas and opportunities
- ~ advocate and lobby for your needs or interests
- ~ prepare government grants or submissions
- ~ inform government about our needs and priorities.

We have provided a framework that integrates numerous plans for land use, economic and community development, environmental management, health and more for our region.

what's in the plan ...

Part I is the vision for our region to 2020 and the strategy for RDA – Northern Rivers until 2012. This includes our goals, outcomes and the process of reviewing and developing the plan further.

Part II is a regional profile with detailed information about our people, geography, economy, services and environment.

we need a plan because ...

- ~ our biodiversity is at risk – we have the third highest biodiversity in Australia and highest in NSW
- ~ we are in the frontline of the impact of climate change
- ~ we don't have enough jobs – we have had consistently high unemployment rates for the last decade
- ~ we're growing very quickly – population growth here is higher than the rest of NSW
- ~ our infrastructure is ageing and services are stretched
- ~ we're older than the rest of the state – our ageing population continues to increase
- ~ we have a high Aboriginal population – nearly double the state population
- ~ many of us don't make enough money to live here – this is one of Australia's regions with the most consistently high levels of socio-economic disadvantage over decades
- ~ housing is too expensive
- ~ it's hard to get around –public transport is limited
- ~ we rely on volunteers for many of our services
- ~ our telecommunications infrastructure is not up to speed
- ~ we are a cross-border region

our regional vision ...

To achieve our regional outcomes will mean we all need to make our own efforts to build our future. You will see that the plan provides opportunities for you to work towards our 2020 vision of

a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for the communities of the Northern Rivers region

our regional goals for 2020 are to ...

- ~ empower and enable our communities to reduce the region's ecological footprint, respond and adapt to climate change and improve and enhance our natural infrastructure
- ~ improve the health, well being and safety of our communities through the provision of essential community facilities and services (i.e. health, housing, transport, communications etc)
- ~ support and strengthen the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our region (Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, youth, families at risk, elderly people)
- ~ continue to develop a united regional voice to maintain our unique regional identity
- ~ enhance investment in economic enabling infrastructure
- ~ continue to facilitate business growth and investment in a diverse industry base
- ~ meet the region's employment and job creation challenge of 16,000 export jobs by 2027 by resourcing and supporting skills development and capacity building programs in the region

what we will do ...

This plan shows what Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers is going to do to address our needs and priorities through facilitation, capacity building, strategic connections, leadership, advocacy, and where appropriate, development projects.

In the next 12 months we are going to work on:

- ~ facilitating discussions across major players to make decisions and develop consensus about a redefined health system
- ~ determining priority actions for vulnerable groups (Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, youth, families at risk, elderly people) with NRSDC and Communities NSW
- ~ securing resources and coordinating the development of the Integrated Regional Transport Plan work with NOROC, NRSDC and the NSW Government
- ~ a broadband needs and services survey
- ~ a local food source identification strategy
- ~ the Sustainability Advantage program to achieve resource efficiency savings for the Northern Rivers cluster of participating businesses
- ~ our economic development and job creation strategy

economic development and job creation strategy

- ◆ facilitating consultation to identify industry development priorities
- ◆ helping Northern Rivers Food grow our food industry
- ◆ finding new markets for creative industry practitioners
- ◆ identifying and benchmarking our green industries
- ◆ continuing aged care workforce development
- ◆ coordinating the 2011 North Coast Innovation Festival

how you can help ...

To be useful, this plan needs to be a living document. We will be asking you:

- ~ what you think of the regional goals and outcomes – have we got them right, or do we need to refine them?
- ~ what is happening in your community/organisation to help achieve these outcome?
- ~ who can help us and who wants to be involved
- ~ what do we need to work on in the future – with a key focus on setting priorities for vulnerable people in our region and industry

We will take your ideas on board and update this plan by June 2011.

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A. Introduction

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a nationwide initiative based on building partnerships and encouraging all governments and stakeholders to be responsive to local priorities and needs.

RDA – Northern Rivers is a non-profit community-based organisation that connects people and businesses in our region to opportunities through partnerships focusing on community, environment and economy. As a conduit between government and local communities, we are both a source and a provider of information, and play a pivotal role in the sustainability of the Northern Rivers region through community engagement, regional planning, and leadership in regional development.

This Regional Plan has been developed by RDA – Northern Rivers to identify regional development priorities for our region. The plan is based on a ten year vision supported by regional goals and outcomes. To implement these outcomes, RDA – Northern Rivers has identified short term strategic actions and a Strategy for Economic Development and Job Creation until June 2012.

Development of this Plan has involved local council consultations, regional input into the preparation of hot issues papers, valley-based open forums, the Gift competition and analysis of the significant base of research and regional planning consultation already available in the Northern Rivers. The plan has aimed to build on and add value to existing work, rather than duplicate and commence a new planning process.

Regional Plans require the support and coordination of local government, state and federal agencies, regional organisations, industry, business, community service, not for profit, health, education and training sectors. Community knowledge and expertise is also required to inform and guide regional development activities.

This means that the Northern Rivers Regional Plan is a living document that will be informed, refined and developed to confirm and clarify the regional outcomes and goals by June 2011. Review processes will also identify opportunities for implementation by other regional development organisations and guide the ongoing work of RDA-NR to meet regional needs.

Charter for Regional Development Australia

RDA is a catalyst for regional development that contributes to and drives:

- regional business growth plans and strategies, to support economic development, job creation, skills development and business investment
- environmental solutions, to support ongoing sustainability and the management of climate change (including drought, flood or bushfire impacts)
- social inclusion strategies, to bring together and support all members of our community

Part I: VISION AND STRATEGY

B. Strategic Framework

What's Special about the Northern Rivers?

Our Strengths in 2010

Our strengths are defined by our local geography, high biodiversity, natural attributes, heritage, cultural and creative diversity and the commitment by our people to the Northern Rivers.

Situated in the Macleay-Macpherson overlap we have the highest levels of biodiversity in NSW and the third highest rate in Australia. We are home to the biggest erosion caldera in the southern hemisphere, with World Heritage recognised rainforests.

The bulk of our region's population is distributed across the Northern Rivers in many small towns and villages. A diversity of lifestyle, economic and social opportunities across our region is reflected in unique local cultures of these individual communities and their own distinctive sense of place.

Our region is part of the fastest growth corridor in the nation. However, despite our proximity to South East Queensland, Brisbane and the Gold Coast (the third and fifth biggest cities in Australia respectively), we have managed to maintain our difference and unique identity as a region of villages. This proximity also gives us access to markets for economic development, including South East Asia and the Pacific, particularly through the Brisbane Port and the fifth busiest airport in Australia at the Gold Coast/Coolangatta.

Our region experiences collaboration across institutions and organisations, and is well supported by energetic and loyal communities, volunteers and politicians.

We have a rural outlook with an emphasis on agricultural land uses and activities, and a range of natural features that are a strong part of the feel and essence of the Northern Rivers. These provide a source of resources, inspiration for economic activities and contribute towards our scenic amenity.

Our natural attributes – water, climate and soils – service a strong agricultural sector including traditional meat, dairy and sugar can and a diverse horticultural industry. These assets provide potential for future food production. We are renown for high quality foods and regional cuisine and a site of increasing levels of organic production.



Our quality of life is more important to us than wealth. We are an area of optimism.

Our heritage is rich – both first peoples and the federation era.

The diversity of our people is particularly enhanced through our higher than average Aboriginal population.

Our well developed educational facilities include two centres of Southern Cross University, six TAFE campuses and nearly thirty cultural educational institutions with specialist training in the arts, crafts, theatre and film.

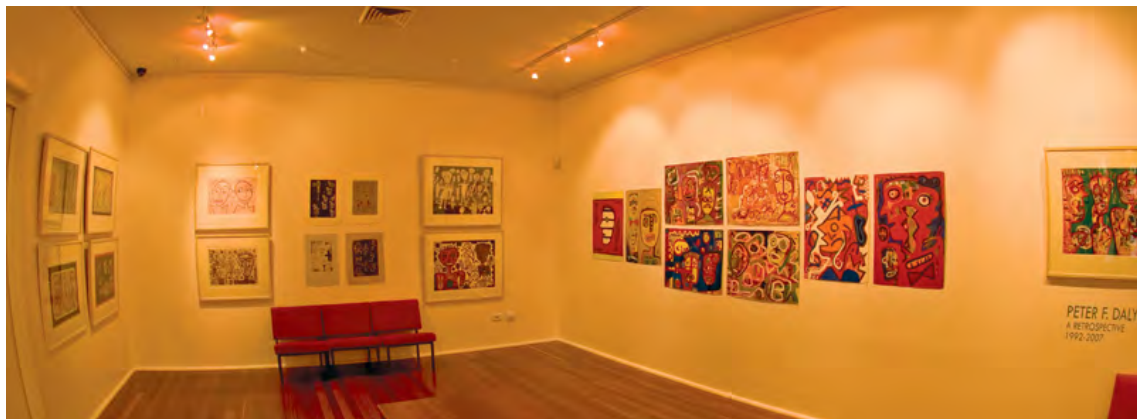
We have high rates of job creation despite long term unemployment rates.

Our skill base is strong in the creative and knowledge based sectors. A high level of social and cultural diversity and creative energy is expressed at markets, in arts and crafts, the multi media industry, festivals and celebrations. We are also home to more film makers than anywhere else in Australia other than Sydney and Melbourne.

We are a key tourism destination, with high levels of international tourist visitation. Our natural assets, biodiversity, coastal and marine areas; culture and sporting facilities provide a strong base for this industry. Our Aboriginal people and tourism sector are also coming together to find new ways of celebrating our heritage with the world.

We have quality and diverse health services. Many of our region's residents recognise the importance of healing (with a proliferation of alternative medicines and therapies) and spirituality to community well being.

We are a microcosm of many issues that Australia is facing and present a great test market to pilot new ideas.



What Needs Fixing in the Northern Rivers?

Our Challenges in 2010

Our challenges reflect our high population growth, long term unemployment, social and economic disparity, geographic location, pressures on our environment and servicing needs.

We have high unemployment: more people and not enough jobs. Is there enough of the right work for all our region's residents? Are our employment opportunities related to what people really want to do?

Being part of the fastest growth area in NSW our employment is fuelled by population growth (services), but our capacity to create jobs cannot keep pace with this growth. We have a history of long-term/entrenched unemployment for many residents, high levels of casualisation and under-employment.

We lack understanding about the motivations that influence the changing demographic patterns of our population. We know we have a high proportion of retirees moving here, but do not know enough about other in-migration patterns (e.g. age or ethnicity influences).

Our geographic location means we are "neither fish nor fowl". We are distant from Sydney, our State capital and feel like we are out of sight, out of mind. We operate as a dispersed suburb of South East Queensland (with a population of 4.4 million people) yet we cannot access support from the Queensland government to service our growing needs. This means our infrastructure and services suffer from a lack of investment to maintain them and meet our needs. Whilst our isolation from Sydney cannot be "fixed", geographically, it should be possible for decision makers in Sydney to have a reasonable profile and understanding of our region and its needs.

There is significant social and economic disparity across the region, resulting in two key social divisions – those who will grow and those who are challenged. This is emphasised by a widening gap between educational levels.

We have one of the highest proportions of residents on the lowest incomes in the State of NSW. Six localities in the region are identified in the 40 most disadvantaged postcodes areas based on income levels, education and skill levels, access to services and labour force participation (Professor Tony Vinson 2007¹).

The high levels of growth on the coast and the decline in hinterland populations creates a challenge to transfer benefits and costs equitably or appropriately across the region.

Many residents suffer from social isolation (especially the elderly, youth and low income earners) as a result of our regional settlement pattern, lack of transport, low socio-economic status and lack of facilities/services etc.



¹ The Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia facilitate the distribution of information and statistical data related to the recently released report: *Dropping Off the Edge*. Under the authorship of Professor Tony Vinson, this major new report maps the distribution of social disadvantage throughout Australia. <http://www.australiandisadvantage.org.au/>

The age and capacity of our current infrastructure means it struggles to meet our needs. In many instances, our local population has to access services external to our region. During peak tourism periods, infrastructure may be required to cater for three times the normal levels of demand. We have limited public transport and few alternatives to the private motor vehicle. Telecommunications are bringing changes in how we access services, but we are missing out on key transport and telecommunications infrastructure.

The ability of our health services to cope with future growth in the ageing population and their specific needs is constrained. We face new risks in supporting the health and social needs of this growing older population.

Our social, cultural and environmental diversity is both a strength and weakness. Different people have different values and needs which may result in conflict between different groups, interests and decisions.

We have a history and reputation of a strong environmental ethic that is perceived to affect development opportunities in our region, both positively and negatively.

The environmental sensitivity of our region is at risk. It is not clear how much we value our biodiversity as an asset. We are facing climate change challenges such as coastal erosion, particularly with increasing frequency of high intensity storm events. Maintenance and enhancement of our natural infrastructure and assets is required as environmental quality is in decline. Poor natural resource management also decreases the potential for long term industry viability in our region.

Our proximity to the highly urbanised Gold Coast, places us at risk of increasing urban sprawl along the coast.

We face a loss of farming potential due to industry restructuring, competition for housing on good agricultural lands and viability of current agricultural activities. Is our highest value crop growing houses? Is this the best use of prime agricultural land?

There continues to be uncertainty about development requirements and planning processes – planning and management is fragmented across many different organisations, and there is often inconsistency in planning approaches and conflict, particularly over land uses. Recent changes to the land use planning system have also reduced our capacity to make local planning decisions.

Our own region is not good at giving our own businesses a go. Many competitive tenders are not awarded to local businesses, particularly in the construction and non-profit community services sector.



We are a region of small businesses, with less than 1% of businesses employing over 100 people. This limits our access to philanthropy, sponsorship and corporate expertise.

There is an increasing gap between generations. We are not well placed to respond to generational changes in the workforce. Conversely, we face new risks in supporting the health and social needs of our increasing aged population.

We want our young people to stay here, but often forget that today's youth belong to the world. Our youth lack a local voice and attitudes about our young people have a strong influence.

We have high levels of housing stress and a homelessness rate that is triple the NSW rate. This contributes to a lack of sense of belonging. Our young people do not have the capacity to afford land or housing locally.

Lifestyle is a key driver for many of our residents. We do not know how this affects our work ethic. Do we place lifestyle over productivity?



Keeping the Northern Rivers Special

Opportunities: 2010 - 2020

Our region is at a tipping point. It can find a way to bridge our social divides, protect and enhance our natural assets and build a strong economic foundation. Alternatively, it could enhance the division between the haves and have nots, lose our identity, erode our natural infrastructure and rely on population as the sole driver for jobs growth. Our region offers a unique location to test, model and pilot new programs and innovative approaches, and provides opportunities to:

- ◆ develop capability and tools to tap into our vast experience and human capital, including highly qualified individuals, an asset rich ageing population wanting to make contributions; and the enthusiasm and energy of our youth. These could include meaningful mentoring programs, quality volunteers, valued role models etc;
- ◆ enhance our job capacity creation, particularly in creating manufacturing and export jobs and not just those fuelled by population growth;
- ◆ meet the demands and needs of the ageing population for health and other services;
- ◆ change the standards of how we measure skills, not just by qualifications;
- ◆ diversify opportunities to create participation so that our Aboriginal and young people feel more valued;
- ◆ deliver outcomes to youth and future generations – who are our future;
- ◆ explore linkages between new technologies and new industries as a means to keep our young people here;
- ◆ build a new work ethic integrating skill development and capacity building;

- ◆ support and enhance the capability and numbers of volunteers;
- ◆ tap into new technologies;
- ◆ capitalise on the flexibility of our small business sector;
- ◆ improve and maintain our natural infrastructure, including natural disaster responses;
- ◆ ensure the delivery of health services reform results in more equitable and improved access to primary, preventative and community based care;
- ◆ address housing and homelessness development needs;
- ◆ take advantage of the affordability of our hinterland areas;
- ◆ explore opportunities for new agricultural industries;
- ◆ manage water and waste reforms;
- ◆ deliver transport planning and investments, including the Pacific Highway upgrade, mobility management and broadband infrastructure. We could trial innovative solutions to our transport challenges for example including better systems for coordinating existing capacity and car pooling schemes;
- ◆ capitalise on the Sustain Northern Rivers Collaboration for Climate Change²; and
- ◆ maintain our distinctiveness.



² Sustain Northern Rivers (SNR) is collaborative platform for action on climate change. Its goal is to foster networks that help stimulate innovative action; learn together about what works; share resources and successes and speed up the change to sustainable ways of living and working.

Sustain Northern Rivers was started in 2008 by an alliance of peak regional organisations that signed the Northern Rivers Climate Change Collaboration Agreement. These partner organisations have committed to communicate, consult and collaborate for action on climate change. They work together on projects for sustainable transport, food, and energy, but acknowledge that beyond these projects, there are many creative people and organisations simultaneously working for an ecologically sound future for our region.

We have identified the following opportunities to keep the Northern Rivers special³:

Keeping our strong identity as a region of diverse villages. Not only do we share a common identity, but we recognise and celebrate the diversity and unique character of individual villages and places.

Reviving small town and village centres and developing local employment opportunities to keep the Northern Rivers as a region of villages, each with its own distinctive sense of place and community.

Designing and providing services that encourage social inclusion, interaction and build social capital.

Protecting special resources such as agricultural land, mining and forestry, and identifying 'no go' areas for human settlement, to keep the rural outlook of the area and prevent urban sprawl.

Improving the region's natural beauty through programs to care for the land.

Establishing a formal reserve system that protects all native animal and plant types and communities and passes on this biodiversity to future generations. This is very important, as the region is located in the Macleay-McPherson overlap and is the highest area of biodiversity in NSW.

Recognising the region's World Heritage areas as critical assets for biodiversity, tourism and recreation.

Leading the way in regional planning activities to integrate between all levels of government in achieving the region's goals, and maintain local control over the region's future.

Investing significantly in new approaches to learning and innovation to develop new job opportunities and contribute towards keeping young people in the region after they finish school.

Developing employment in the creative and knowledge-based industries to provide opportunities for groups (such as Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, young people) that are vulnerable in the regional labour market.

Developing health care and home care related industries to service the region's aging population and strengthen its economic base.

Leading development in clean and green industry to protect the natural features which are a strong part of the feel and essence of the Northern Rivers, and a source of resources and inspiration for economic activities.

Maintaining the region's reputation for a strong and personal connection between genuine, reliable and quality products or services and the people who wish to purchase them.

Recognising the importance of healing and spirituality to community well being.

Expressing social and cultural diversity and creative energy at markets, in arts and crafts, in the multi-media industry and in festivals and celebrations.

³ These actions were extracted from the *Draft Regional Policy Review: Incomplete – Work in Progress. A Paper prepared for the NRRS Management Committee*, by the NRRS Secretariat (December 2003, unpublished), following an extensive research and consultation process to inform regional planning. May of these have been integrated into the Far North Coast Regional Strategy.

Key Regional Issues and Priorities

OUR BIODIVERSITY IS AT RISK

- ~ We have the highest biodiversity in NSW and third highest in Australia
- ~ Our biodiversity is being impacted upon by high population growth, development pressures, land management practices

WE ARE IN THE FRONTLINE OF THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

- ~ Several major floods in 2009 highlight our vulnerability to increased and more intense storm events due to climate change
- ~ Modelling of climate change impacts indicates potential for erosion in excess of 100 metres during severe storm events in some locations along the NSW coast – this will impact on some of our coastal towns and villages (such as Woolli, Ballina, Byron Bay and Kingscliff)
- ~ Temperature increases of 0.2–1.8°C will increase our exposure to heat-related health problems, mosquito borne infections and bushfire risk

WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH JOBS

- ~ Our unemployment rate is 10% compared to the State level of 7%. Unemployment is particularly high for our youth and Aboriginal people
- ~ 60% of residents are employed full-time compared to 69% for NSW
- ~ We have had consistently high unemployment rates for over the last decade, often with one of the highest rates nationally since 2000

WE'RE GROWING VERY QUICKLY

- ~ Our annual population growth rate is 1.6%, and as high as 2.6% in the Tweed, but it is only 1.2% for NSW as a whole
- ~ Almost 90% of our future growth will be driven by net migration (compared to 40% for NSW) as opposed to natural increase

OUR INFRASTRUCTURE IS AGEING AND SERVICES ARE STRETCHED

- ~ Our infrastructure is not being replaced or maintained at a rate anywhere near our population growth. It does not have the capacity to cope with seasonal tourist peaks where population can triple in some areas
- ~ There is a lack of understanding about changes in health services delivery and how it meets our needs
- ~ The freeze on the Country Towns Water and Sewerage Scheme until 2012 will exacerbate this problem

WE'RE OLDER THAN THE REST OF THE STATE

- ~ 38% of our working age population is 25-54 years, compared to 42% for NSW
- ~ We have a larger 65+ years age group (18% compared to 13% for NSW)
- ~ It is projected that 65+ year olds will form 30% of our region's population by 2036 compared to 21% for the State



WE HAVE A HIGH ABORIGINAL POPULATION

- ~ Our Aboriginal population is nearly double the State average

MANY OF US DON'T MAKE ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE HERE

- ~ The median household incomes in the region are 69% of the median household income for NSW
- ~ 64% of households earn less than \$1,000 per week gross income, compared to 48% for the State
- ~ 6 localities in our region are identified in the 40 highest ranking postcode areas on the Vinson 'disadvantage' factor (based on income levels, education and skill levels, access to services, labour force participation)
- ~ 2 of our LGAs rank in the bottom 12 scores for NSW on the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage
- ~ Our population of people with disabilities is significantly higher than the State average



HOUSING IS TOO EXPENSIVE

- ~ Up to 67% of our renting households experience rental stress and are spending more than 30% of their income on housing
- ~ The Richmond-Tweed house rents are the highest in the State outside of Sydney

IT'S HARD TO GET AROUND

- ~ Public transport is limited, except for some more frequent bus services in major centres like Lismore and Tweed Heads
- ~ School buses provide the only form of public transport for many villages and outlying areas. These do not run in school holidays and return from major centres mid- afternoon

WE RELY ON VOLUNTEERS FOR MANY OF OUR SERVICES

- ~ Our economy has a strong reliance on health and community services, many of which are delivered by community based organisations made of volunteer committees
- ~ Environmental and social programs are predominantly delivered by volunteers and community groups
- ~ There is a perception that our volunteer base is ageing and that this does not motivate our youth

OUR COMMUNICATIONS ARE NOT UP TO SPEED

- ~ Mobile phone coverage is still patchy in many parts of our region
- ~ Broadband services are limited and impact upon the viability and growth of many of our businesses, especially the creative industries



WE ARE A CROSS-BORDER REGION

- ~ We have a community of interest to the north of NSW, and often feel distant from Sydney.
- ~ It is a challenge to maintain our distinctive decentralised rural /coastal village environment in the face of south east QLD's centralised conurbation
- ~ This location means there are many regulatory/legislative differences (e.g. taxes, daylight savings, freight differentials etc) that affect how we live, work and play
- ~ A significant number of our residents travel over the border to work
- ~ This location impacts of service delivery and access, particularly how we access and pay for our health services

C. Vision and Goals

2020 Vision for the Northern Rivers

A healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for the communities of the Northern Rivers region⁴

HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS means that the people and natural environments of our region are healthy, there is a high level of mutual trust, co-operation and support within our region's communities, and there is sufficient material wealth to satisfy basic needs and wants (acknowledging that some people aspire to higher levels of material wealth than others).

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE means recognising the links between our economy, environment and quality of life, now and in the future. Acknowledging that ecologically sustainable development, economically and socially sustainable development are synonymous. By striving for a sustainable future, we are aiming to achieve a balance between economic, environmental and social goals.

"Sustainable development needs to be based on community planning which takes into account land use capacity as well as the ecology ...⁵ and social/spiritual aspirations to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations".

COMMUNITIES OF THE NORTHERN RIVERS REGION means:

The people in our region do not form an homogenous group. Communities can be defined by spatial boundaries, such as the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence Valleys, or by particular characteristics, including for example ethnicity, age, gender, income or people adopting differing lifestyles.

Editorial Acknowledgement: The Vision, Context, Guiding Principles and Desired Future Character statement have all been adapted and refined from published and unpublished research and consultation materials from the Northern Rivers Regional Strategy (NRRS) (between 1995 – 2003). Most of this content has been extracted from the *Draft Regional Policy Review: Incomplete – Work in Progress. A Paper Prepared for the NRRS Management Committee*, by the NRRS Secretariat (December 2003, unpublished).

⁴ This vision has been derived from the Northern Rivers Regional Strategy and was formally adopted in 1998 by the NSW Premiers Department, Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Organisation, North Coast Environment Council, Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils and the NSW Department of Planning (NRRS, 1998). It is the vision for the Far North Coast Regional Strategy (2006-2031), has provided a key base for regional planning and continues to be strongly supported by many stakeholders and individuals in the region.

⁵ The definition of sustainable development was identified at a community workshop for the Northern Rivers Regional Strategy in 1995 and included reference to "a population limit". This term has been excluded from the definition in the vision as the consultation and research since 1995 indicates that a population cap does not acknowledge per capita consumption, violates the equity objective and excludes other important information which should be considered if using sustainability criteria.

Context

20 million years ago a volcano erupted. As it cooled and eroded, a beautiful mountain range emerged – the rim of the volcano forming the mountains and its solid core making a distinctively shaped formation in the centre. Rainforest developed.

50,000 years ago, the Bundjalung people called this region home. At that time the Big Scrub rainforest covered the landscape. Floodplains adjoined the coastline, rising to steep timbered slopes further inland. Birds, animals and insects of an incredible variety roamed the area.

150 years ago European settlers arrived. Their first task was logging – taking the ancient red cedars out of the forest. Eventually, most of the forest was cleared for farming. Settlement continued. Towns and villages grew up. As the 20th century progressed, more and more people came to the area. Tourism became a major activity. Towns and villages sprang up and flourished.

Early in the 21st century, this magnificent stretch of coastline from the Queensland border down to Grafton, known as the Northern Rivers region, is in danger. The people of the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales face a critical turning point. The population already exceeds the resources available within the region for supporting consumption and waste disposal. Unemployment levels are above the state average and average incomes are low, with over one quarter of the adult population receiving welfare benefits and the overall population ageing. Population levels in coastal towns are increasing, while inland communities are declining. The region's biodiversity is at risk.

We recognise the urgent need to balance the increasing human demands on the physical environment with our own social and economic well-being, not only for ourselves but for people in the future. If we fail to plan properly for the future, we will lose forever the unique natural assets of our region, and along with them, our unique social assets and economic wellbeing.

This is a blueprint describing how the Northern Rivers will develop over the next 10 years. We created a vision for the future that involves building on our region's natural, social and economic 'capital'.

Guiding Principles

In visioning the future character of the Northern Rivers we have worked from the following sustainability principles:

- The precautionary principle: we can't always predict the effects of our actions, so environmental decisions should err on the side of caution. We must take steps to prevent serious or irreparable damage to the environment even in circumstances where we have no firm knowledge that significant damage will not be done.
- Intergenerational equity: that future generations of people should have the same benefits as we do from the health, diversity and productivity of our natural resources.
- The use of valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms: environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services.
- That biodiversity and ecological integrity should be maintained.
- That we take a global perspective on local decisions.
- That development aims to increase human welfare and quality of life as well as economic growth.
- That natural resource use is limited to make sure we maintain constant natural capital.
- That efficiency of resource use is a major objective, contributing to creating a resilient economy and ecology.
- That the community participates in creating and realising this vision.

Northern Rivers Desired Future Character – 2020

- ◆ A region of vibrant urban and rural villages.
- ◆ The social glue is a common vision and set of values.
- ◆ An inclusive community with jobs and a safe and secure place to live.
- ◆ People have a strong connection with the earth.
- ◆ People are healthy and feel good about themselves and their community.
- ◆ Known as the country's top learning and lifestyle region.
- ◆ Known worldwide for a clean and green approach to industry and development.
- ◆ Committed to 'putting local first' in relation to produce, industry and people.
- ◆ Villages, farms and natural areas exist in harmony.
- ◆ Value placed on the diversity of living things.
- ◆ Sustainable management of all our natural resources.

vibrant,
inter-connected
villages

expansion through
innovative learning,
lifestyle and the
three sectors of
agriculture, tourism
and
knowledge-based
industries

a mosaic of farms,
forests. pristine

We have created a vision for each form of our 'capital' – our social, natural and economic wealth, with the recognition that all three are interlinked. Any future development must not deplete our existing capital and where capital is now being lost from the region, we must replace and nourish it.



Our Natural Capital in 2020

Natural capital is our natural infrastructure and includes the soil, water, air, diversity of living things, productivity, wilderness and existence of healthy ecosystems. Some natural capital must be protected because its removal would mean we could not generate future 'wealth' (for example, prime agricultural land or areas of high biodiversity). Some natural capital is not site-specific and can be managed as a total resource (for example, areas of plantation forestry). Our natural capital needs to be valued as a form of infrastructure that requires investment to maintain, improve, enhance and develop its capacity.

Desired Future Character

- ◆ We believe in the intrinsic worth of environmental values and are committed to caring for the natural world
- ◆ We are committed to maintaining and improving our natural capital and natural infrastructure
- ◆ We value the region's high diversity of living things
- ◆ We protect and enhance ecosystems, rainforests, marine areas rural lands and fragile coastline from urbanisation and have decided on areas of land that will never be settled
- ◆ We respect and protect areas of Aboriginal interest
- ◆ Our region is dominated by rivers, farmland and forests
- ◆ Villages, farms and natural areas exist in harmony
- ◆ We manage the pace and type of new development and have agreed on our carrying capacities, with an emphasis on restricting the density of coastal development
- ◆ We rehabilitate and manage our aquatic and marine environments, including alongside our streams and rivers and we've restored wetlands
- ◆ We work with Aboriginal people to bring in traditional land management techniques and map and protect sacred sites
- ◆ We treat our water as a valuable asset: we have reduced the amount of water used by households and are now meeting our river flow requirements ... and we've improved its quality
- ◆ We carefully manage and reuse our effluent, sewage and stormwater and consider integrating these flows
- ◆ We reduce, reuse and recycle and are more efficient with resources
- ◆ We generate power locally, use renewable electricity and alternate energy sources
- ◆ We manage acid sulfate soil hot spots to reduce risks
- ◆ We carefully manage bushfires and the quality of our air is constantly improving
- ◆ We use bikes more – so we're healthier
- ◆ Our use of public transport and vehicle sharing means we have improved our use of energy resources for getting around

a landscape of villages scattered between farms, forests, wilderness and areas for human recreation, linked by a web of transport and communication

our epicentre is an extinct volcano;

home of the Big Scrub: gateway to NSW rainforests and world heritage areas

from volcanic origins come fertile soil and abundant rainforest

Big River Country: farms, forests and protected fertile riverlands



Our Social Capital in 2020

Social capital is the features of social organisation that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These include social trust, norms, networks, participation in local community and connections within neighbourhoods, workplaces and between individuals. Social capital allows people to interact effectively so they can achieve shared ideals. Feelings of trust and safety, tolerance of diversity and value for life and inclusion are some forms of social capital. A key element of social capital is social inclusion. An inclusive community is one in which all members feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully (including having a job, a safe and secure place to live, being able to get around, being healthy and feeling good about yourself and your community).

a region of vibrant,
inter-connected
villages

responsible,
cohesive, caring
communities

a lively, healthy inter-
connected society

home to a diverse,
colourful mix of
people

a safe and secure
place to live

Desired Future Character

- ◆ We are able to provide a safe and secure place to live, where people can feel good about themselves and their community by having a job, being healthy and being able to get around
- ◆ We agree on a common vision and set of values
- ◆ All people have a voice and can influence decisions that affect them
- ◆ Our people feel good about our region and we are able to support people's special needs
- ◆ We are recognised as a place with accepting and responsible communities that values and cultivates cultural and social diversity, mutual respect and self respect
- ◆ We respect Aboriginal culture and value our traditional custodians
- ◆ Many young people stay here when they finish school, as we care for - and support - our youth
- ◆ Locals can choose from a range of lifestyles and we assimilate new settlers
- ◆ We have a rich sense of our cultural heritage...with a special emphasis on our Aboriginal heritage
- ◆ Our community groups are a vital and active part of community development
- ◆ Volunteers participate in community service and we have strong, pro-active local networks
- ◆ To solve problems we build links between young and old people, connecting communities of interest
- ◆ Our cities and towns promote social interaction and close-knit neighbourhoods; and our strong village communities offer alternatives to town living with strong connections to the Gold Coast
- ◆ Residents have access to government and infrastructure services, even if they are isolated
- ◆ We have taken a coordinated approach to providing transport for everyone: communication and transport services reduce isolation in small settlements
- ◆ Our medical services and programs have created a healthier and happier population
- ◆ We provide affordable housing to people who need it, even in popular coastal areas
- ◆ We celebrate everything: festivals flourish! - we celebrate together - many festivals celebrate our unique character
- ◆ We enjoy recreation and sport and keep fit and active through playing sport
- ◆ Our region is a safe place and crime rates are low
- ◆ We have a strong connection with the earth and have developed different ways of sharing land
- ◆ We set and manage tourist numbers and impacts to build strong local communities

Our Economic Capital in 2020



Economic capital includes both man-made and physical capital (such as factories, tools, technology used to produce goods and services), human capital (the knowledge and skills people use to be productive) and our natural infrastructure that supports our economic activities. Considerations to develop our economic capital need to directly relate to the generation of income for the region and include resources, skills, the labour force, industries in the area, what infrastructure exists, education and training.

Desired Future Character

- ◆ We have developed a regional 'brand' for the area as a leader in 'clean and green' industry development
- ◆ We have high levels of employment and our young people are better educated and stay in the area
- ◆ 'Local comes first': for our produce and people
- ◆ We attract investment by making it easy to do business here
- ◆ Our broad range of skills gives us a strong economic base and thanks to key service centres, we can support a wide range of industries
- ◆ Education and training are tailored to our local needs and strengths and our education facilities improve opportunities and income for residents
- ◆ We've developed 'user-pays' solutions to funding infrastructure and services
- ◆ Better coordinated transport means more jobs and wider choices: we coordinate freight transport to help import and export trade and have improved transport throughout the region
- ◆ Communication technology is seamless across the region and we have developed our skills in Information Technology (IT)
- ◆ We make the most of our natural and human resources and strike a balance between using and protecting our renewable resources
- ◆ Our agriculture is appropriate to our resources and we specialise in and export a wide range of agricultural products
- ◆ We've used the knowledge based industry to value-add to other products and have become a world leader in creative, spiritual and healing industries
- ◆ We have a strong building and construction industry, use manufacturing to value-add to our resource base and cater for the needs of retirees
- ◆ Our tourism is based on nature, culture and living heritage: we've developed many attractions to bring visitors inland, have balanced population and tourism between coastal and inland areas and our tourism industry employs locals
- ◆ We have a strong foundation of social enterprise creating social, cultural or environmental value

expansion through innovative, learning and lifestyle and the sectors of agriculture, tourism and knowledge-based/ creative industries

thriving green industries using local labour

integration of healthy agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and professional services

infrastructure enabling economic activity

a wide range of skills and high rate of employment

How we will achieve our Vision?

Our Goals

Our goals and outcomes have been developed to achieve the ten year vision for the Northern Rivers region. As this Regional Plan will initially be implemented by RDA-NR, the key performance indicators (indicators) and strategies have been identified for RDA-NR only. The indicators and strategies are for the life of RDA-NR's current funding agreement (it should be noted that RDA-NR is not the lead agent for all strategies). Some of the strategies will open up new areas of activity, and these will be incorporated into future reviews of the plan.

Section G, the Government Strategic Context provides an assessment and review of existing government plans and how these are working towards achieving the regional goals and outcomes. Section D, the Delivery Strategy identifies greater detail around the implementation of the RDA-NR strategies, including timelines, priorities and partnerships or collaborations.

Whilst the goals have been broken up into investing in our natural, social and economic capital, RDA-NR recognises that sustainability applies across the three areas of natural, social and economic capital, and many outcomes and strategies under one heading often contribute towards the outcomes under another heading. Consequently, it is important that the goals are considered together, rather than individually.

Our Planning Framework

Goals for the Northern Rivers Region:

These are the projected state of affairs that are intended to be achieved for the Northern Rivers region by 2020. The goals have been set for the region as a whole and do not reflect goals for RDA-NR as an organisation. Many regional and local plans, actions and initiatives, including those of RDA-NR will work towards achieving these goals.

Outcomes for the Northern Rivers Region:

These are actual impacts/ benefits/ changes for the region by 2020. The regional plan provides a framework for many regional stakeholders to work towards these outcomes, not just RDA-NR

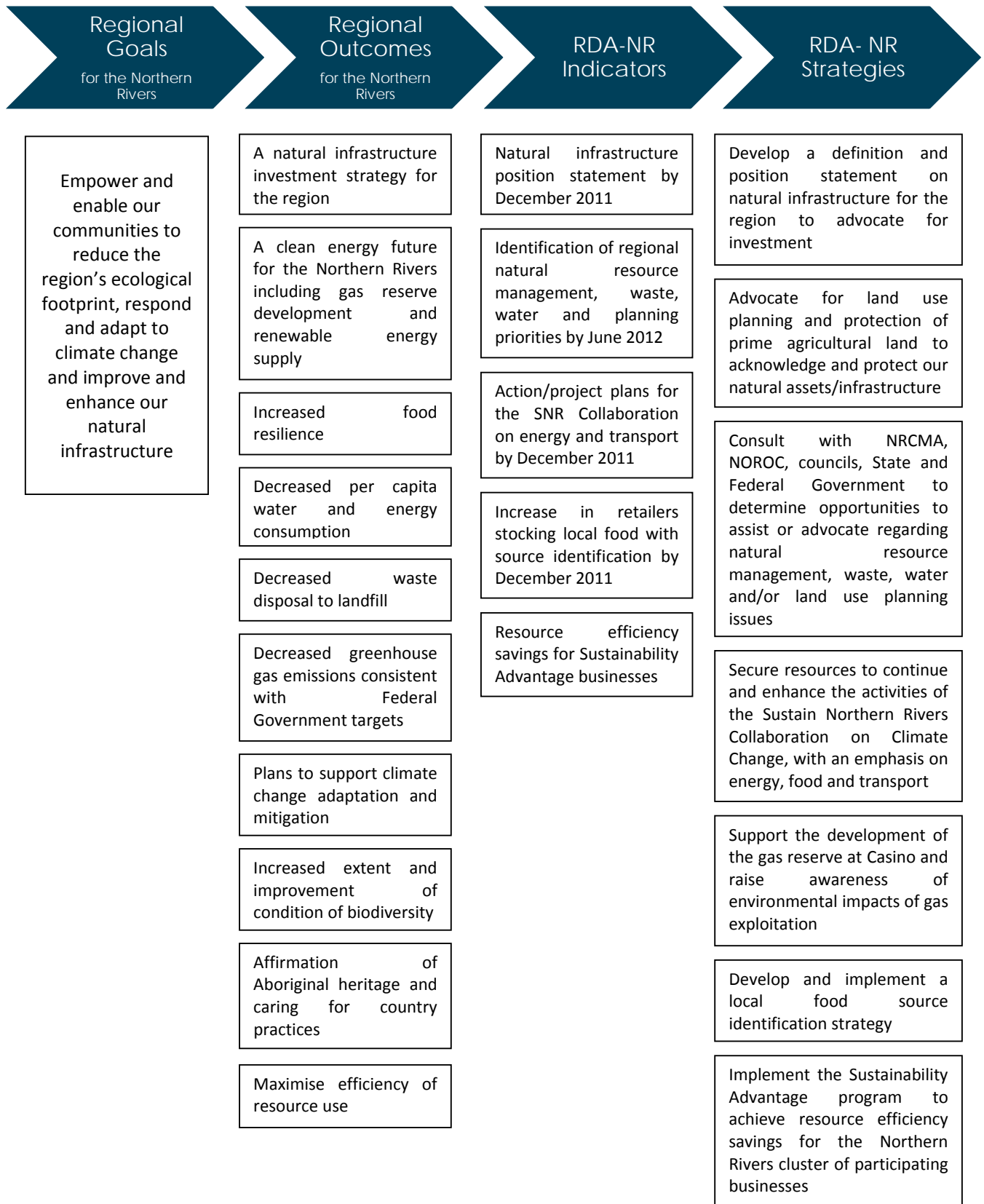
Indicators - RDA-NR's Progress:

These are observable and measurable "milestones" that will enable RDA-NR to track its contribution towards the regional outcomes. These indicate the progress of RDA-NR only.

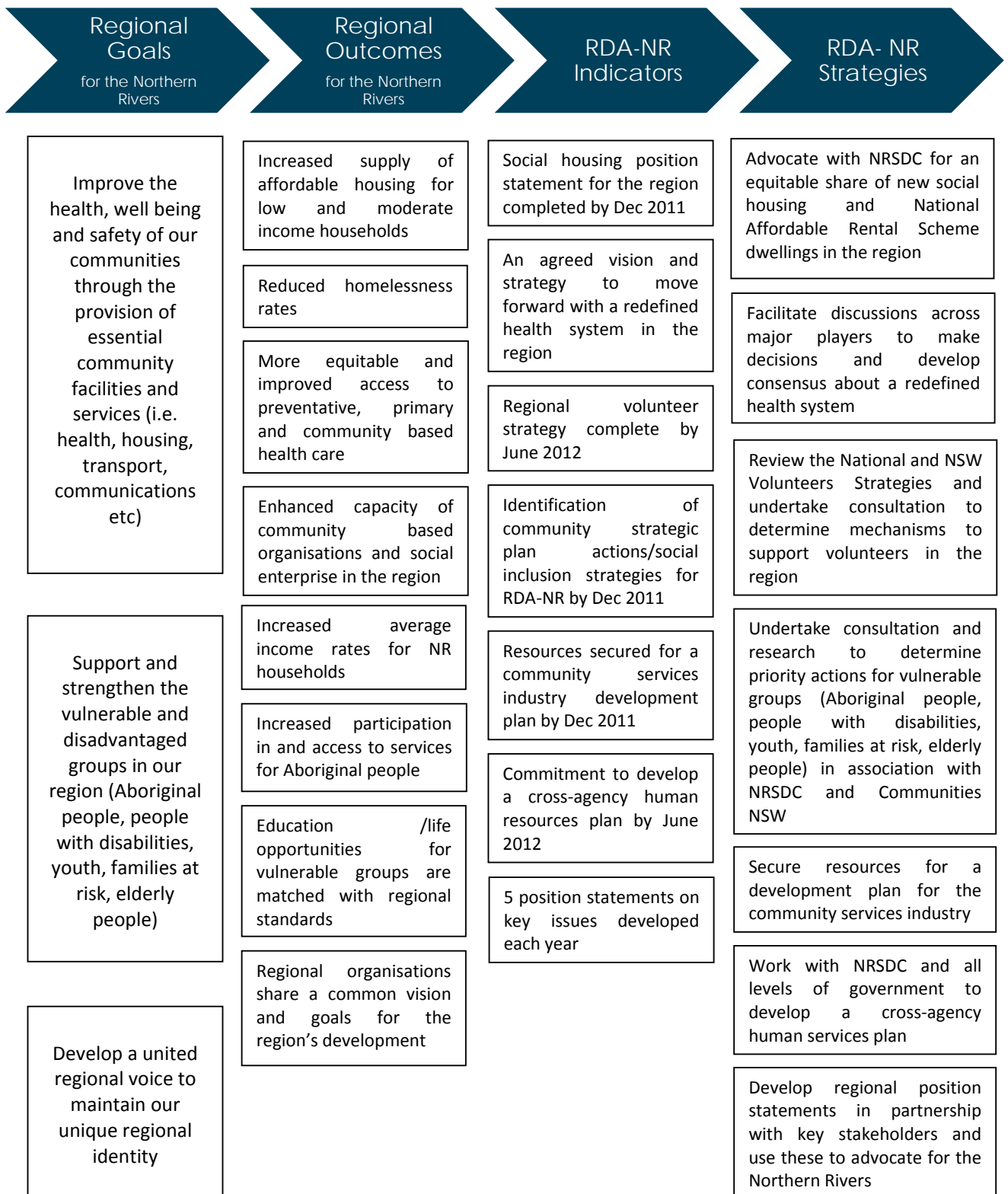
Strategies for RDA-NR:

These are the short to medium term action plans that RDA-NR will use to achieve the regional goals.

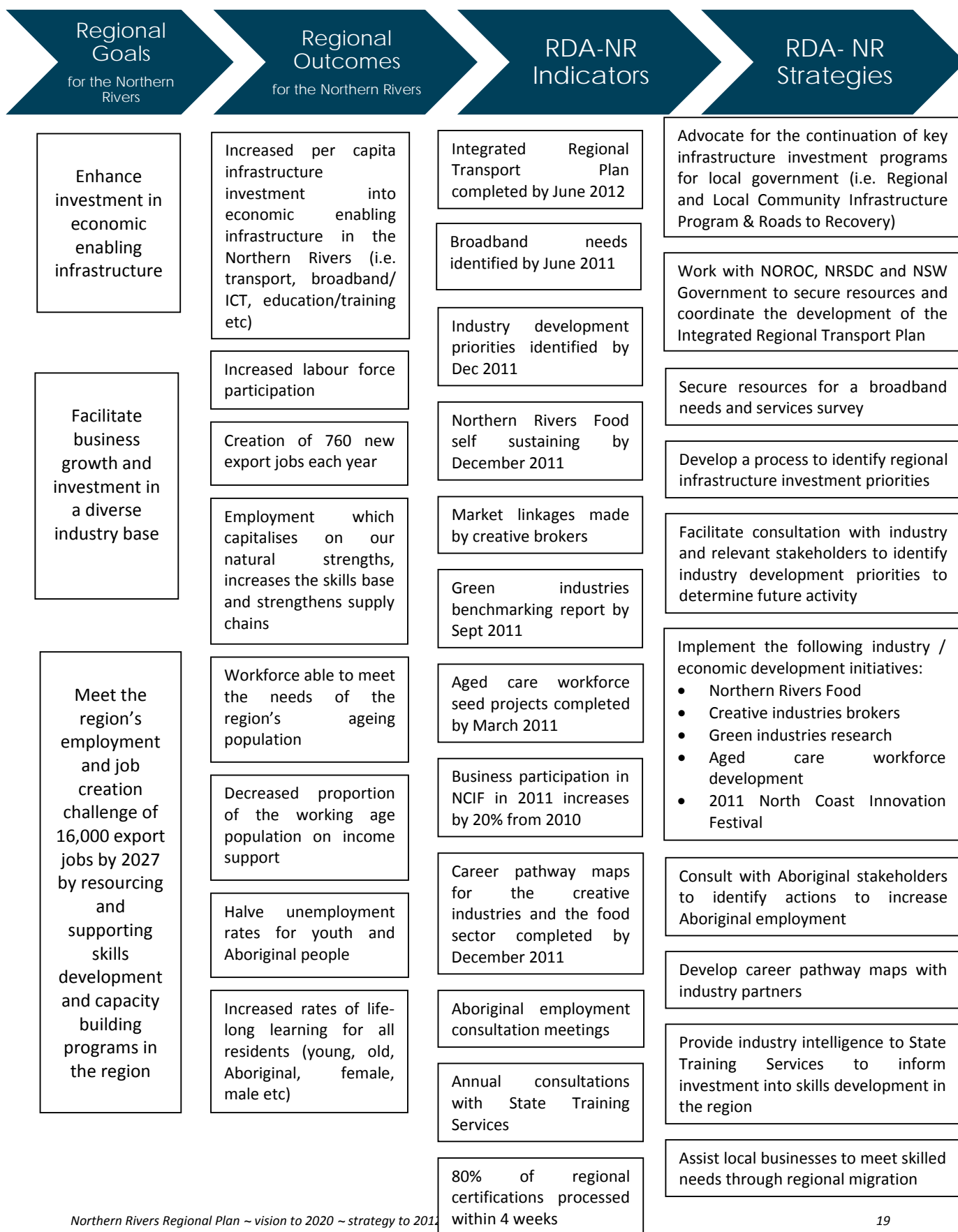
Investing in our Natural Capital



Investing in our Social Capital and Social Inclusion



Investing in our Economic Capital



Economic Development and Job Creation Strategy – June 2012

There are a number of existing plans that provide the region’s economic development and job creation strategy. These include:

- Regional Business Growth Plan for the Northern Rivers (Appendix 7), developed by I&I NSW and adopted by the NSW Cabinet;
- Keep Australia Working Regional Employment Plan for the Richmond-Tweed and Clarence Valley Priority Employment Area (Appendix 8); and
- Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan (RIEP), developed by the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board in partnership with the Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee, I&I NSW, General Manager’s Group, Southern Cross University.

These plans have been developed together and acknowledge the linkages and role each of these plans play. A summary of the strategic focus of each of these plans is summarised below.

KAW Regional Employment Plan Goals	NSW Government Regional Business Growth Plan for the Northern Rivers Strategies	Northern Rivers RIEP Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising employment and business development opportunities created by the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan • Generating jobs in the long term • Helping retrenched workers • Maximising employment and training opportunities created by the Jobs Fund and similar projects • Improving the skills base of the region and addressing skill gaps and shortages • Increasing opportunities for apprentices • Promoting stronger links between stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to improve regional business sustainability (including re-use and recycling of water and use of alternative technologies) • Balance demand for land and timely release of strategic enterprise zones to match residential growth • Support growth through innovation of creative industries sector • Provide infrastructure for business and to support population growth • Implement the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan • Develop initiatives to bring skills to the region and to retrain the existing workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage economic diversity and the creation of long term employment opportunities throughout the region while protecting the region’s environment and liveability • To encourage economic development activities that will assist in the creation of a viable and sustainable network of towns and villages • To increase exports and import replacement • To increase efficiency and ensure that business and industry is afforded access to well maintained and world class hard and soft infrastructure • To foster both large and small business creation • To increase reinvestment of regional wealth • To encourage education and training • To utilise renewable resources and maximise land and infrastructure in a sustainable manner • To increase access to Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) that are equivalent to those delivered in metropolitan areas

RDA-NR is a key stakeholder in all these processes and such a comprehensive framework is already in existence, RDA-NR has determined the following Economic Development and Job Creation Strategy to June 2012:

1. Provide feedback and input into future development of Regional Business Growth Plans for the Northern Rivers;
2. Work with the Keep Australia Working Local Employment Coordinator which is scheduled to be conclude in June 2011, so that there is a sustainable transition strategy to complete implementation of the Regional Employment Plan;
3. Review the 2009 RIEP Update and consult with industry to determine industry priorities for incorporation in the Regional Plan;
4. Implement the RDA-NR strategies for Investing in our Economic Capital in this plan; and
5. Provide leadership to continue to review and assess future economic development and job creation needs and opportunities.

D. Strategy

RDA-NR has recognised the need for an independent vision for our region that is not affected by the operational constraints or requirements of any single agency. This is a primary focus in this plan.

However, implementation of a comprehensive regional plan can not be the sole responsibility of any one agency or organisation. Consequently, due to the time constraints with preparing this plan, RDA-NR has prepared a delivery strategy for RDA-NR only.

The current delivery strategy is for actions that RDA-NR will commit to between September 2010 to June 2012 and are based upon RDA-NR's services and capabilities as listed below:

- strategic connecting
- data and information
- advocacy and advice
- leadership and facilitation
- project management
- technical assistance

Delivery focus for RDA – Northern Rivers

engage ~ plan ~ connect ~ inform ~ grow

Delivery arrangements with other regional stakeholders will be negotiated as the Regional Plan is reviewed during October 2010 to April 2011. This review period will enable regional stakeholders to provide feedback and refine the Strategic Framework, as well as identify partners and opportunities for collaborative action and implementation by June 2011.

Marketing Opportunities

The following strategies that are already resourced present marketing and promotional opportunities for RDA-NR and their partners in these activities:

- Aged care workforce development
- Sustainability Advantage – Northern Rivers Cluster
- Northern Rivers Food
- 2011 North Coast Innovation Festival (NCIF)
- Creative Industries Brokers Project
- Foodlinks Source Identification
- Green industries research

Priorities

High priority strategies are those that RDA-NR has already committed resources to, or are areas of activity that will be undertaken within the next 12 months. Medium priority strategies reflect areas of importance that RDA-NR will consult to refine during the review period and aim to complete by December 2011. Low priority strategies will be reviewed and refined during the review period, and may even be amended based on consultation and stakeholder feedback.

RDA-NR Strategy for Investing in our Natural Capital

Strategy	Priority	Resources, Responsibilities & Partnerships	Timeframes	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Develop a definition and position statement on natural infrastructure for the region to advocate for investment	Medium	RDA-NR, NRCMA, NRM agencies (State and Federal Government)	Dec 2011	Natural infrastructure position statement
Advocate for land use planning and protection of prime agricultural land to acknowledge and protect our natural assets/infrastructure	Medium	RDA-NR, NRCMA, NCEC, NOROC, NSW Planning	Dec 2011	Natural infrastructure position statement
Consult with NRCMA, NOROC, councils, State and Federal Government to determine opportunities to assist or advocate regarding natural resource management, waste, water and/or land use planning issues	Low	RDA-NR, NRCMA, NOROC, councils, NRM agencies (State and Federal Government)	June 2012	Identification of regional natural resource management, waste, water and planning priorities
Secure resources to continue and enhance the activities of the Sustain Northern Rivers Collaboration on Climate Change, with an emphasis on energy, food and transport	Medium	\$10,000 committed to appoint a consultant to develop up project plans and funding proposal. SNR collaboration members	December 2011	Action/project plans for the SNR Collaboration on energy and transport
Support the development of the gas reserve at Casino and raise awareness of environmental impacts of gas exploitation	Low	Richmond Valley Council, Metgasco, Industry & Investment NSW, NSW Planning, Keep Australia Working	As required	Action/project plans for the SNR Collaboration on energy and transport
Develop and implement a local food source identification strategy	High committed	\$60,000 committed to RDA-NR by NR Foodlinks. Project officer employed and project underway. Synergies with NR Food	July 2010 – Dec 2011	Increase in retailers stocking local food with source identification
Implement the Sustainability Advantage program to achieve resource efficiency savings for the Northern Rivers cluster of participating businesses	High committed	Funds committed by DECCW to RDA-NR for cluster facilitation. Business participants include Brookfarm, Lismore and Richmond Valley Councils, Northern Star, Summerland Credit Union, Cawarra Cosmetics, Lismore Workers Club, Westpac Helicopter, St Andrews Nursing Home, Feros Care, Southern Cross University, North Coast TAFE	2009 – Sept 2010 for current cluster New cluster July 2010 – Dec 2011	Resource efficiency savings for Sustainability Advantage businesses

RDA-NR Strategy for Investing in our Social Capital

Strategy	Priority	Resources, Responsibilities & Partnerships	Timeframes	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Advocate with NRSDC for an equitable share of new social housing and National Rental Affordable Scheme dwellings in the region	Medium	NRSDC, RDA-NR	Dec 2011	Social housing position statement for the region
Facilitate discussions across major players to make decisions and develop consensus about a redefined health system	High	RDA-NR, NCAHS, NRUDRH, NR Division of General Practice	Dec 2010	An agreed vision and strategy to move forward with a redefined health system in the region
Review the National and NSW Volunteers Strategies and undertake consultation to determine mechanisms to support volunteers in the region	Low	RDA-NR, NRSDC	June 2012	Regional volunteer strategy
Undertake consultation and research to determine priority actions for vulnerable groups (Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, youth, families at risk, elderly people) in association with NRSDC and Communities NSW	High	RDA-NR, NRSDC, Communities NSW, local government	Dec 2011	Identification of community strategic plan actions/social inclusion strategies for RDA-NR
Secure resources for a development plan for the community services industry	Medium	RDA-NR, NRSDC	Dec 2011	Resources secured for a community services industry development plan
Work with NRSDC and all levels of government to develop a cross-agency human services plan	Low	NRSDC, RDA-NR, RMN, Federal, State and Local government agencies	June 2012	Commitment to develop a cross-agency human resources plan
Develop regional position statements in partnership with key stakeholders and use these to advocate for the Northern Rivers	Medium	RDA-NR, Regional Futures Institute	June 2011, June 2012	5 position statements on key issues developed each year

RDA-NR Strategy for Investing in our Economic Capital

Strategy	Priority	Resources, Responsibilities and Partnership Arrangements	Timeframes	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Advocate for the continuation of key infrastructure investment programs for local government (i.e. Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program & Roads to Recovery)	Medium	RDA-NR, NOROC, local government	Dec 2011	Letters and submissions to government agencies
Work with NOROC, NRSDC and the NSW Government to secure resources and coordinate the development of the Integrated Regional Transport Plan	High - \$120,000 committed, est \$250K needed	NOROC, RDA-NR, NRSDC, Transport NSW, Planning NSW, I&I NSW	June 2012	Integrated Regional Transport Plan
Secure resources for a broadband needs and services survey	High	RDA-NR, I&I NSW, NRSDC, NOROC, SCU	June 2011	Broadband needs identified
Develop a process to identify regional infrastructure investment priorities	Medium	RDA-NR, I&I NSW, NRSDC, NOROC, SCU	Dec 2011	Resources secured to prioritise regional infrastructure investment needs
Facilitate consult with industry and relevant stakeholders to identify industry development priorities to determine future activity	High	RDA-NR, I&I NSW, KAW, DEEWR, AusIndustry, STS, industry	June 2011	Industry development priorities identified
Implement the following industry / economic development initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Rivers Food Creative industries brokers Green industries research Aged care workforce development 2011 North Coast Innovation Festival (NCIF) 	High - All activities resourced Funds and PO ⁶ Funds & brokers Funds and PO Funds & projects Funds and PO	RDA-NR, I&I NSW, food industry, Arts Northern Rivers, Regional Arts NSW, DET, DEEWR, RDA-MNC, NCIF sponsors and event managers	Dec 2011 June 2011 Sept 2011 March 2011 June 2011	NR Food self sustaining Market linkages by creative brokers Green industries benchmarking report Aged care workforce seed projects Business participation in NCIF in 2011 increases by 20% from 2010
Consult with Aboriginal stakeholders to identify actions to increase Aboriginal employment	Low	Regional Futures Institute, Aboriginal e-team, I&I NSW, TAFE, RDA-NR	June 2012	Aboriginal employment consultation meetings
Develop career pathway maps with industry partners	Medium	RDA-NR, NR Food, , NR Creative Industries Consortium Education & Training Roundtable	Dec 2011	Career pathway maps for the creative industries and the food sector
Provide industry intelligence to State Training Services to inform investment into skills development in the region	Medium	RDA-NR, I&I NSW, STS, TAFE, industry	Annually, as requested	Annual consultations with State Training Services
Assist local businesses to meet skilled needs through regional migration	Medium	RDA-NR, DIAC	Ongoing	80% of regional certifications processed within 4 weeks

⁶ PO = Project Officer

E. Review

Section F, Development of the Plan – Consultation and Methodology identifies that additional consultation and engagement with stakeholders in our region is required to confirm the Regional Plan’s strategic framework and develop the implementation strategy. This consultation will be undertaken during October 2010 to April 2011 and will result in the development of a more comprehensive Implementation Plan than the current Strategy and an initial update of the Plan by June 2011. This will also enable mapping of other activities and actions that are intended to achieve the regional goals and regional outcomes.

The review process will also involve:

- incorporation of agreed actions into the annual RDA-NR Business Plans on an annual basis (every May – June);
- annual assessment and reporting of strategy implementation and achievement of key performance indicators (May – June);
- benchmarking of current status the regional outcomes. Not all outcomes may be able to benchmarked quantitatively. Progress towards those that can be benchmarked will then be assessed on a five-yearly basis using the census as a primary data source (i.e. next review will be 2012).

An initial assessment of benchmarking status is provided below for some indicators. The review process will update and refine benchmarks for all the agreed regional outcomes to track our ongoing progress in regional development.

Benchmarking Regional Outcomes

Natural Capital Outcomes for the Northern Rivers: Status in 2010

Outcome	Benchmark Status in 2010
A natural infrastructure ⁷ investment strategy for the region	Initial recognition of natural infrastructure as a concept. No strategy exists. NR CMA advocating for recognition of natural infrastructure investment in disaster recovery funding programs
A clean energy future for the Northern Rivers including gas reserve development at Casino and renewable energy supply	Cogeneration plants at Broadwater and Condong in operation Discussion about a regional energy strategy at Bellingen Energy Forum and Sustain Northern Rivers

Benchmark data and measures are yet to be defined for the following outcomes:

- increased food resilience⁸
- decreased per capita water and energy consumption
- decreased waste disposal to landfill
- decreased greenhouse gas emissions consistent with federal government targets
- plans to support climate change adaptation and mitigation
- increased extent and improvement of condition of biodiversity

⁷ Natural infrastructure is emerging as a concept to highlight the importance of our natural environment and assets as a key piece of infrastructure preserves the environment, helps to maintain vital ecosystems and maintains our quality of life, but that always seems to be the forgotten piece of infrastructure.

⁸ Food resilience is an emerging term to build upon the concept of food security (which involves all people at all times having access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences). Food resilience extends this concept to a food supply system that can provide affordable food (buffered against price shocks), nutritious food from safe, trusted sources; agro-diversity where land use planning is enforced and agricultural land is protected for food production; and income for farmers and the agricultural industry, buffered against commodity price shocks. (Erickson, undated)

- affirmation of Aboriginal heritage and caring for country
- maximise efficiency of resource use

Social Capital and Social Inclusion Outcomes in the Northern Rivers: Status 2010

Outcome	Benchmark Status in 2010
Reduced rates of homelessness	15% of primary homelessness in NSW is recorded in the Northern Rivers (Census 2006) Overall homelessness rate 124 per 10,000 residents are almost triple the NSW rate of 42 per 10,000 (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2009)
Increased average income rates for NR households	NR 2006 median weekly income \$695 NSW 2006 median weekly income \$1,035

Benchmark data and measures are yet to be defined for the following outcomes:

- increased supply of affordable housing for low and moderate income households
- more equitable and improved access to preventative, primary and community based health care
- enhanced capacity of community based organisations and social enterprise in the region
- increased participation and access to services for aboriginal people
- education /life opportunities for vulnerable groups are matched with regional standards
- regional organisations share a common vision and goals for the region's development

Economic Capital Outcomes in the Northern Rivers: Status in 2010

Outcome	Benchmark Status in 2010
Increased labour force participation	52% participation rate (2006 census) 112,716 participants in labour force
Creation of 760 new export jobs each year	24.4% of regional jobs driven by export 21,477 export jobs (2006 census)
Northern Rivers unemployment rate matches the state average	NSW unemployment rate 5.2% (March 2009) NR unemployment rate 7.78% (March 2009)
Halve unemployment rates for youth and Aboriginal people	Youth (15-24 year old) unemployment rate 28% (2006 census) Aboriginal unemployment rate 20% (2006 census)

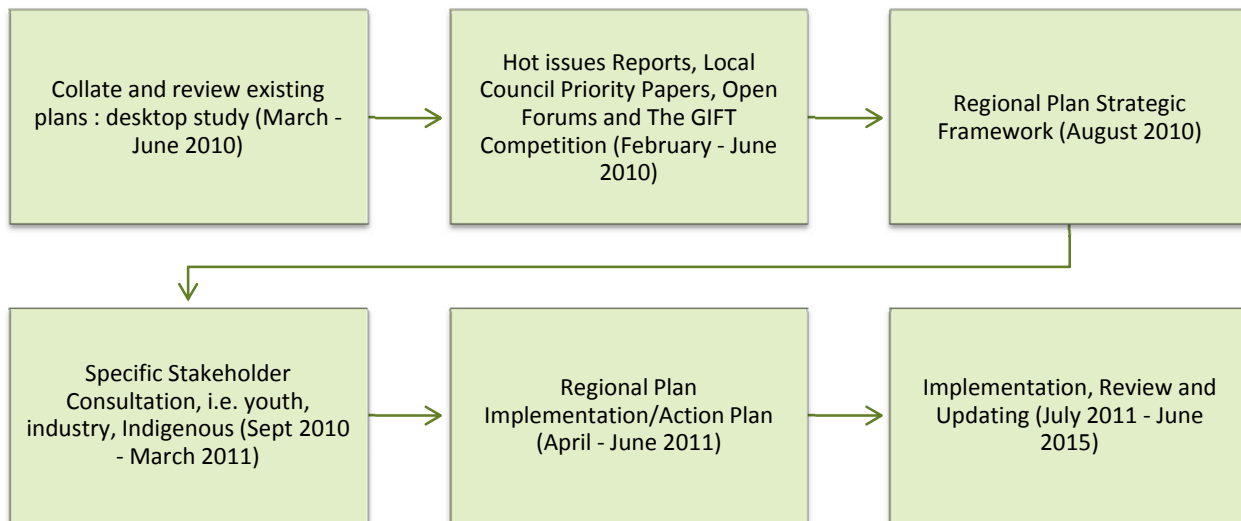
Benchmark data and measures are yet to be defined for the following outcomes:

- increased per capita investment into economic enabling infrastructure in the Northern Rivers (i.e. transport, broadband/ ICT, education/ training etc)
- workforce able to meet the needs of the region's ageing population employment which capitalises on our natural strengths, increases the skills base and strengthens supply chains
- decreased proportion of the working age population on income support
- increased rates of life-long learning for all residents (young, old, indigenous, female, male etc)

F. Development of the Plan - Consultation and Methodology

RDA-NR aims to provide a regional planning framework that integrates the many regional plans (land use, catchment management, local government, economic development, health etc) and identifies opportunities for RDA to fill gaps, add value and build partnerships through facilitation, capacity building, strategic connections, leadership, advocacy, and where appropriate, development projects. The Plan recognises the current land use planning framework, NSW State Plan and has not attempted to duplicate work that is already being undertaken. The planning process is summarised below.

RDA-NR Regional Planning Process



The national RDA network are required to develop plans for their region, with all regional plans to be completed by either June or August 2010.

Integration of Existing Plans

We are fortunate in the Northern Rivers region, that we have a strong history of regional planning to draw on in developing this plan with such a short timeframe. The Northern Rivers Regional Strategy (NRRS) was a significant regional planning program funded by the Australian Government's Building Better Cities Program from 1995 – 2003 (although funding in later years was provided from regional stakeholders and State Government)⁹.

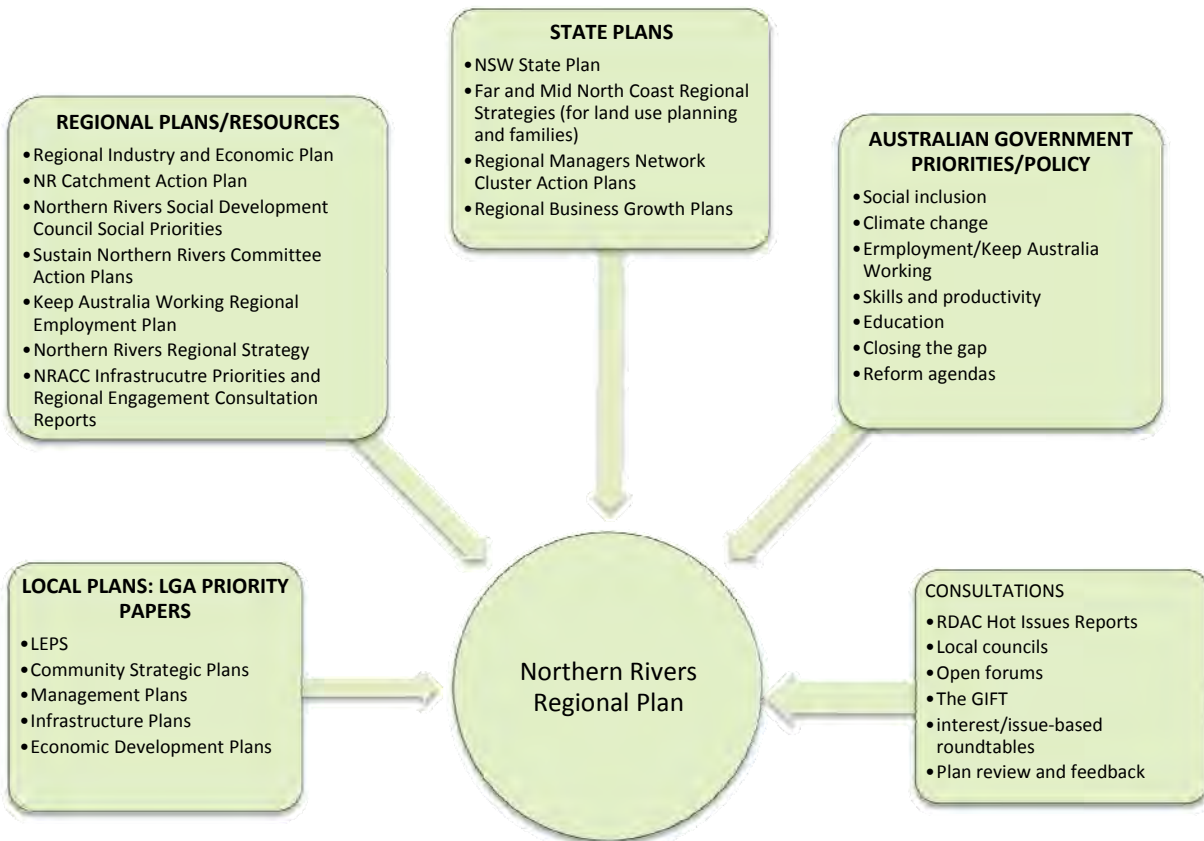
During 2003 – 2009, the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board coordinated the development and implementation of the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan (RIEP). This involved economic benchmarking, integration of economic development requirements and implementation of industry development priorities determined by industry roundtables and forums.

Other work that has been drawn on includes the consultations and prepared key reports on regional engagement and infrastructure priorities for the region in the transition to RDA, the Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee (NRACC) in 2008.

⁹ The NRRS was overseen by a multi- vision, desired future character statements, objectives and specific projects and initiatives and has been a primary source of content for the strategic framework of this plan. Consultation included regular meetings of valley committees, summits, forums, workshops, roundtables and surveys. Significant research was undertaken on sustainability, natural resource management, transport, quality of life, industry futures scenarios, villages, agriculture, planning etc.

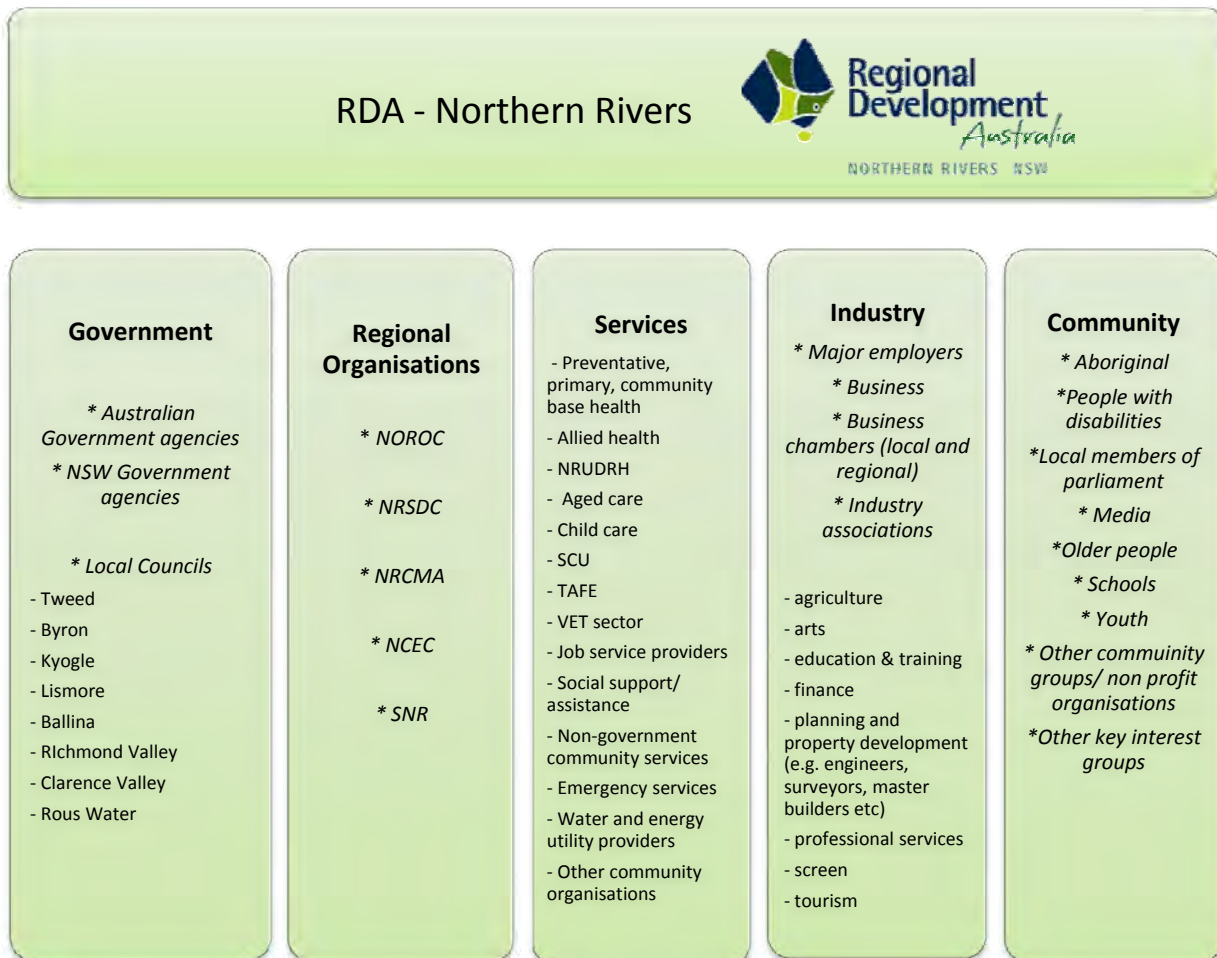
At a State Government level, the State Plan (including the North Coast Local Action Plan and Cluster Plans of the Regional Manager’s Network), Far and Mid North Coast Regional Strategies and Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan are some of the key planning frameworks affecting the region. The NSW Government Regional Manager’s Network was revising and updating the regional delivery plans for the Economic Development and the Environment Cluster and the Human Services Justice Cluster and these have been useful information resources

The region’s councils have Local Environmental Plans, Management Plans, Infrastructure, Economic Development and Community Strategic Plans. These have been reviewed and summarised in consultation with the relevant council in Local Council Priority Papers (Appendix 6).



Community Consultation and Involvement

The framework for stakeholder consultation for the ongoing development of the Northern Rivers Regional Plan is shown below.



Due to the short time frame for plan development, consultation to date has been limited to:

- liaison with key regional stakeholders (government agencies, councils, regional organisations, industry associations, peak groups, local politicians) into the preparation of Hot Issues Reports for the NSW Regional Development Advisory Council in late 2009 and early 2010;
- valley-based open forums in the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence Valleys (NOT local government areas) with local community based groups and interests to develop Hot Topics Reports for each of the valleys (Appendix 4);
- local council reviews in the development of Local Council Priority Papers (Appendix 6);
- council consultations with Tweed, Richmond and Clarence Valley Councils in association with RDA-NR meetings in those locations;
- the Gift for the Future Competition, seeking community 'gifts' in the form of written, photographic and multimedia submissions to capture data that will add value to future RDA-NR initiatives, help shape the regional plan and share ideas of how local communities can help ensure that the community's legacy is a gift - not a debt (Appendix 5); and
- regional issues (October 2009) and SWOT (June 2010) workshops by the RDA-NR Board;
- meetings with local politicians;
- presentations to key organisations, such as NOROC, Aboriginal e-team, NSW Business Chamber and Regional Futures Institute;

- planning meetings on health, Aboriginal employment and climate change with targeted stakeholder groups.

The following consultations were undertaken in the region. RDA-NR was asked to provide keynote presentations to inform these workshops/forums that provided useful information and consultation to inform the regional plan:

- Regional Futures Institute (RFI) of Southern Cross University (SCU), Think Tank in March 2010;
- Workshop to develop the 10 Big Ideas to Grow the Northern Rivers by the NSW Business Chamber (June 2010).

Given that RDA-NR has a responsibility to minimise duplication and fragmentation, leveraging off these consultations by informing the content delivered and access to the outcomes and results has been an efficient process to capture key stakeholder views at this stage. Ongoing coordination is being considered regarding land use planning, catchment management and community development in the review and updates of the Far North Coast Regional Strategy, Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan review and preparation of a Regional Community Development Plan.

This plan is only the first stage in developing a regional planning framework, and future consultation is required including:

- written submissions, feedback and responses to the plan;
- additional council consultations with Ballina, Kyogle, Lismore and Byron Councils are planned to occur in association with future RDA-NR meetings;
- issue and/or industry specific consultations/roundtables to determine priorities and actions that require further consultation as identified in Sections B and D of the plan;
- development of sector specific engagement strategies for youth and Aboriginal people.

These consultations will be undertaken between October 2010 to April 2011 and will inform the development of a more comprehensive implementation plan by June 2011.

Appendix 3 summaries the consultation program, future consultation plans and key stakeholders who have already been consulted.

G. Government Strategic Context

This section provides an initial review of the plans, strategies and initiatives that have informed development of this plan and will influence the implementation of the regional goals and outcomes for the Northern Rivers. This is not an exhaustive list and is likely to change over time. Future consultation will identify key areas of activity and map other stakeholder contributions towards achieving the regional outcomes.

Investing in our Natural Capital

Strategies/Initiatives	
Australian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth Solar Flagships Program • National Strategy on Energy Efficiency • Smart Grid Smart City Program • Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme
NSW State Plan 2010: Investing in a Better Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Fund • Energy Challenge Prize • Energy Efficiency Skills Program • NSW Climate Change Action Plan • NSW Energy Efficiency Strategy
North Coast Region Economic Development and Environment Regional Manager Cluster: Regional Strategic Plan 2010 - 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Water Planning Project • Green Team Alliance • Regional Strategies, Land and Housing Monitors • Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework • State of the Environment and State of the Catchment Reporting • Climate Change Action Plan • Water Quality Project Group • Regional Water Planning Project
Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan under review and being updated 2010 - 2011
State Training Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Skills Strategy • Corporate Partners for Change Regional Program
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of the Environment Reports • Rous Water Future Water Strategy • Tweed Shire Water Supply Augmentation Project

Investing in our Social Capital and Social Inclusion

Strategies/Initiatives	
Australian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan social housing investment • National Affordable Housing Agreement • National Partnerships on Homelessness • Social Housing and Remote Aboriginal Housing • National Rental Affordability Scheme Social housing investment
NSW State Plan 2010: Investing in a Better Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing NSW Building Program • Affordable Housing Innovations Fund • NSW Carers Action Plan: 2007-2012 • Multi-purpose health services in small rural communities • Prevention of Overweight and Obesity in Children, Young People and their Families 2009 – 2011 Strategy • NSW State Health Plan: A New Direction for NSW Health • Future Directions for Health in NSW • NSW: A New Direction in Mental Health • NSW Immunisation Strategy 2008- 2011 • Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW • Keep them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Action Plan • NSW Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities • Safe Families Program • Aboriginal Assistance Schemes • Job Compacts • NSW Volunteering Strategy • Towards 2030: Planning for our Changing Population • Two Ways Together • Stronger Together • Better Together: A New Direction to Make NSW Government Services Work better for People with a Disability and their Families • NSW Volunteering Strategy • NSW Women's Plan • NSW Action Plan on Domestic and Family Violence • NSW Aboriginal Justice Plan 2004-2014
North Coast Region Justice and Human Services Regional Manager Cluster: Regional Strategic Plan 2010 - 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep them Safe • Regional Homelessness Committee • North Coast Domestic and Family Violence Committees and Action Plans • Two Ways Together Regional Action Plans, Regional Engagement Groups and COAG mandated initiatives, including community governance bodies in Ballina and Tabulam; Aboriginal Community Information Days, Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy • COAG Initiatives – Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre • North Coast Housing and Human Services Accord including Lismore Rough Sleepers, DHASI, HASI5 and case coordination projects in South Grafton • Families NSW • Crime Prevention Partnerships – Richmond Local Area Command • Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Project – Richmond Local Area Command • Cross Priority Management including Nimbin Integrated Services Project, Balund-a, SE Qld Border liaison and FNC and MNC Local Government Community Development • Disaster Response and Recovery • Tweed Shire/Gold Coast City Council Cross Border Sub Plan for Emergency and Disaster Response and Recovery
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Coast Area Health Service: The Care of the Older Person Plan 2010 – 2015 • Arts Northern Rivers, Arts and Creative Industries Strategy for the Northern Rivers 2009 – 2012 • Northern Rivers Social Development Council: Northern Rivers Social Issues Forums 2006 • Regional Futures Institute 2010 Think Tank Communique • Clarence Valley Affordable Housing Strategy • Lismore Community Strategic Plan

Investing in our Economic Capital

Strategies/Initiatives	
Australian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Broadband roll out • Keep Australia Working • Infrastructure Australia
Keep Australia Working Regional Employment Plan: Richmond – Tweed and Clarence Valley Priority Employment Area (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richmond Valley Economic Development – gas field development and rail freight hub • Green Teams Alliance • Knowledge Workers • Assisting retrenched or at-risk workers • Linking employers and contractors to infrastructure projects • Provision of ongoing assistance and support to Jobs Fund projects

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising opportunities in the forestry industry • Aged care training roadshow/skills development • Improving stakeholder communication and linkages • Communicating with young people about regional industries • Linking businesses to state and federal programs • Training programs to overcome skills shortages
NSW State Plan 2010: Investing in a Better Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacific Highway upgrades • Road maintenance investments • Local Infrastructure Fund • Community Building Partnership Fund • Building the Country Package • Major Investment Attraction Fund • Joint Regional Planning Panels • Energy Efficiency Skills Program
North Coast Region Economic Development and Environment Regional Manager Cluster: Regional Strategic Plan 2010 - 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Job Summits (none in region currently) • Regional Business Growth Plans • Closing the Gap initiatives • Many Rivers Partnership Agreement including the Green Teams Alliance • Keep Australia Working Regional Employment Plan • Rapid Response Teams for major company closure or downsizing • Cross Border Liaison – Northern NSW and SE QLD
North Coast Region Justice and Human Services Regional Manager Cluster: Regional Strategic Plan 2010 - 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster Response and Recovery • Tweed Shire/Gold Coast City Council Cross Border Sub Plan for Emergency and Disaster Response and Recovery
NSW State Plan: North Coast Local Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Business Growth Plans • Building the Country Package • Sustainability Advantage • Job Compacts for Aboriginal People • Aboriginal Economic Development Officer • TAFE NSW – North Coast Institute Employer Services Program • NSW Skills Centre in Lismore • Regional Training Taskforce • Regional Youth Compact • Use new technologies at TAFE NSW – North Coast Institute • Regional Transport Strategy for Far North Coast from 2010-07-27 • Pacific Highway funding upgrades • Road maintenance investments
State Plan: Regional Business Growth Plan Northern Rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business sustainability • Employment lands supply • Infrastructure for business needs (especially creative industries and broadband infrastructure) and population growth • Implement the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan (RIEP) (includes Integrated Transport Strategy for the Northern Rivers) • Bring skills to the region and retrain the existing workforce
Far North Coast Regional Strategy 2006 – 2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of state and regionally significant farmland • Protection of regionally significant extractive resources • Identification and provision of employment lands • Housing and Land Monitor • Tourism Planning Requirements • Acknowledgement of the RIEP • Identification of regional transport corridors and protection of existing rail corridors
Mid North Coast Regional Strategy 2006 – 2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and provision of employment lands • Tourism Planning Requirements • Acknowledgement of the RIEP • Housing and Land Monitor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of regionally significant extractive resources • Farmland identification, mapping and protection • Identification of regional transport corridors
NSW Innovation Strategy	
State Training Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Skills Development Priorities • Corporate Partners for Change • Green Skills Training • Indigenous Training Strategy • Strategic Skills General Funding Program • Retrenched Worker Program • Productivity Places Program
Local Council Economic Development Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tweed Economic Vision & Strategy 2007-2010 • The Tweed's Top 10 • Tweed Shire Council's - Tweed Futures 2004-2024 • Byron's Tourism Management Plan 2008-2018 • Sustainable Agriculture Strategy 2004 • Ballina shire wide, Alstonville/Wollongbar and Lennox Head Business Retention and Expansion Survey 2008 • Richmond Valley Economic Development Strategy 2010 – 2015 and Infrastructure snapshot • Richmond Valley Significant Venture Projects Study 2009 • Lismore Sustainable Economic Development Strategy to 2030 (under development) • Clarence Valley Economic Development Strategic Plan • Clarence Valley Industrial Lands Strategy • Kyogle "Sense of Place" Project Economic Development Plan
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan (RIEP) developed by Northern Rivers Regional Development Board (2003 – 2005); Update by RDA-NR 2009 • Arts Northern Rivers, Arts and Creative Industries Strategy for the Northern Rivers 2009 – 2012 • Regional Futures Institute 2010 Think Tank Communique

Part II: NORTHERN RIVERS REGIONAL PROFILE¹⁰

H. Our Region

The Northern Rivers region¹⁰ of New South Wales covers approximately 20,732 square kilometres of the north-eastern corner of the State. It stretches from the Queensland border to the southern end of Clarence Valley and from the coast (including the most easterly point of Australia) to the Great Dividing Range in the west. It includes the local government areas (LGAs) of Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed.

Figure 1: The Northern Rivers Region



Our region is rich in Aboriginal cultural history and its boundaries roughly overlay the Aboriginal boundaries of the Bundjalung Nation (based on the natural geography of mountains, rivers and creeks) which encompasses the Upper Clarence, extends from the eastern Richmond Range to the south; the north bank of the Clarence River to the south-east; the south bank of the Logan River to the north and the foothills of the Great Dividing Range to the west. It also includes the Arakwal, Yaegl and Gumbayngirr nations.

Our region incorporates three large river systems (Richmond, Tweed and Clarence), a mass of smaller waterways, world heritage listed rainforests, national parks, world renowned coastline and beaches. The topography and fertility of the region combine to produce rolling and lush hills and a stunning coastline that is much admired and unique in the Australian context. We have the third highest level of biodiversity in Australia and a favourable temperate to sub-tropical climate. Sustainability values and principles are very important to us.

¹⁰ Much of the data and information in the Regional Profile has been extracted (and in some instances directly copied) from the *Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan: Data Update – December 2009* (prepared for RDA – Northern Rivers by SGS Economics and Planning, 2009).

Our People: Social and Demographic Profile

The diversity and amenity of our region's many settlements continue to attract an increasing number of new residents from all walks of life, attracted by the array of lifestyle options and cultural and creative opportunities. Our reputation for artistic and cultural experiences is fuelled by a number of internationally known events including the North Coast Blues and Roots Festival, the Byron Bay Writers Festival and the Bangalow Film Festival. This continued in-migration of new residents with new skills, interests and priorities is extending the capabilities of our human resources. We have a strong and growing skill base in creative and knowledge based sectors which are providing new market opportunities beyond our traditional economic base.

Population

Our region is home to over 292,000 people (June 2008), which is approximately 4% of the State's population. Our annual growth rate of 1.6% is higher than the population growth rate for NSW and is highest in the Tweed, reaching 2.6%. This makes us the fastest growing area in NSW and population projections¹¹ indicate that we will grow by approximately 37% by 2036 – compared to 33% for NSW (NSW Department of Planning, 2008).

In comparison to other lifestyle regions, we are similar in population size to the Sunshine Coast in QLD and a little smaller than the NSW Central Coast.

The age structure of the region's population varies from that of the State with a smaller proportion of the working age group 25-54 years (38% compared to 42%) and a larger 65+ years age group (18% compared to 13%). Future growth is expected across all age groups but the greatest increases will occur for ages above 50. Although the working age population (15 – 64 years) represents a slightly smaller proportion than that of the State overall, with the exception of Byron, the older workforce (55-64 years) has increased marginally since the last census. Improvements in information and communication technologies which enable people to manage lifestyle choice and professional need are likely to account for this growth.

Table 1: Population Growth Rate and Age Structure in the Northern Rivers

Local Government Area (LGA)	2007-2008 Growth rate	2006 Census (% population)		
		<15 years	15-64 years	65 + years
Ballina	1.5	18.7	61.6	19.6
Byron	1.6	19.4	68.4**	12.1
Clarence Valley	0.7	19.9	60.9	19.3
Kyogle	-0.1	21.8	63.0	15.3
Lismore	0.6	20.5	66.0	13.6
Richmond Valley	0.8	21.6	60.5	17.0
Tweed	2.6	18.4	59.4	22.2
Northern Rivers *	1.6	20.1	61.6	18.3
NSW	1.2	29.8	66.3	13.8

*Richmond-Tweed was the fastest growing Statistical Division in NSW outside Sydney in 2007/08

** Byron is one of only a few LGAs with a working age population higher than the State – ABS 2008

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Aboriginal Population

The Bundjalung, Arakwal, Yaegel and Gambaingirr peoples are the traditional custodians of the land in our region. In the 2006 census, 3.6% of residents in the Northern Rivers identified themselves as Aboriginal. This represents a significantly higher proportion of Aboriginal residents in NSW as a whole (2.1%). It is important to note that 4.7% of Northern Rivers' residents and 6.0% of NSW's residents didn't state their Aboriginal status.

¹¹ These projections take account of birth rates, death rates and people moving in and out of the region.

Figure 2: Local Aboriginal Land Councils in the Northern Rivers

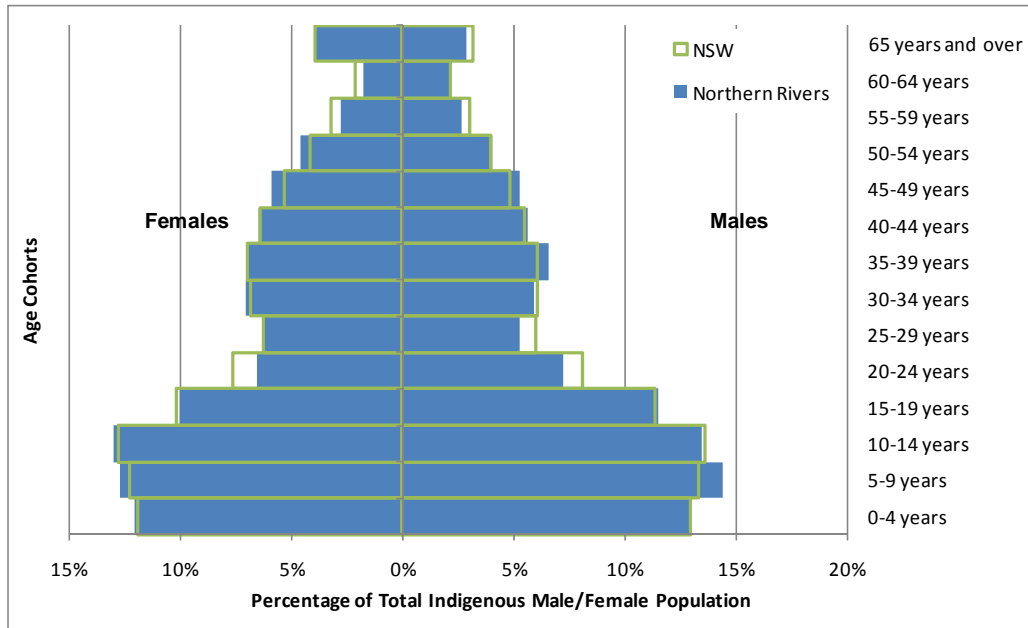


Regional Indigenous Enterprise Development Plan 2010 (Industry and Investment NSW)

The local government areas (LGAs) with the highest proportion of Aboriginal people are Kyogle (5.8%), Richmond Valley (5.8%), Clarence Valley (4.8%) and Lismore (3.7%).

The age profile of our Aboriginal population is younger than the overall population and this is reflected in the larger proportions of younger people in these LGAs (see Figure 3). Birth rates are significantly higher in our Aboriginal community and life expectancy is much lower.

Figure 3: Aboriginal Population by Age and Sex, Northern Rivers and NSW – 2006



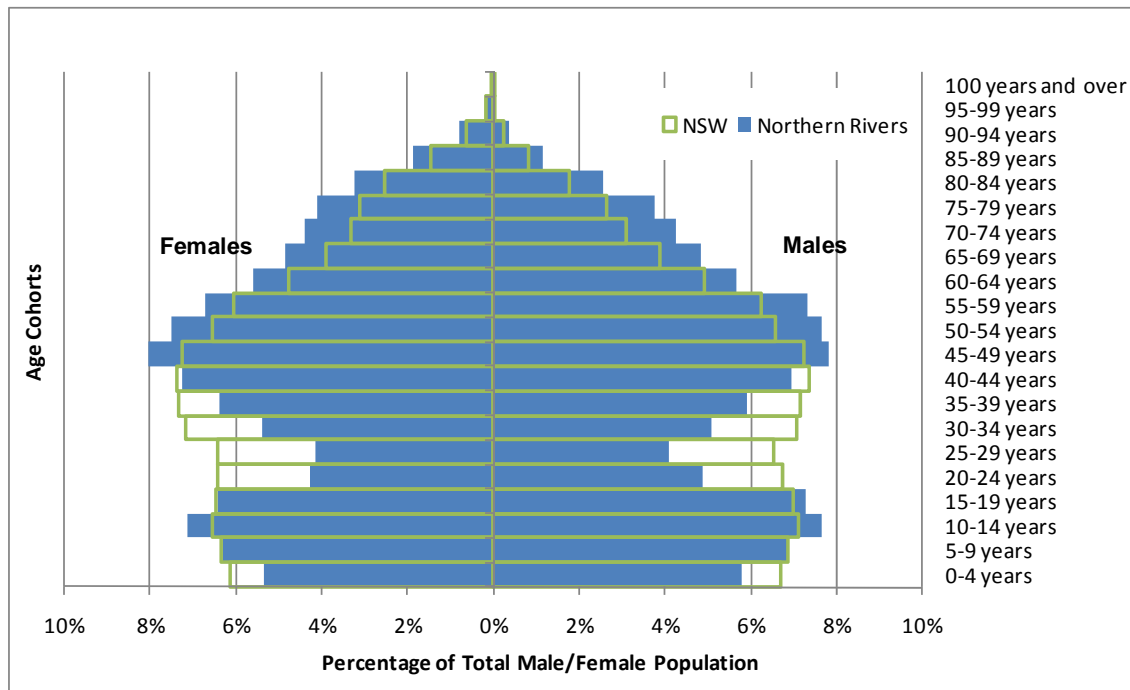
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

The Aboriginal population of the Northern Rivers, follows a similar age and sex distribution to the Aboriginal population of NSW as a whole. The majority of the Aboriginal population appears to be between the ages of 0 and 19 years, making it a very young population. There appears to be slightly more Aboriginal persons between the ages of 0 and 19 in our region compared with NSW, whereas there are fewer Aboriginal persons aged between 20 and 29 years in the Northern Rivers compared with the State.

Population Structure

The age/sex profile of our region highlights a number of distinct features. There is a relatively equal distribution between males and females within the Northern Rivers, very similar to that of NSW as a whole.

Figure 4: Population by Age and Sex, Northern Rivers and NSW – 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Our demographic profile also suggests an ageing resident population. There are a smaller proportion of residents aged between 20 and 39 years of age and a higher proportion of residents aged between 45 and 59 years of age in our region compared to NSW. In particular, there are a significantly larger number of Tweed residents aged over 65 years of age (22%) compared to the NSW average (13%). There are also proportionally fewer people aged between 20 and 39 years of age within the Tweed local government area compared to elsewhere in the region and the NSW average.

Population Forecasts

To better understand the potential issues that could arise in the Northern Rivers, it is important to understand anticipated population growth.

Population projections have been prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The latest projections are based on the 2007 Estimated Resident Population determined by the ABS, which are shown in the following table. According to these projections, our region is projected to grow from 283,615 persons in 2007 to 359,720 in 2027. This is a total increase of 21%, at a rate of 3,800 people per annum. Table 2 indicates that this growth is projected to be higher than the average rate for NSW over the same time period.

Table 2: Population Projections to 2027, Northern Rivers Region and NSW

Population Projection			Average Annual Change (%)		
	Northern Rivers	NSW		Northern Rivers	NSW
2007	283,615	6,888,014	2007-2012	1.35	1.12
2012	303,292	7,218,890	2012 - 2017	1.26	1.08
2017	322,911	7,684,353	2017 -2022	1.15	1.02
2022	341,905	8,083,896	2022 - 2027	1.02	0.94
2027	359,720	8,470,705			

Source: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (2006)

Almost 90% of our future growth will be driven by net migration as opposed to natural increase (births less deaths). This is significantly different to the State of NSW, where only 40% of State growth will occur through migration. Our highest growth will occur in our coastal areas, particularly the local government areas (LGAs) of Tweed, Ballina and Byron.

“Contrary to popular belief, the population migration is not dominated by retirees. During the year prior to the 2001 census, 79 per cent of people who moved to ‘sea change’ areas were younger than 50 years of age (ABS 2004a). Also contrary to popular belief, the majority of new coastal residents moved from either a regional population centre (42 per cent) or from a country area (27 per cent), rather than from a capital city,” (Smith and Doherty, 2006).

Table 3: Population Forecasts by LGA, Northern Rivers Region

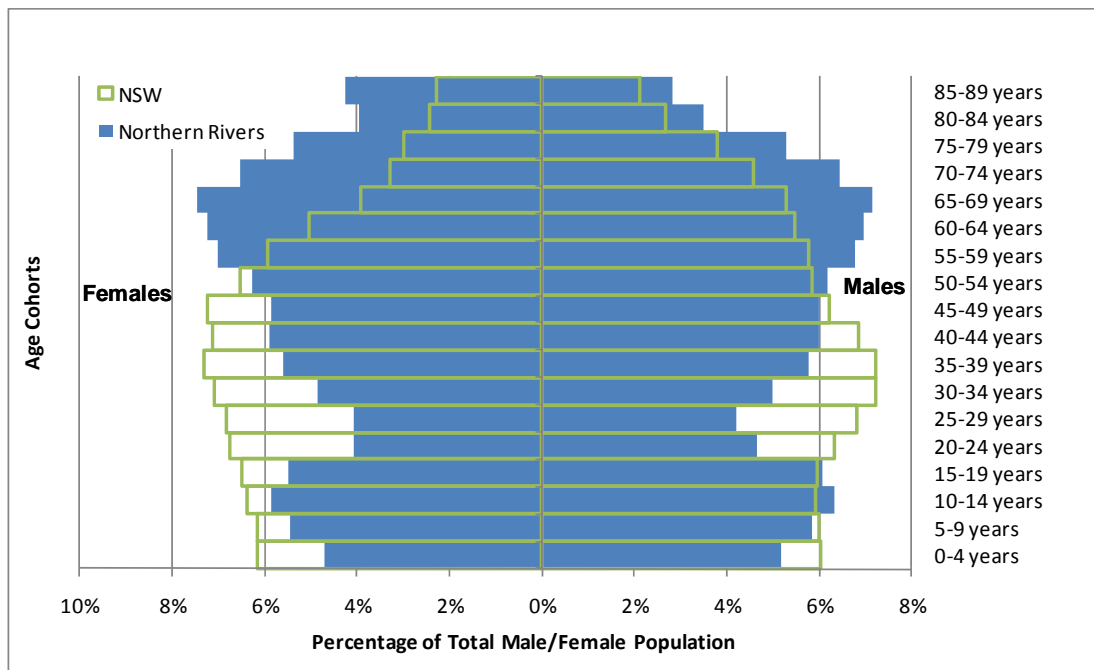
LGA	2007	2027	Growth rate per annum (%)
Tweed	84,461	122,157	1.86
Lismore	44,608	51,972	0.77
Ballina	40,959	53,888	1.38
Byron	30,931	35,116	0.64
Kyogle	9,672	9,768	0.05
Richmond Valley	22,442	28,539	1.21
Clarence Valley	50,542	58,280	0.71
Northern Rivers	283,615	359,720	1.20

Source: Department of Health and Ageing via the ABS Population Projections

The population structure of our region is projected to age significantly when compared to NSW. It is projected that the majority of the Northern Rivers population will be aged between 50 and 90 years of age in 2027, compared to a majority of people aged between 20 and 45 years of age for NSW as a whole. According to Department of Planning projections (2008), this older age group will form 30% of the region’s population

by 2036 compared to 21% for the State. Particular lifestyle factors and attractions within the Northern Rivers region that accommodate an aging population may be a significant contributor to this projected trend. The distribution between males and females within the area is expected to remain relatively even to 2027.

Figure 5: Forecast Population by Age and Sex, Northern Rivers and NSW – 2027

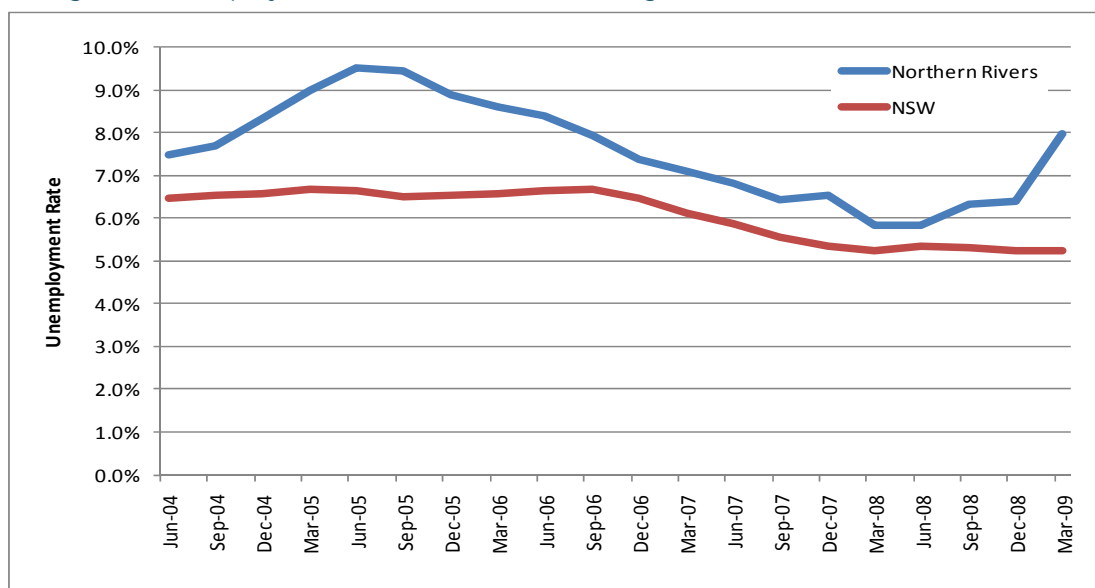


Source: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

Employment

Our region has a relatively low labour force participation rate at only 52% compared to 59% of the State’s population as a whole (2006 Census). According to the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations’ Small Area Labour Markets data, in the four and a half years to December 2008, unemployment in both the Northern Rivers region and in NSW has declined.

Figure 6: Unemployment Rate, Northern Rivers Region and NSW, June 2004 to December 2008*



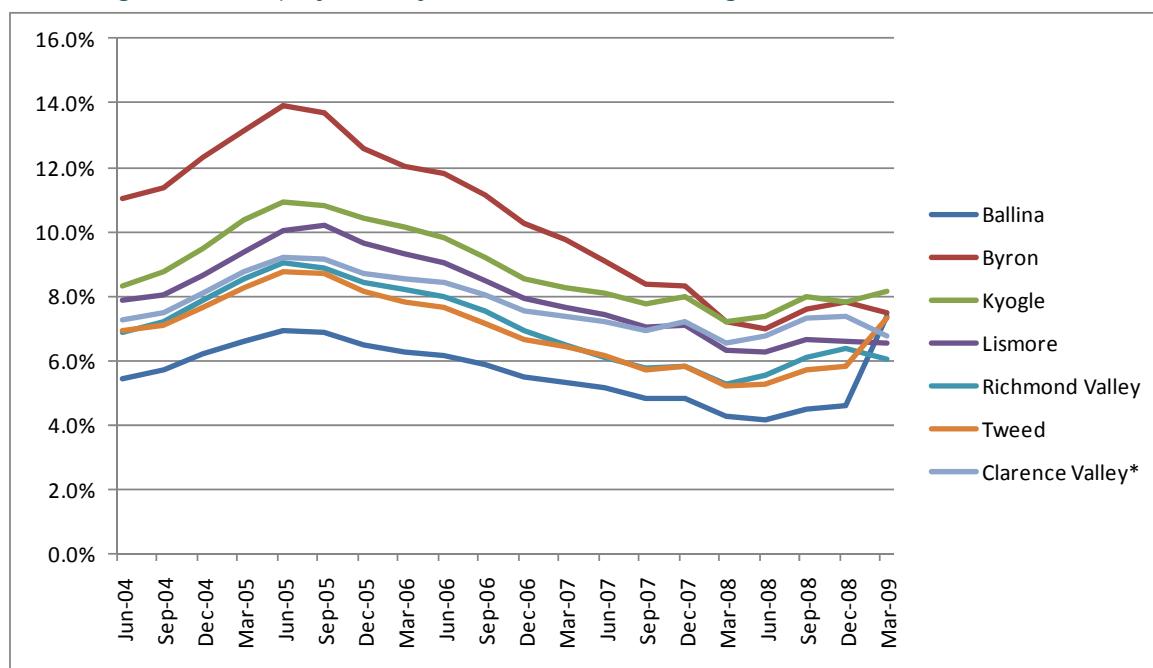
*Note that up until the March 2009, the Northern Rivers was defined including the former local government areas of Copmanhurst, Grafton, Maclean and Pristine Waters as an approximation for Clarence Valley.
Source: DEEWR Small Area Labour Market Data

Between June 2004 and June 2005, unemployment in the Northern Rivers region increased significantly. From this point, a relatively steady rate of decline occurred between September 2005 and September 2007. After this time, unemployment in our region began to increase to reach a level of approximately 6.4% by December 2008. With the advent of the Global Financial Crisis, unemployment in the Northern Rivers rose notably between December 2008 and March 2009, reaching 8.0%. Unemployment in NSW as a whole has remained relatively steady at 5.2% in March 2009, up from 5.1% in December 2008. The unemployment rate for Australia as a whole rose from 4.2% in December 2008 to 4.6% in March 2009.

A breakdown of unemployment rates for each local government area within the Northern Rivers region displays an obvious trend towards declining unemployment from June 2005 through to December 2008. The unemployment trend for Byron LGA is particularly interesting. This area has experienced the highest rate of decline in unemployment when compared to other areas of the Northern Rivers region. All other areas have experienced a decline in unemployment over this same time period.

Looking more specifically at the unemployment rates for the region, it is evident that since June 2008, increases in unemployment have occurred. Ballina has consistently had the lowest unemployment rates in the region while unemployment in Kyogle is the highest in the region of late, although the unemployment rate in Byron has traditionally been the highest out of all the areas. Noticeably there has been a significant increase in the unemployment rates between December 2008 and March 2009 for Ballina and the Tweed. Kyogle also increased somewhat, however, the unemployment rate in all other areas remained the same or in fact became lower.

Figure 7: Unemployment by LGA, Northern Rivers Region, June 2004 to December 2008



*Note that Clarence Valley is a conglomeration of the former Copmanhurst, Grafton, Maclean and Pristine Waters Local Government Areas (except for March 2009), and is a close approximation for the 2006 Census boundary for Clarence Valley.

Source: DEEWR Small Area Labour Market Data

Our region has been recognised by the Australian Government as one of the 20 most disadvantaged areas in Australia, and consequently identified as Keep Australia Working Priority Region. This is because the measures of workforce participation rate, percentage of workforce employed full-time and, median household income are all significantly lower in the Northern Rivers than State and National measures.

For example, a comparison with other lifestyle regions shows that the Sunshine Coast has a participation rate at 57%, Greater Geelong at 58% and the NSW Central Coast at 55%, whereas our rate is only 52%.

Comparisons with other similar 'lifestyle' regions show lower unemployment rates lower than our 6.4% (as at December 2008), with:

- Greater Geelong at 3.9%
- Sunshine Coast at 4.2%
- NSW Central Coast at 5.2%
- Wollongong at 6.1%

Our unemployment rates for youth (28%) are lower than for NSW (33%), but our unemployment rates for 25-64 year olds (71%) are higher than the state averages (63%).

Table 4: Unemployment Rate by Age - 2006

Age (years)	Northern Rivers	NSW
	%	%
15-19	15.2	16.7
20-24	12.9	16.1
25-34	18.3	16.8
35-44	20.3	19.9
45-54	20.6	16.2
55-64	11.9	9.7
65-74	0.6	0.7
75-84	0.1	0.3
85 and older	0.1	0.1

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

The participation rates for Aboriginal people in our region are lower than the state averages, and our unemployment rates are higher. However, there are not major differences between the state and region in terms of Aboriginal employment issues, which shows that our closing the gap challenge is similar to that of NSW.

Table 5: Unemployment and Participation for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Population, Northern Rivers and NSW - 2006

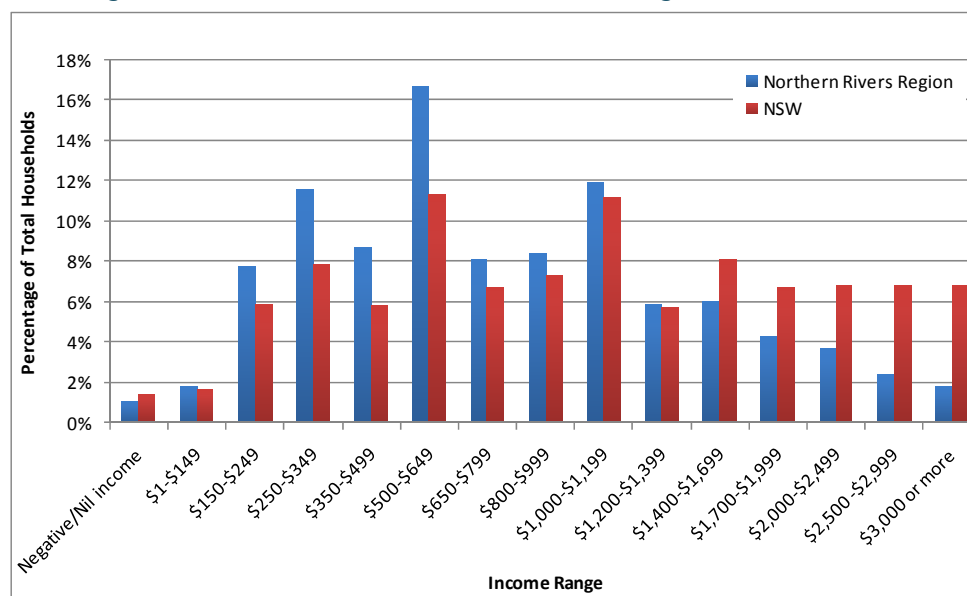
LGA	Unemployment rate (%)		Participation rate (%)	
	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Tweed	16.5	6.7	54.1	47.5
Byron	16.7	8.5	60.2	55.3
Ballina	17.2	6.9	54.1	54.8
Lismore	25.1	8.6	53.1	56.9
Kyogle	27.3	9.2	39.6	50.3
Richmond Valley	22.1	8.0	41.2	49.3
Clarence Valley	23.8	9.2	45.3	47.1
Northern Rivers	20.1	7.9	49.7	51.0
NSW	19.3	5.6	51.2	58.1

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Income

The Northern Rivers is lower than the NSW average on most measures of socio-economic status. Six localities in the region were listed in the 40 highest ranking postcode areas on the 'disadvantage' factor compiled by Prof. Tony Vinson (Dropping off the Edge: the Distribution of Disadvantage in Australia, 2006). This factor comprises variables such as income level, education and skill levels, access to services, labour force participation. Two LGAs within the region rank in the bottom 12 scores for the State on the Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage (ABS, SEIFA 2006). This is particularly reflected in our income characteristics.

Figure 8: Household Income, Northern Rivers Region and NSW, 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Median household incomes in the Northern Rivers are significantly lower than those NSW. Median household incomes in our region are 62% and 69% of the median household incomes for Sydney and NSW respectively.

According to the 2006 ABS Census data, our region has an average household income that primarily ranges between \$250 and \$1,200 per week. 64% of our households earn less than \$1,000 per week gross income compared to 48% for NSW. Of this range, approximately 17% of households earn between \$500 and \$649 per week. We also have significantly fewer households earning over \$1,400 per week when compared to the NSW average. The median weekly household income for the Northern Rivers is \$695, compared to \$1,093 for NSW and \$1,027 for Australia.

Table 6: Median household Income, Northern Rivers LGAS and NSW

Local Government Area/ Region	Median Annual Gross Household Income (\$)	Median weekly Gross Household Income (\$)
Tweed	35,300	679
Byron	38,700	744
Kyogle	31,200	600
Ballina	40,400	777
Lismore	39,500	759
Richmond Valley	33,500	645
Clarence Valley	32,900	633
Northern Rivers	36,140	695
Sydney Stat Div	60,000	1,153
NSW (inc Syd)	53,800	1,035
Rest of NSW	42,400	815

Source: ABS 2006 Census

The primary employment sectors in the region are retail, health & community services, manufacturing, education, business services and agriculture. A significant proportion of job opportunities in these sectors typically offer relatively lower incomes and are often casual or part time. Our lower incomes can also be explained by the age profile of our region and our higher unemployment rate. They are also likely to be influenced by our relatively lower education levels. This results in a high level of casualisation and under-employment in the Northern Rivers.

Our region also has a high dependency on welfare support and benefits as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Recipients of Unemployment Benefits

LGA	Recipients as a proportion of working age population	
	Unemployment benefits	All Centrelink benefits
Byron	9%	29%
Clarence Valley	9%	32%
Kyogle	10%	34%
Lismore	7%	30%
Richmond Valley	8%	30%
Tweed	7%	26%
Northern Rivers	8%	29%
NSW	5%	18%
Australia	5%	18%

Source: Keep Australia Working Regional Employment Plan 2010

Note that the Ballina LGA has not been identified as a priority area by the Australian Government, and so data for Ballina is not available in this table.

Ethnicity

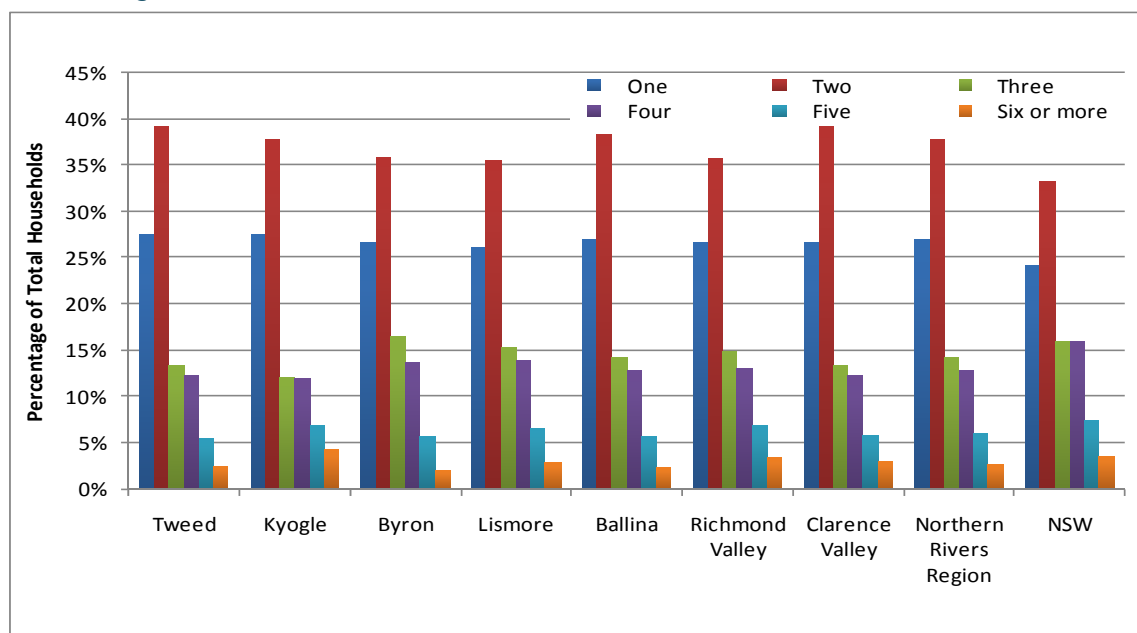
Our region has a much less culturally diverse population than the rest of NSW. In 2006, 23.8% of the State's population was born overseas compared to just 16.8% for our region. The highest proportions of overseas-born residents were in the LGAs of Byron (16.2%) and Tweed (14.3%). Richmond Valley and Clarence Valley had the lowest proportion of overseas-born residents at just 5% and 6.8% respectively.

Housing Characteristics

Household Size

Over 35% of all households in our region are two person households. This is the most common household size for the Northern Rivers, NSW (33%) and Australia (34%). One person households are the next most common household size accounting for 27% of households in our region and 24% of households in NSW and Australia. Compared to the Northern Rivers region, NSW has a higher proportion of three and four person households. Households with five people or more are both relatively uncommon in both the Northern Rivers region and the whole of NSW.

Figure 9: Number of Persons Resident in Households, Northern Rivers and NSW – 2006

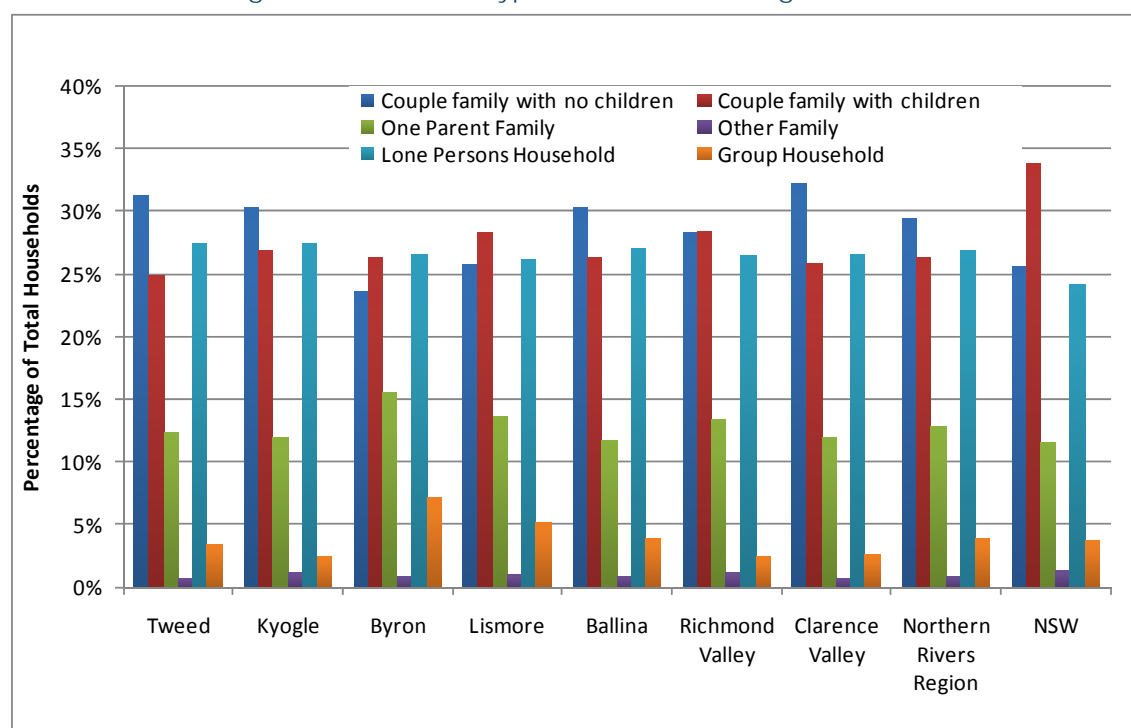


Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Household Type

The household characteristics of our region differ from those of NSW as a whole in a number of significant ways. Approximately 34% of households in NSW are couples with children. This is significantly higher compared to the Northern Rivers region, where 26% of households are couples with children. The Australian average is slightly less than the NSW average for a couple family with children, making up 33% of all households. Compared to the NSW average, the Northern Rivers region has a higher proportion of couple families with no children. This is the most common household type in the region accounting for 29% of all households. For NSW as a whole, approximately 26% of households consist of couples with no children. There are also a significant proportion of lone person households within the Northern Rivers region. Lone person households account for 27% of households in Northern Rivers compared to 24% in NSW and Australia. This trend of increasing numbers of household types of one person or couples with no children is a national trend that reflects our ageing population and the declines in child bearing.

Figure 10: Household Type, Northern Rivers Region and NSW, 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Housing Affordability

People in our region, like those in the nation generally, predominantly live in houses they own or are purchasing while approximately 30% of households rent, either private or publicly owned housing. We differ from the State however, in that we have significantly less public housing and our housing costs are markedly higher. This is compounded by our region's lower income levels. With our current and projected rate of population growth, housing supply and affordability will impact significantly on where people will live, particularly in relation to proximity to workplaces and services. The supply of housing in our region has not kept pace with population growth and resultant demand. Deliberate strategies to address workforce housing needs will be necessary in the region to ensure that people are able to continue to access affordable housing close to employment.

Up to 67% of renting households in our region are currently experiencing rental stress and spending more than 30% of income on housing. This figure is lower for inland locations where it is still over 40%. 10% of rental housing in the Northern Rivers is public housing compared to 15.5% statewide.

There has been an overall decline in median house prices in our region since March 2008. Overall, the median house price in the Northern Rivers region has decreased from \$380,000 in March 2008 to \$349,000 in March

2009. Global and national financial pressures since 2008 have resulted in the decline of housing prices in all areas of the Northern Rivers except Clarence Valley and Kyogle. According to March 2009 data, median house prices in Ballina, Byron and Tweed are significantly higher than other areas within the Northern Rivers region. Richmond - Tweed separate house rents are the highest in NSW outside of Sydney and private rental vacancy rates in the Northern Rivers are comparable to Sydney.

Table 8: Housing Costs – Rents and Sale Prices, Northern Rivers and NSW

Local Government Area/ Region	Median Weekly Rent (\$)	Median Sale Price (\$,000)	Income Spent on Rent (%)
	June 2009	May, 2009	
Ballina	350	388	46
Byron	400	467	56
Clarence Valley	260	285	41
Kyogle	220	239	42
Lismore	280	288	42
Richmond Valley	260	248	39
Tweed	350	385	52
NSW (inc. Sydney)	300	356	28
Rest of NSW (excl. Sydney)	250	270	30

Source: Housing NSW, Rent & Sales Report no. 88; ABS 2006 Census

* 3 bedroom house

** All dwelling types

Homelessness

Housing affordability can also have an impact on homelessness in our region. Homelessness can fall into the following categories¹²:

- primary: a lack of conventional accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough/improvised dwellings);
- secondary: frequently moving from one temporary shelter to another (e.g. emergency accommodation, youth refuges, "couch surfing"); and
- tertiary: accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (e.g. boarding housing and caravan parks).

Our overall homelessness rate of 124 per 10,000 residents is almost triple the NSW rate of 42 per 10,000 (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2009), and 15% of primary homelessness in NSW is recorded in the Northern Rivers (Census 2006).

¹² Information derived from presentation by Tony Davies, CEO of Northern Rivers Social Development Council at the Regional Futures Institute Think Tank (March 2010)

Geographic Profile

Location and Settlements

Our region is located in the far north of the state of NSW on the eastern seaboard, and east of the Great Dividing Range. We adjoin the densely populated South East Queensland region, and the high growth corridor in NSW of the Mid North Coast.

Figure 11: Location of the Northern Rivers Region



Figure 12: Our Council Areas

Our region includes seven local councils, and one County Council. These are Tweed, Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Rous Water.



Source: http://www.rda.gov.au/resources/maps.aspx#nsw_maps

Tweed City Council www.tweed.nsw.gov.au

The Tweed is located on the far north coast of New South Wales near the Queensland border, approximately 860 km north of Sydney and 100 km south of Brisbane. The council area covers a total area of approximately 1,303 square kilometres.

The Tweed has a population exceeding 82,900 people (2006). It is estimated that by 2030 the Tweed will have a population of over 130,000 people. This represents a population increase of over 50% within 20 years.

Major towns in the council area include Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah, Kingscliff and Pottsville. In total there are seventeen villages across the council area.

Major industry sectors include tourism, retail, health, education and community services. Service industries have grown to employ almost three quarters of the workforce. The key growth industries in the Tweed which need to be fostered are based around tourism and associated services, health industry, education and the cultural industries are also growing significantly.

Lismore City Council www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

Lismore covers an area of 1,267 square kilometres stretching from North Woodburn in the south, to the village of Nimbin and the Nightcap Ranges to the North and from Clunes in the east to Bentley in the West. Lismore is situated on the banks of the Wilsons River and the busy Bruxner Highway, providing easy access to the Pacific Highway and other major transport links.

In 2007 Lismore Council area had a population of 44,668 (ABS Regional Population Growth Australia 2006-07). This represents an increase of 443 over the previous year – a growth of 1.3%. Lismore has a comparatively young population, with the median age being just 37 – the youngest median age in the region. Lismore's population continues to grow at a sustainable level with the City's residents maintaining the highest household income for the region.

The major town in the LGA is Lismore, and population is dispersed in many surrounding villages.

Lismore is experiencing business growth in health care, education and industry sectors contributing to tourism and hospitality. Employment associated with public administration and safety, plus personal services is also on the rise as these sectors expand their service delivery capacity. Dominance by the retail sector as the region's main employer for many decades, gave way in 2006 to service delivery in health care and social services.

Kyogle Council www.kyogle.nsw.gov.au

Kyogle is approximately 747 km north of Sydney and 233 km south of Brisbane. The council area extends south from the Queensland border covering a total area of some 3,589 square kilometres. Major towns and villages include Kyogle, Tabulam, Bonalbo, Mallanganee and Woodenbong.

Kyogle's population was 9,629 at the 2006 census.

Major industry sectors include primary industries, forestry, dairy and beef. Kyogle has a skilled and flexible labour force that is drawn from across the shire and other council areas. Major growth industries include cropping, bushfood, and herb and tourism industries

Ballina Shire Council www.ballina.nsw.gov.au

Ballina is located 769 km north of Sydney and 193 km south of Brisbane. The shire covers an area of 480 square kilometres and is set amongst a picturesque coastal-rural landscape. Major towns include Ballina, Alstonville, Lennox Head, Wollongbar and Wardell with a dispersion of villages and hamlets including Teven, Tintenbar and Knockrow.

The population of Ballina Shire in 2007 was 40,932 persons representing an increase of 1.7% from the level recorded in 2006.

Major industry sectors include retail, health and community services, a diverse range of agricultural industries from producing beef, sugar and dairy products to tropical fruit, nuts and coffee, and medicinal plant crops. Major growth industries include tourism, construction and property development, wholesale and retail trade, recreational and cultural industries, and health and community services.

Byron Shire Council www.byron.nsw.gov.au

Byron is located approximately 790 km north of Sydney and 202 km south of Brisbane. The shire covers an area of approximately 550 square kilometres.

Byron had a resident population base of 28,766 people at the 2006 census. The estimated resident population as at 30 June 2008 is 31,503 and growing at approximately 1.5% per annum.

Major towns and villages include Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, Bangalow, Brunswick Heads and Ocean Shores. There are a number of small villages or hamlets such as Billinudgel, Main Arm, Federal and Rosebank.

Major industry sectors include tourism, creative industries encompassing artists, writers and filmmakers, and agriculture, including coffee, avocados, sugar cane, seafood/fishing, dairying, macadamias, stone fruit, blueberries and bananas. Retail and home based businesses are large employers in the Shire.

Richmond Valley Council www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

The Richmond Valley from the west through Casino is the gateway to the Northern Rivers. Similarly from the south via the Pacific Highway, New Italy and Woodburn welcomes travelers into the upper Northern Rivers area. The Richmond Valley is within 1 hours drive to the Gold Coast and 2 hours to Brisbane and covers approximately 3,050 square kilometres.

Evans Head is cradled by the Broadwater and Bundjalung National Parks. Further inland the deep broad water of the Richmond River flows through villages of Woodburn, Coraki and Tatham and the major town of Casino.

Richmond Valley's current population level sits is 22,672 people (2008) which represented a growth of 0.8% over the previous 12 months. Over the past five years, the population of Richmond Valley has increased at an average annual rate of 1.2%, which was higher than the growth rate for New South Wales over the same period (0.9%).

The Richmond Valley is a leader in primary industries and food manufacturing enterprises with the NSW Sugar Mill located at Broadwater and Richmond Dairies and the Northern Rivers Meat Cooperative at Casino. This is supported by agricultural specialisations in grain, dairy, beef, fruits, vegetables, timber and tea-tree. There is also a healthy retail and tourism sector, growing creative industries and building and construction industry sectors.

Clarence Valley Council www.clarence.nsw.gov.au

The Clarence River which is more than 380 kilometres in length is the Valley's living link, connecting the rural localities and rugged mountain ranges in the west to the City of Grafton, the historic river towns of Ulmarra and Maclean and the coastal centres of Yamba and Iluka. The Clarence Valley is only a 3 hour drive from Brisbane.

Clarence Valley's population base was 51,007 at June 2008 and is growing at 0.7% per annum.

Major industry sectors include commercial estuary and ocean fisheries with significant plant and port facilities in Yamba, Maclean and Iluka. Traditional industries like beef, sugar cane production and milling remains strong. Tourism and aquaculture are major growth industries being driven by substantial investment, strong market awareness and improved transport links.

Climate

The general climatic conditions in our bioregion include hot, wet summers along the coastal area forming typical sub-tropical patterns, a sub-humid climate on the slopes and a more temperate pattern in the western areas with warm summers. A montane climate (colder winters with frosts, sleet) occurs in a small area in the southwest of the bioregion at higher elevations. Summers in the Northern Rivers are relatively warm, with average maximum January temperatures of approximately 27–30°C (Table 9). On average, Yamba experiences only 1 day above 35°C each year, although warmer areas such as Lismore tend to experience more frequent summer extremes. Winters are cool to mild, with average maximum July temperatures of 19–20°C toward the coast, but only 12°C in more inland towns such as Armidale. The North Coast Region has the highest rainfall of all NSW regions, averaging 1200 mm per year, concentrated in summer (NSW DECCW 2010). The catchment's coastal areas receive approximately 1,350–1,650 mm of rainfall each year, while rainfall in the interior is significantly lower. Peak precipitation occurs between November and April, however, variability in rainfall from one year to the next is high.

Table 9: North Coast Bioregion Climatic Information

Mean annual temperature	8-20°C
Minimum average monthly temperature	-2.8-9.8°C
Maximum average monthly temperature	20.3-30.9°C
Mean annual rainfall	607-2912mm
Minimum average monthly rainfall	30-99mm
Maximum average monthly rainfall	76-499mm

Source: DECCW website <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/bioregions/NorthCoast-Climate.htm>

Climate Change

CSIRO climate change projections prepared for the New South Wales Government (Climate Change in the Northern Rivers Catchment 2007) for the Northern Rivers Catchment¹³ indicate that: "although changes in average temperature, rainfall and evaporation will have long-term consequences for the catchment, the impacts of climate change are more likely to be felt through extreme weather events. Projections suggest there may well be more hot days, bushfires, droughts and intense storms". A reduction in winter rainfall and a decrease in soil moisture in winter and spring is projected for this region. Sea levels will rise, changing flood patterns and affecting the coast. Minimum temperatures across all seasons are projected to be warmer, with winter maximum temperatures rising more than summer maximum temperatures (NSW DECCW 2010).

Temperature in our region in the future (to 2100) is likely to be between 0.2°C and 1.8°C warmer. The summer increases are projected between 1.0 – 1.5°C with winter increases between 2.0 – 3.0°C. Average daily minimum temperatures are projected to increase by 2.0 – 3.0°C.

Annual average rainfall is likely to increase by between seven and twenty per cent, and sea-levels are likely to be 90-880 mm higher (CSIRO 2007). Since 1973, droughts have become more intense and since 1950, annual rainfall along the eastern seaboard has declined. Flooding, coastal erosion and inundation are major concerns for our region, particularly in low-lying areas in Byron, Ballina, Clarence and Tweed.

¹³ This catchment is based on the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority region, which is larger than the RDA Northern Rivers, extending further south to the Foster/Great Lakes area.
Northern Rivers Regional Plan ~ vision to 2020 ~ strategy to 2012

The pattern of the El Niño Southern Oscillation cycle is expected to continue but with higher temperatures than currently experienced. El Niño years are likely to continue to be drier than average and become hotter. La Niña years are likely to continue to be wetter than average and also to become warmer. In El Niño events, water stress is expected to be more intense due to higher temperatures. During La Niña years storms with heavy downpours are expected to be more frequent (NSW DECCW 2010).

Other effects include the expected increase in the frequency of very high or extreme fire-risk days across NSW and similarly, erosion on the steeper slopes and runoff is likely to increase in summer and autumn and decrease in winter and spring. The major impacts for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity are likely to be from the rise in sea levels, increased temperatures, changes to water availability and bushfires. The ecological communities most at risk are those on the coastal lowlands, saline wetlands and fragmented forests and woodlands on the hinterland (NSW DECCW 2010).

Community impacts on assets, residential and commercial property from coastal inundation will be widespread. Infrastructure that is likely to be affected as water levels rise include fishing ports at Tweed, Ballina, Evans Head, Iluka and Yamba, as well as the commercial shipping wharf on Goodwin Island. Many boat ramps, jetties and wharves are likely to be affected within estuaries and lakes. With an increased flow in urban streams, more frequent flash flooding is likely which can pose an increased safety risk to the community. Other community impacts include public health implications such as increased heat/sun exposure and mosquito borne infections.

Inflows to water storages may decrease by 10–20% during drier periods. This will have the most significant impact on towns with small storages. Low-lying sewerage systems near many coastal lakes are likely to be affected by sea level rise, with consequent water-quality risks.

Natural Resources

Gas

Coal seam gas or coal seam methane occurs naturally within coal deposits in the Clarence-Moreton basin in the north east corner of NSW that is located in our region. The gas is largely composed of methane and as it has minor carbon dioxide levels, it is considered an environmentally friendly energy source. This resource is currently the subject of significant exploration and potential development, particularly by the Metgasco and Arrow Energy companies.

Extractive and Mineral Resources

Extractive resources in our region include sand and gravel, brick clay, hard rock aggregate, armour rock, loam and unprocessed materials such as fill for road making. Mineral resources such as antimony, limestone, heavy mineral sands, nickel, cobalt, and scandium are also in our region. Demand for these resources is affected by matters such as world resource prices, housing interest rates and government funding of infrastructure projects. Although it is not possible to predict exactly what the demand will be, it is reasonable to assume that some mineral extraction operations will take place in the future and demand for extractive resources will continue. The NSW Government has estimated that based on historical trends demand for our extractive resources could rise to as much as 8.9 million tonnes per year by the year 2042.

Agricultural Lands

The rich volcanic soils of our region's plateaus and alluvial flood plains have high agriculture productivity. Steep slopes on the volcanic plateau and drainage problems on the alluvial soils considerably reduce the area of these soils available for agricultural production. These are largely frost free and support a range of agricultural industries including sub tropical fruit and vegetable crops, meat, dairy and sugar cane. New horticultural crops such as macadamias, avocados, coffee, tea, bush foods, herbs, bamboo, lychees and a range of other tropical fruits continue to emerge.

Meat and dairy continue to be a major user of our agricultural lands, accounting for 90% of our region's milk supply from 145 dairy farms (NORCO 2009 Annual Report). There are also approximately 12,400 properties that stock beef cattle in our region (Pers. com. North Coast Livestock Health & Pest Authority; 2010).

Timber and Forestry

It is estimated that private forests in our region cover a gross area of 631,000 hectares. The Northern Rivers is favoured for wood production with suitable soils, adequate rainfall and a range of climates that can produce a variety of timbers. Large areas of private native forest are managed for timber production and our region has a rapidly expanding plantation resource, and a strong production sector. The NSW Government has encouraged policies that attract investment in value adding facilities. At present there is considerable interest and trials into the use of forest and sawmill residues as bio-fuels and biochar.

Employment Lands

An adequate supply of employment lands is necessary for the expansion of commercial, industrial, institutional, retail and major tourism activities as our resident and tourist population increases. Demand is primarily in the coastal areas where land is increasingly limited and unaffordable. The hinterland has capacity to meet this land requirement but will require the necessary support infrastructure including energy, transport and telecommunications. The Far and Mid North Coast Regional Strategies identify the region's employment land requirements (NSW Department of Planning 2006 and 2009).

Our Services

Transport

The Northern Rivers region has frequently been described as a region of villages and transport is consistently identified by employers, residents and agencies working with job seekers as one of our region's key challenges.

Road transport infrastructure in our region has undergone significant upgrading with the continued extensions to the freeway connection between Sydney and Brisbane. Brisbane is now no more than 3 hours travel by road from anywhere in the region.

We have domestic airports at Lismore, Ballina and Grafton and the international and the recently upgraded international airport at Coolangatta. The main Sydney to Brisbane rail line passes through Grafton, Casino and Kyogle which carries freight and the XPT which services the area twice daily. Casino has been identified as a potential major intermodal terminal for the region, and the Australian Rail Track Corporation is making a significant investment into upgrading the Namoonah siding loop at Casino to enhance the railway infrastructure for the interstate network.

As with most rural and regional areas, the public transport system across the Northern Rivers is limited and residents are highly car dependent. With our growing and ageing population, integration of transport and land use planning across the region is critical if we are to improve our residents' access to employment, services and social networks. Our population is concentrated in coastal areas but as it continues to expand, the capacity of the hinterland to adequately accommodate a share of this growth will be directly linked to transport infrastructure capabilities.

Job seekers in our region are significantly impacted by the lack of public transport that matches the needs of workers, employers and job seekers in relation to schedules and routes. A significant number of low income workers and job seekers struggle with the costs associated with running a private vehicle and as a result, must rely on limited and often costly public transport services. Transport presents a significant issue for our Aboriginal communities on a range of levels from lack of transport, through licensing and fines related to driving offences.

Information Technology and Communication

Much of our region offers the same range of information technology and telecommunications amenities as any major metropolitan centre in Australia although rollout of broadband services across the entire region is not complete. In comparison to other lifestyle regions, the level of internet connection in the Northern Rivers is low (55% of the population compared to 65% and 57% for the Sunshine Coast and NSW Central Coast respectively). Of those utilising the internet, only 28% reported broadband connection compared to 40% in the Sunshine Coast and 35% for the NSW Central Coast.

While mobile phone coverage in our region continues to improve there remain areas that are not well serviced. If the Northern Rivers is to 'capture' a share of the emerging creative industries, a sector which is so reliant on strong information technology (IT) and telecommunications, improvements to this infrastructure must be a priority.

Education Profile

Our region is well serviced by a wide range of educational institutions, with a strong specialisation in education compared to non-metropolitan NSW. We have 52 High Schools, 176 Primary Schools, 9 campuses of the North Coast Institute of TAFE and 2 Campuses of the Southern Cross University. The University's main base is in Lismore and it has other sites at Coffs Harbour, the Gold Coast and Port Macquarie. This wide range of facilities is extended by a strong Adult and Community Education sector, 25 registered training organisations (including ACE and Job Training Networks) and up to 30 cultural educational organisations in the region that provide specialist training in the arts, crafts, theatre and film. There is also a range of alternative

and non-mainstream teaching in the area. The region has over 50,000 students enrolled in the diverse range of institutions. Students come from across the country to study at the many centres of excellence.

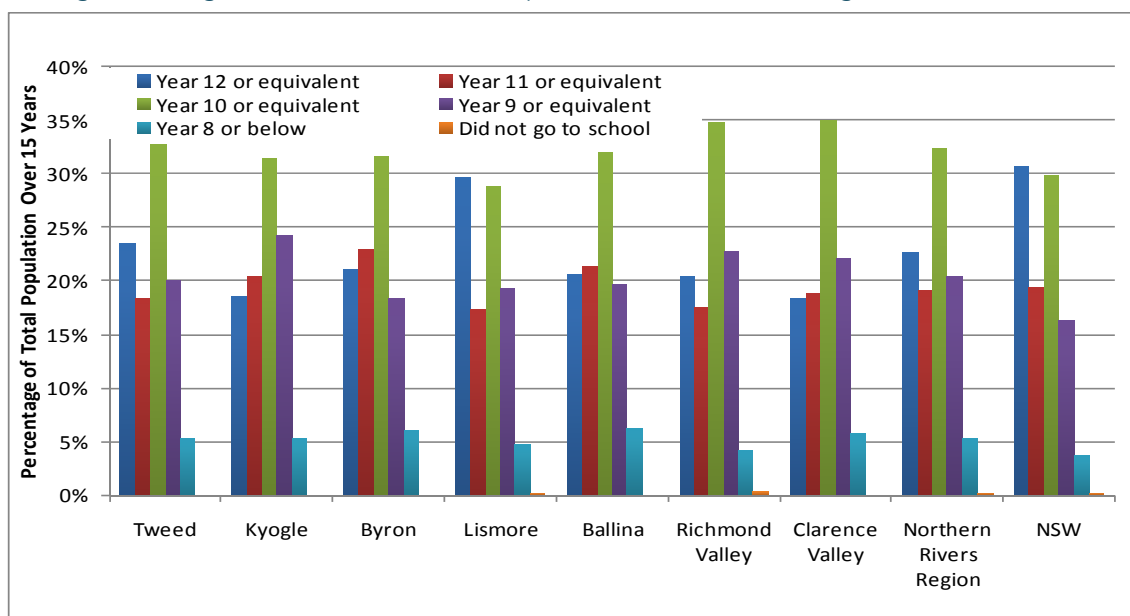
As one of Australia’s newest universities, Southern Cross has student enrolments exceeding 10,000 and claims a position as one of the leading post-graduate educational facilities in Australia, rating highly in research funding, distance education and industry partnerships. It has made a significant contribution to higher education in the Northern Rivers region, the broader Australian community and increasingly in the neighbouring countries of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

The North Coast Institute of TAFE works closely with education partners in both schools and universities. These links facilitate a diverse range of opportunities to structure educational qualifications. The Institute offers a wide range of high quality vocational courses with each campus offering specialist knowledge and training.

School Qualifications

The qualifications of residents 15 years and older¹⁴ in our region vary from those of NSW as a whole. Residents of NSW, on average, have higher school based qualifications than those of residents of the Northern Rivers region. Approximately 31% of NSW residents have completed Year 12 or equivalent and a further 30% have completed year 10 or equivalent.

Figure 13: Highest Level of School Completed, Northern Rivers Region and NSW – 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Approximately 32% of residents in the Northern Rivers have completed up to Year 10 or the equivalent in schooling. This is the most common school qualification of residents within Northern Rivers with only 22% of residents having completed Year 12 or equivalent. At a local level, more residents in Lismore (29%) have completed Year 12 or equivalent compared to other areas of our region. The school qualifications of Lismore residents are relatively similar to the NSW average.

Non-School Qualifications

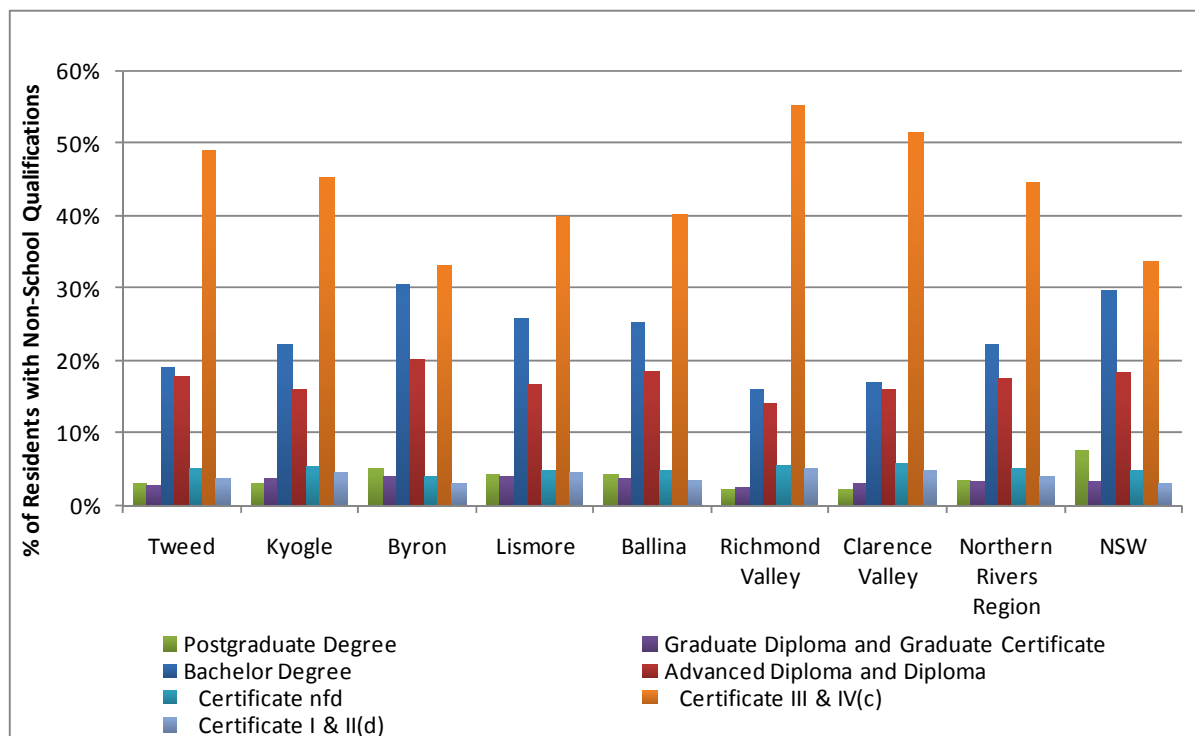
Our educational attainment is significantly lower than for NSW and Australia. The most prevalent non-school qualification held by our residents is a Certificate III and IV qualification. Approximately 45% of Northern Rivers’ residents hold this qualification. Approximately 22% of our residents hold a bachelor degree. For NSW

¹⁴ All references to residents in relation to educational qualifications refer to residents aged 15 years and older.

as a whole, 34% of residents hold Certificate III and IV qualifications and approximately 30% of residents hold a bachelor degree. In Australia, as a whole, around 35% of residents hold Certificate III and IV qualifications and approximately 29% hold a bachelor degree.

In our region there are 6.8% residents also hold advanced diplomas and diplomas compared to 10.1% for NSW as a whole. Given that future jobs growth will be influenced by levels of education, this is a key issue for our region to focus on.

Figure 14: Resident Non-School Qualifications, Northern Rivers Region and NSW, 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Health Profile

The main public provider of health services in our region is the North Coast Area Health Service (NCAHS). Services range from population health (health promotion, disease prevention, public health and screening) through to rehabilitation and palliative care. Movement out of our region for health services is largely to tertiary facilities in Sydney, Newcastle and Brisbane. However the area health service is increasing its provision of high level care, and reducing the need for our residents to travel to receive care out of the area.

The increase in population and ageing has resulted in a marked increase in activity across NCAHS resulting in a sustained rise in emergency department presentations and occupancy rates across acute services. Ageing of the population, recognition that hospital can be a stressful environment, particularly for older people, and the desire of patients and their families to be actively engaged in their health care present new challenges for delivery of health care services. Increasing demand has led to the development of new models of care including inpatient and community packages.

The NCAHS offers the following services:

- **Health Promotion** to develop public policy and structures through the provision of environmental, social, psychosocial and educational support systems to support wellbeing, reduce inequitable differences in health status between groups, and enable individuals and communities to make healthy choices.
- **Public Health Unit Services** which include environmental health, communicable diseases, immunisation and tobacco control with a focus on protection of the public, improvement in health status, and reduction in health inequities.

- **Acute Care, Primary and Community Health Services** covering the continuum of care from population health services, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. Delivery of care is provided through three interdependent elements of the service delivery system: Area-wide Clinical Streams, geographical Networks and Operating Units.
- **Public Hospitals.** The two major Non-Metropolitan Referral Hospitals in our region are at Tweed Heads and Lismore. Grafton Base Hospital is the only District Group 1 service, and there are four District Group 2 Hospitals located at Murwillumbah, Ballina, Casino and Maclean. There are four Community Acute Hospitals without Surgery located at Mullumbimby, Byron Bay, Bonalbo and Coraki. Multi-purpose services are located at Nimbin, Kyogle and Urbenville (NSW Health Information Resources Directory 2009).
- Riverland **Detoxification Unit** at Lismore Base Hospital.
- **Aboriginal Health Services and Programs**, with an emphasis on Aboriginal maternal and infant health, chronic care, otitis media and vascular health.
- **Community Health Services** which provide access to community nurses and services such as family counselling; nutrition and dietetics; aboriginal health; mental health; child and family health; domestic violence; drug and alcohol services; early childhood services; palliative care; physiotherapy; podiatry; social work; and speech therapy.

Table 10: Community Health Centres by LGA

Local Government Area	Community Health Centres
Clarence Valley	Grafton, Maclean, Iluka
Richmond Valley	Coraki, Casino, Evans Head
Kyogle	Kyogle, Bonalbo Urbenville - Tenterfield Shire
Lismore	Lismore, Nimbin, Goonellabah
Ballina	Ballina, Alstonville
Byron	Byron Bay, Bangalow, Mullumbimby
Tweed	Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah, Kingscliff

Source: <http://int.ncahs.nsw.gov.au/>

Recent developments to clinical services within the area include:

- new Integrated Cancer Care Centres at Lismore Base Hospital
- new Diagnostic Cardiology Unit will open at Lismore Base Hospital
- new 40 bed acute Adult Mental Health Unit at Lismore Base Hospital. This project added an additional 15 beds at Lismore
- eight bed Adolescent Mental Health Unit at Lismore
- redevelopment of Surgical Services and Emergency Department at Grafton Base Hospital
- establishment of a HealthOne Centre at Pottsville due to open in May 2011
- establishment of a Community Care Centre at Box Ridge Aboriginal community

Private hospitals are also located at Tugun (John Flynn Hospital) and Lismore (St Vincents). Private Day Surgery centres are located at Ballina, Tweed Heads and Lismore. Services available through the private providers include cardiac services, dental, dietetics, emergency care, endoscopy, ENT, gastroenterology, general medicine, general surgery, gynaecology, IVF services, maternity, maxillofacial, obstetrics, occupational therapy, ophthalmology, orthopaedics, paediatrics, pain management, palliative care, pathology, pharmacy, physiotherapy, plastic and reconstructive surgery, podiatry, psychology, radiology, rehabilitation, renal dialysis, speech pathology, urology vascular surgery and ultrasound.

In addition, NSW Health provides funding for a number of health programs to non-government organisations as summarised below.

Table 11: Non-Government Health Related Services in the NCAHS Region

Non Government Organisation	Program Area	Project
ABORIGINAL HEALTH		
Box Ridge Health Post	Aboriginal Health	Aboriginal Health Post
Dharah Gibinj AMS Core + Vascular Health	Aboriginal Health	Aboriginal Medical Service
Jali Health Post	Aboriginal Health	Aboriginal Health Post
Muli Health Post	Aboriginal Health	Aboriginal Health Post
DRUG AND ALCOHOL		
Buttery Drug Summit	Drug & Alcohol	National Drug Summit 3
Buttery MERIT	Drug & Alcohol	Magistrates Referral Into Treatment
Buttery National Drug Summit	Drug & Alcohol	National Drug Summit
Namatjira Haven MERIT	Drug & Alcohol	Magistrates Referral Into Treatment
VICTIMS OF CRIME		
Lismore Child & Adolescent Counselling Service	Victims of Crime	Sexual Assault Counselling
TRANSPORT		
Clarence Community Transport	Health Related Transport	Community Health Related Transport
Northern Rivers Community Transport	Health Related Transport	Community Health Related Transport
Tweed Ballina Byron Community Transport	Health Related Transport	Community Health Related Transport
PALLIATIVE CARE		
Community Programs Incorporated	Palliative Care	Volunteer Support Coordination
WOMENS HEALTH		
Lismore Women's Health Centre	Women's Health	Women's Health & Wellbeing, National Women's Health
Northern Rivers Social Development Council	Women's Health	Lismore & Kyogle Family Planning
MENTAL HEALTH		
Casino Neighbourhood Centre	Mental Health	LINKS
Child and Adolescent Specialist Program and Accommodation	Mental Health	Home Away From Home
Community Programs	Mental Health	Supportive Accommodation
GROW	Mental Health	Counselling
Lismore Women's Health Centre	Mental Health	Eating Disorders
On Track	Mental Health	Bay Ami Accommodation, Moomba Accommodation, Community Programs
HOUSING & ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT INITIATIVES (HASI)		
Mission Australia	Mental Health	HASI 2
New Horizons	Mental Health	HASI 4B (Flexible Support)
On Track	Mental Health	HASI 3A

Source: Population Health, Planning and Performance Directorate, North Coast Area Health Profile. North Coast Area Health Service, Lismore. Available at: <http://www.ncahs.nsw.gov.au/health-profile/>. Accessed (insert date of access).

Retirement and Aged Care Facilities

As noted earlier, the number of people over 65 years in our region is increasing dramatically. The Northern Rivers is an attractive destination for retirement and we have a significantly high proportion of people aged 65 years with a high projected growth rate (see Table 12). Along with this growth rate comes the increased prevalence and incidence of aged related disease.

Aged care services aim to provide an integrated system approach to encourage and support older members of our community to remain in their own home. These are supported by acute facilities, day centres, and a range of Primary and Community Health settings. Generally services are provided in collaboration with GPs, NGOs, Aboriginal Medical Services and other Government organisations.

Table 12: Projected number and proportion of residents aged 65yrs and over by LGA and Network, NCAHS 2006 to 2016

Network	LGA	2006		2011		2016	
		No	% of population	No	% of population	No	% of population
Tweed – Byron	Byron	3,577	11.6	4,137	12.5	5,279	14.9
	Tweed	18,044	21.7	20,782	22.6	24,875	24.6
	Total	21,621	19	24,919	19.9	30,154	22.1
Richmond	Ballina	7,718	19.1	8,603	19.9	10,149	22.0
	Kyogle	1,461	15.1	1,564	16.3	1,813	19.2
	Lismore	5,868	13.2	6,308	13.9	7,368	15.9
	Richmond Valley	3,866	17.4	4,291	18.8	4,971	21.1
	Total	18,913	16.2	20,765	17.2	24,301	19.4
Clarence Valley	Clarence Valley	9,461	18.8	11,124	21.4	13,290	24.8

Source: ABS estimated resident populations and NSW Health Population Projection Series 1, 2009 - ASGC 2006 (HOIST)

A survey of facilities in late 2009 identified a total of 68 services in the region providing 2,672 beds and 1,693 independent living facilities. In a number of locations these services have been constructed in flood prone areas and present a unique challenge for emergency services if evacuation is required.

Table 13: Aged Care Services in the Northern Rivers – 2009

LGA	No. Facilities	High Care Beds	Low Care Beds	Respite Beds	Dementia Beds	Total Care Beds	Independent Living Units
Tweed	23	430	467	9	35	941	1,046
Byron	6	106	123			229	65
Ballina	9	136	261		15	412	300
Kyogle	3	9	46			55	
Lismore	9	252	149	1	13	415	8
Richmond Valley	6	98	97			195	
Clarence Valley	12	206	201		18	425	274
Northern Rivers	68	1,237	1,344	10	81	2,672	1,693

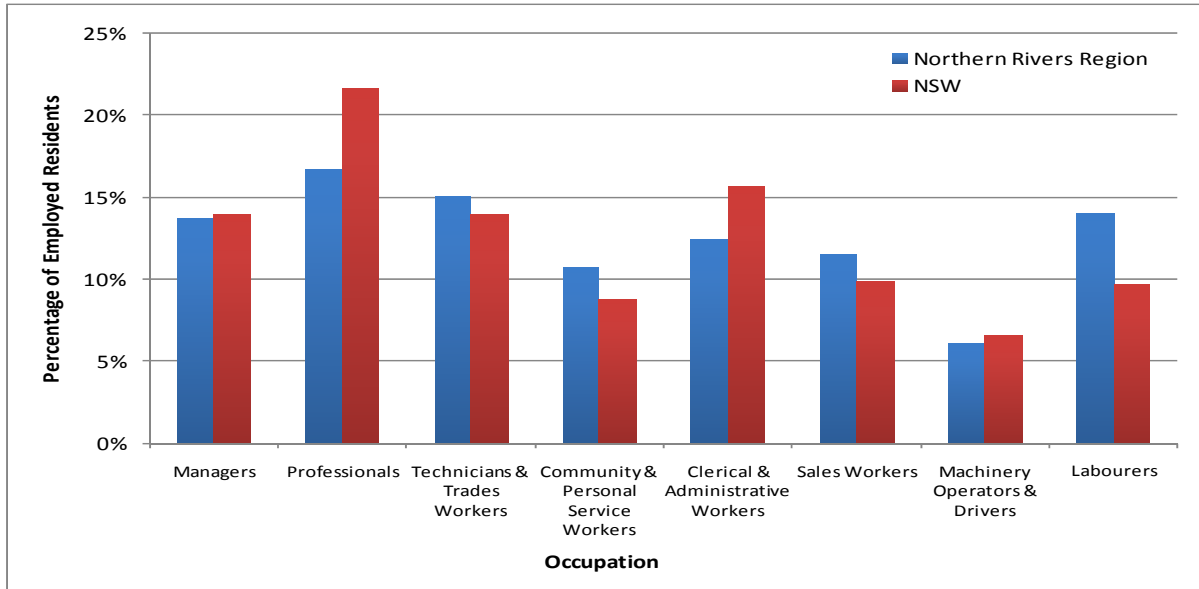
Note that dementia and respite beds are not always specified. In some facilities low and high care bed numbers are not separated – all beds have been included in the low care numbers, so it is likely that there is a higher number of high care beds than specified.
Source: www.rdanorthernrivers.org.au

Our Economy - Economic Profile

Employment Sectors

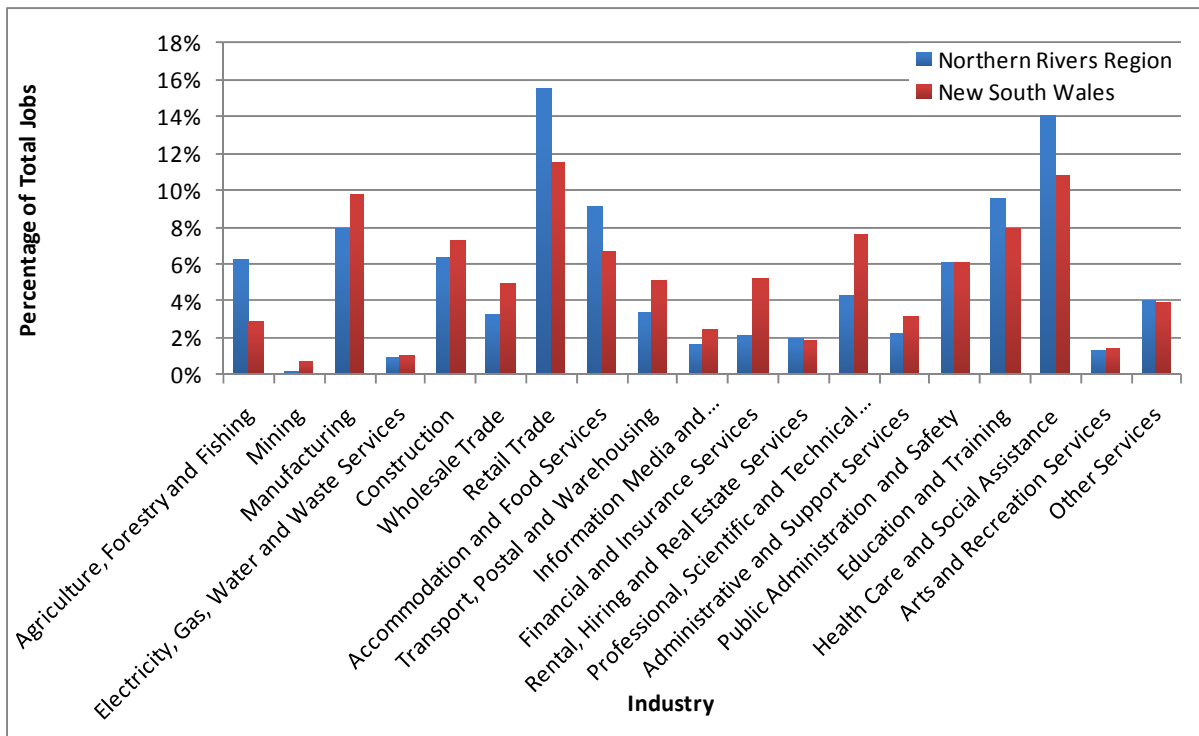
As noted earlier, our economy is characterised by low participation rates, high unemployment and high levels of casualisation and under-employment. Our region has a higher proportion of blue collar workers compared to NSW as a whole. The majority of employment in our region is in a professional capacity (17% of employed residents). This is followed by technicians and trades workers, making up 15% our employees compared to 14% for NSW. Labourers were the next largest cohort with 14% in the Northern Rivers and 10% for NSW.

Figure 15: Resident Employment by Occupation, Northern Rivers and NSW – 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006

Figure 16: Employment by Industry, Northern Rivers and NSW – 2006



Source: ABS Journey to Work Data, 2006

The most significant industry for employment in our region is retail trade, with 16% of all jobs. Other significant employers in the region include health care & social assistance (14%) and education & training (10%), construction (9%), accommodation & food services (9%) and manufacturing (8%).

Table 14 profiles the number of jobs in our region by industry sector compared to NSW as a whole. They also show the share of jobs that each industry category provides as a proportion of the total number of jobs. The proportional representation is then compared to that for NSW as a whole to derive a location quotient (or LQ) for each industry sector. Those industries with a location quotient greater than 1.0, having a greater representation in the Northern Rivers **compared to NSW as a whole**, are considered 'specialised' industries as they employ relatively high proportions of workers relative to the NSW average (i.e. an LQ of greater than 1.0 indicates a relative specialisation). These are the sectors where we have a competitive advantage.

Table 14: Employment by Industry, Northern Rivers Region and NSW, 2006

Industry Sector	Northern Rivers		NSW		Location Quotient
	No.	%	No.	%	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5,565	6	77,239	3	2.23
Mining	141	0	19,271	1	0.23
Manufacturing	7,020	8	268,726	10	0.81
Electricity, gas, water & waste services	809	1	28,767	1	0.87
Construction	5,656	6	198,910	7	0.88
Wholesale trade	2,924	3	134,233	5	0.67
Retail trade	13,784	16	315,440	11	1.35
Accommodation & food services	8,074	9	183,611	7	1.36
Transport, postal & warehousing	3,019	3	139,992	5	0.67
Information media & telecommunications	1,402	2	67,550	2	0.64
Financial & insurance services	1,901	2	143,699	5	0.41
Rental, hiring & real estate services	1,736	2	49,943	2	1.08
Professional, scientific & technical services	3,784	4	209,002	8	0.56
Administrative & support services	1,966	2	86,607	3	0.70
Public administration & safety	5,344	6	166,733	6	0.99
Education & training	8,452	10	216,146	8	1.21
Health care & social assistance	12,447	14	296,228	11	1.30
Arts & recreation services	1,190	1	38,427	1	0.96
Other services	3,526	4	107,474	4	1.02
TOTAL	88,741		2,748,398		

Source: ABS Journey to Work Data, 2006; SGS Economics and Planning, 2009

The industry sector for which the Northern Rivers has a strong specialisation relative to NSW as a whole is agriculture, forestry and fishing. This is not surprising given our coastal position and strong agricultural base. Reinforcing the strong tourism market is a relative specialisation in accommodation and food services and retail trade. The region also has well established health care and education infrastructure with a relative specialisation in these sectors.

The age of the population in our region also has strong implications for the workforce. Research shows that, rather than retirement being a 'single point in time', it is a transitional arrangement whereby people begin to wind down from full time employment to casual employment as they get older. This provides a pool of workers looking for part time work.

Local Employment Trends

The Tweed has been undergoing significant employment transition over the past two decades from its traditional agricultural base including dairy, beef cattle, bananas and sugar to high levels of employment in health and community services, tourism and hospitality, education, retail and construction. Some light manufacturing in the boat building and food processing industries over recent years and significant property

development in Tweed Heads and along the Tweed Coast have provided employment in the construction sector. High levels of employment in the retail, construction and tourism and hospitality industries, dictates that the rate of employment fluctuates with the seasons.

In Lismore, the largest employers are Southern Cross University, Lismore City Council and the health industry through Lismore Base Hospital and St Vincent's Private Hospital. A variety of smaller employers service the surrounding rural areas. While the rate of youth migration out of the smaller communities in the area is high, Southern Cross University at Lismore creates an anomaly to that trend, bringing in large numbers of students from throughout NSW and beyond.

Casino is a rural service centre with the majority of employment centred on services for the local beef, timber and feed crop industries. It is the home of our region's largest employer, the Northern Co-operative Meat Company. Kyogle has a similar employment profile, with cattle grazing, dairy farming and forestry as the main employers.

Key employment industries for the Clarence Valley are retail, health care and social assistance, manufacturing, public administration, accommodation and food services, agriculture forestry and fishing, construction and education and training. The employment base is seasonally affected with high casual and part time in retail, tourism and agricultural industries.

Byron Bay being a major tourism draw card to the area is heavily reliant on tourism, retail and hospitality. Employment numbers vary due to seasonality.

Employment in Ballina reflects the demographic profile, with a strong focus on retail, health and community services, education, tourism, construction and property development.

Recent Industry Trends

Between 2001 to 2006 there has been a decline in the proportion of jobs in our region supported by agriculture, forestry & fishing and the industrial sector (i.e. manufacturing, wholesale trade, transport and storage and communication services). There has been a marginal increase in commercial sector jobs (i.e. property & business services and finance & insurance), as well as in the education industry during this period. Additionally, strong growth was seen in the health and community service sector.

There has been significant employment growth in the following sectors in the 5 years from 2001 to 2006:

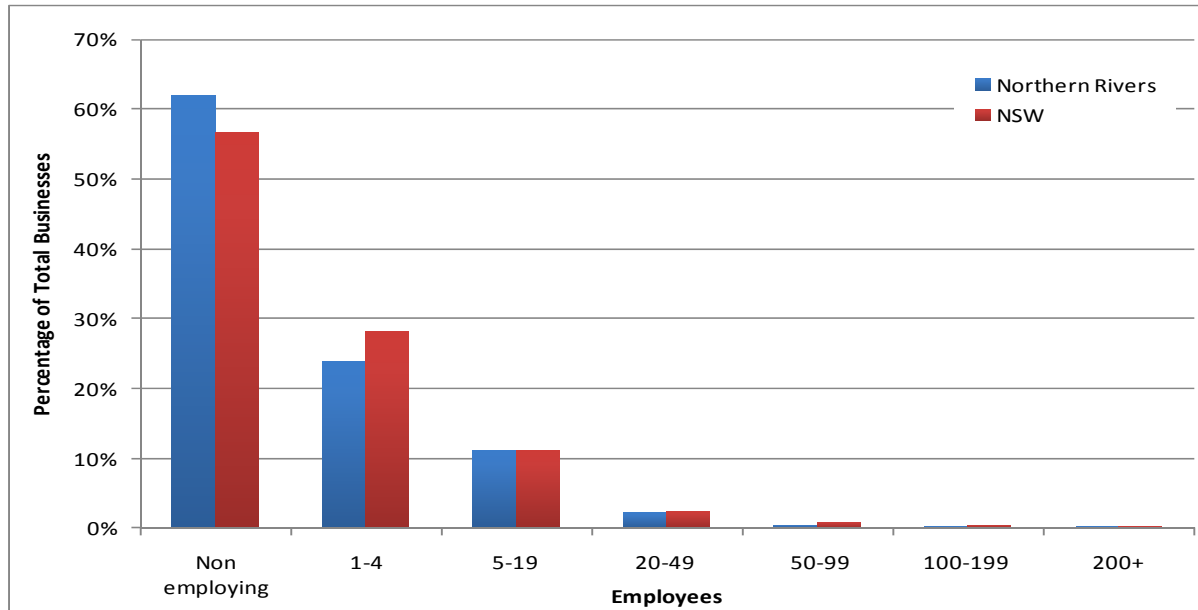
- 6.8% increase in construction;
- 5.0% in health and community services;
- 3.4% in finance and insurance; and
- 2.5% in the creative industries.

Business Profile

Our region is characterised by small businesses. According to the June 2007 data from the ABS Business Counts, our region contains a large amount of non-employing¹⁵ businesses when compared to NSW as a whole. Non-employing businesses make up 62% of all businesses in the Northern Rivers (15,333 businesses) with the remainder employing 1 or more persons. In addition, our region generally contains fewer businesses in each employment size bracket compared to NSW as whole. In terms of a percentage breakdown of employing businesses, 24% of businesses in the Northern Rivers region employ between 1 and 4 employees, 11% employ between 5 and 19 employees, and 4% employ 20 or more persons.

¹⁵ An employing business is defined as an owner of a business employing one or more workers to undertake work for that business whereas non-employing businesses are those for which the owner or owning family are the sole operators of that business.

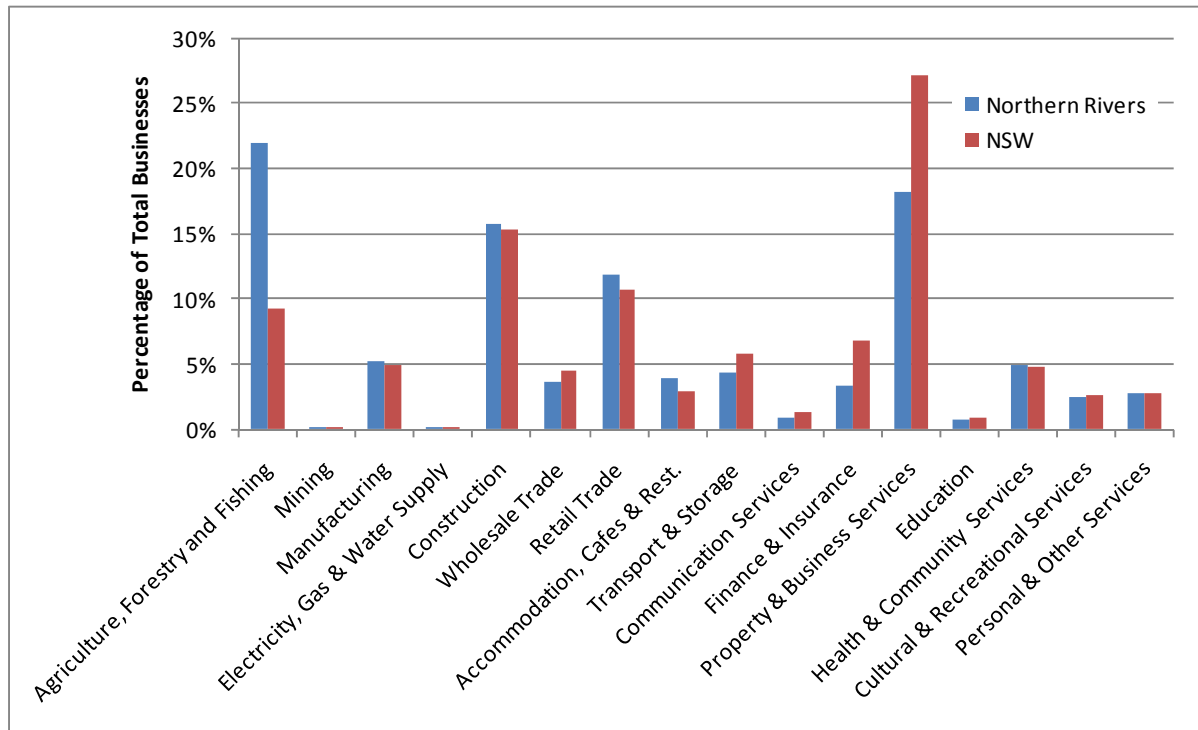
Figure 17: Businesses by Employment Size, Northern Rivers and NSW, 2007



Source: Counts of Australian Businesses, Entries and Exits, 2007

Agriculture, forestry and fishing is the largest industry sector for the Northern Rivers region in terms of business numbers at 5,421 or 22% of all businesses, followed by property and business services at 4,506 or 18% and construction at 3,903 (16% of total Northern Rivers businesses).

Figure 18: Businesses by Industry Sector, Northern Rivers and NSW, 2007



Source: Counts of Australian Businesses, Entries and Exits¹⁶, 2007

¹⁶ The data in the Counts of Australian Businesses is derived from actively trading businesses determined by the ABNs maintained by the Australian Tax Office and the Trading Activity Units (TAUs) maintained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Counts do not include entities which are not considered to be actively trading in the market sector and as such are not considered to be businesses. General Government is one of the excluded categories and this impacts on data for Education and Health and Community Services.

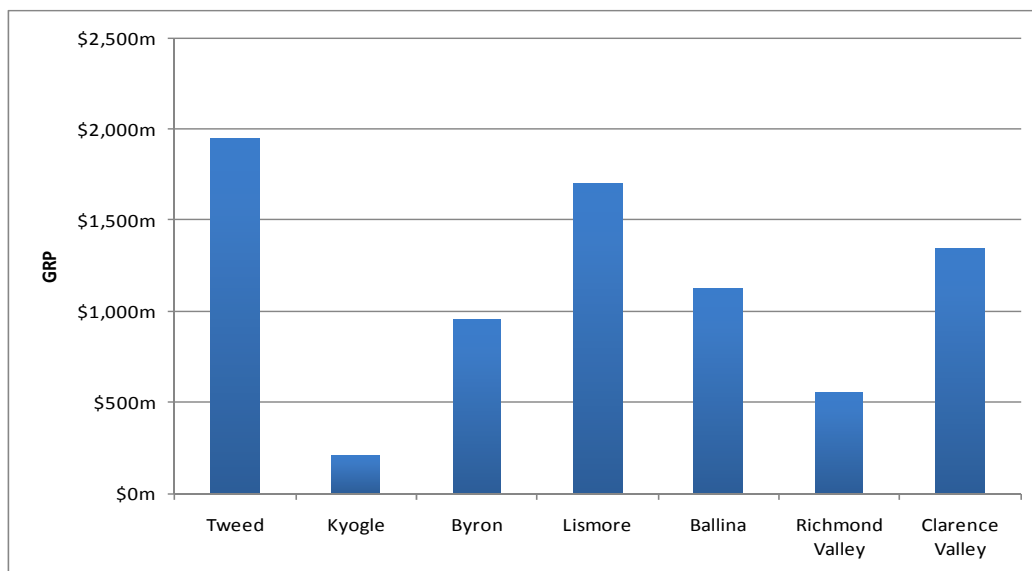
For a relatively small number of businesses, the ABN unit is not suitable for ABS economic statistics purposes and the ABS maintains direct contact with businesses. These businesses constitute the ABSMP. This population consists typically of large, complex and diverse groups of businesses. A type of activity unit (TAU) equates to one business. The TAU is comprised of one or more business entities, sub-entities or branches of a business entity within an enterprise group that can report production and employment data for similar economic activities.

The most common turnover value for any business in our region is between \$200,000 and \$500,000 per annum (4,467 businesses which is 18% of total businesses in Northern Rivers). The Northern Rivers has a larger proportion of smaller businesses, in terms of turnover size, compared to NSW as a whole.

Gross Regional Product

The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of our region is estimated at \$7.8 billion for the 2008 financial year. Of the total GRP for the Northern Rivers, the Tweed local government area has the largest share, with around one quarter (\$1.95 billion). Lismore generates the second biggest share with 22% (\$1.7 billion). Kyogle contributes the least to the region's GRP, that being approximately \$200 million.

Figure 19: Estimated Gross Regional Product (2008 \$), Northern Rivers LGAs, 2008



Source: ABS State Accounts, ABS Labour Force Survey & ABS Journey to Work Data, 2006

The largest industry contribution to the region's GRP is generated in health and community services (\$1.15 billion or 15% of total GRP). The next largest contributions come from retail trade (\$880 million or 11%) and property and business services (\$750 million or 10%).

Table 15: Industry Contribution to GRP, Northern Rivers Region, 2008

Industry Sector	Northern Rivers GRP (\$ 2008)	Northern Rivers % GRP
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	\$281m	4%
Mining	\$0m	0%
Manufacturing	\$725m	9%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	\$79m	1%
Construction	\$555m	7%
Wholesale Trade	\$542m	7%
Retail Trade	\$879m	11%
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	\$397m	5%
Transport and Storage	\$366m	5%
Communication Services	\$125m	2%
Finance and Insurance	\$445m	6%
Property and Business Services	\$750m	10%
Government Administration and Defence	\$482m	6%
Education	\$701m	9%
Health and Community Services	\$1,153m	15%
Cultural and Recreational Services	\$140m	2%
Personal and Other Services	\$223m	3%
Total	\$7,843m	

Source: ABS State Accounts, ABS Labour Force Survey & ABS Journey to Work Data, 2006

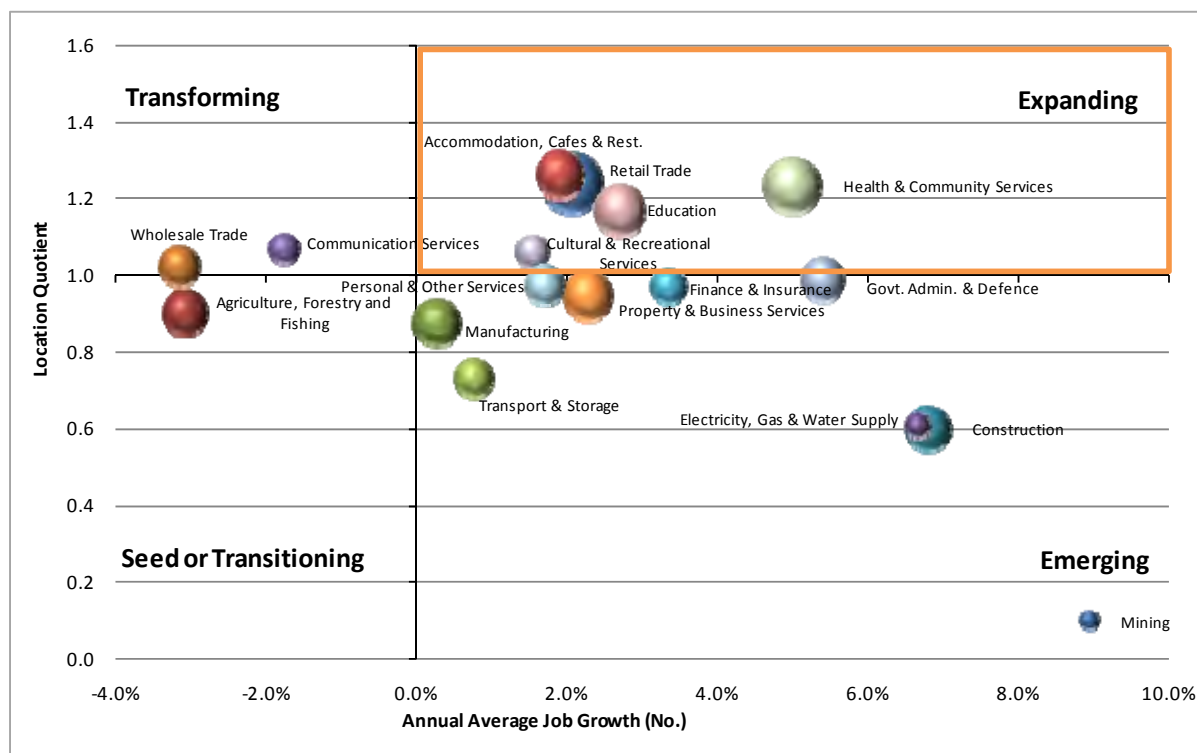
It is interesting to note the significant contribution made by the education industry, with \$700 million of the region's GRP (or 9% of the total industry contribution), reflective of the relative strength of the education industry in our region.

Industry Growth and Share

To understand our industry sectors and how they are performing, we can compare each sector's positioning by considering relative size, growth and employment share. The industry growth share matrix below is divided into quadrants, each quadrant defining the stage of lifecycle for the industry. It highlights how each of our industry sectors (as defined by the ABS's 1-digit ANZSIC 93 classifications) differs from the rest of non-metropolitan NSW and where in their economic lifecycle each industry is. Stages in the lifecycle are illustrated in the growth share matrix as follows:

- **Expanding Stage:** If in the top right quadrant (high average annual growth/higher than non-metropolitan NSW average concentration – as defined by the industry's location quotient). This is excellent news, implying a strong, adaptive industry sector.
- **Emerging Stage:** If in the lower right quadrant (high average annual growth/below non-metropolitan NSW average concentration), this is also good news, implying an emerging, growing industry that may need some assistance to mature.
- **Transforming Stage:** If in the upper left quadrant (lower than average annual growth/above non-metropolitan NSW average concentration), this is not good news, implying the industry is at risk (overall) and needing to increase innovation and productivity to compete with other regions.
- **Seed or Transitioning Stage:** If in the lower left quadrant (lower than average annual growth/lower than non-metropolitan NSW average concentration), this could be bad news, implying that the industry is neither developed nor growing in the region. It could also mean that the 'seed' industry has some potential for growth.

Figure 20: Growth Share Matrix, Northern Rivers Region, 2001 - 2006



Source: ABS Journey to Work Data, 2001 and 2006

As shown in the figure above, the dominant industry sectors of the Northern Rivers - those that are growing and which demonstrate a high level of specialisation in the Northern Rivers relative to the non-metropolitan NSW whole and which drive the region's economic prosperity include:

- health & community services;
- education;
- accommodation, cafes & restaurants;
- retail trade; and
- cultural and recreational services.

The region also has some emerging or potential new drivers of prosperity - those industries that are expanding - which include:

- construction;
- finance and insurance; and
- property & business services.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector represents what could be considered a 'transitioning' industry due to the lack of growth in employment. Despite this, the horticultural industries are an important contributor to our regional economy, and are relatively specialised in the area along with forestry and fishing. It is the other agricultural industries which are not as well represented in the area, and it is important that this does not drive away support for this sector as it plays an important role in the region.

Whilst property and business services and finance and insurance currently represent lower shares in industry employment in the Northern Rivers compared to non-Metropolitan NSW, these industries are nevertheless on a strong growth trajectory, growing by 12% and 18% respectively between 2001 and 2006. This should not discount the continuing importance of our traditional economic drivers.

The Employment Challenge – 2027

As a means of assisting planning for sustainable economic development, an analysis of the likely 'employment challenge' facing the Northern Rivers region has been undertaken in preparing the 2009 Regional Industry & Economic Plan Update. This analysis is based on the following key parameters:

- The Northern Rivers region's **future population** and the forecast rate at which it will grow. Our region is expected to have approximately 359,720 people by the year 2027 (currently 229,000).
- Our **labour force participation** rate (currently 52%) and how it will change as the economy of the Northern Rivers region matures. Despite an ageing population, our region is likely to continue to mature and broaden its economic base in the future and thus, a labour force participation rate of 60% has been adopted as the basis of the preferred 2027 scenario. This means we want to increase the level of participation in the labour force of our working age population.
- The **unemployment rate** – what is a reasonable target given the likely make-up of the region's population and the economy in the future? This analysis has adopted 6.5% as reasonable target for unemployment into the future.
- The level of **employment self-sufficiency** (i.e. jobs located in the Northern Rivers region as a proportion of residents employed). Currently, the Northern Rivers region has a reasonably high employment self-sufficiency rate of 86%, although this has decreased from 88% since 2005. Our region should aspire to retain this target. Consequently the employment self-sufficiency target has been set at 88%.

- The **split between jobs driven by population growth and jobs in the ‘driver’ sectors** of the Northern Rivers regional economy¹⁷. Given the aim to develop / maintain a diverse and robust economy for the region over the next two decades the Northern Rivers economy is likely to develop into a more mature economy. Hence a split of 73% from population and construction combined and 27% from the basic or export sectors have been utilised in estimating the jobs challenge for our region.

As explained above, the number of jobs required for the future increase in regional population will be broadly in two categories – jobs that are driven by population growth and jobs that will come from enterprise and export-oriented growth.

Based on the assumptions / parameters that have been applied, the jobs challenge for the Northern Rivers region over the next 20 years is significant.

Based on the region’s projected population levels in 2027, as per the ABS’s forecasts on behalf of the Department of Health, it is estimated that the region will require approximately 148,000 jobs to be provided by this time. To achieve labour force participation rate of 60% and limit the unemployment rate to 6.5%, whilst achieving the 88% self-sufficiency rate for the region in the previous study and maximising the ratio of population versus export driven employment, a total of **59,250 new jobs** will need to be provided.

Of these 59,250 new jobs, it is anticipated that approximately **43,250 jobs** will occur naturally as a direct result of population growth (e.g. natural employment growth in sectors such as retail, household services, personal services, etc).

The balance of new jobs required in the region, some **16,000 full time positions**, will need to come from growth in enterprises that are essentially export based and thus driven by markets external to the Northern Rivers region. Over 21 years (2006 – 2027), this represents on average the need for about 760 jobs each and every year.

In essence the facilitation of these 16,000 jobs (or 760 jobs per annum) represents the Northern Rivers employment challenge.

¹⁷ In any given area population will drive the provision of the majority of jobs required by the workforce. In a growing region, about 68% of jobs come from the population driven sectors (e.g. education, retail, household services, personal services, etc.) and about 7% from the construction sector. The balance is in exporting sectors (25% of jobs). As the region matures and diversity increases, these proportions change with the construction sector dropping back to around 5% and the exporting sectors increasing to around 27%.

Environmental Profile

Our region is one of the most biodiverse areas in Australia. We also have one of the most fragmented natural landscapes, so our small areas of native vegetation are extremely important.

Two distinct environments exist within our region, the coastal environment and the eastern slopes. The river, estuaries and coastal ecosystems of the coastal zone are particularly sensitive to the impact of urbanisation and economic growth. The catchment's major rivers are the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond and Clarence.

Cultural Heritage

The heritage values of our region reflect the geographic, historic and social influences that have shaped its settlement and development. The estuaries, river valleys and coast have provided a significant influence on Aboriginal settlement. Coastal land, estuaries and marine resources were, and still are, of major economic, spiritual and cultural importance to Aboriginal communities. The subsequent subdivision and development of land in our region has impacted on Aboriginal communities, affecting their lifestyle and settlement and the ability to conduct traditional activities. Despite this, our region is rich in cultural value, with many places and objects of spiritual, historical and social significance known to exist (NSW Department of Planning Far North and Mid North Coast Regional Strategies 2006 and 2009).

The important cultural significance of many of the landscape features within the region are now known by European names. However, these features had been identified by the Aboriginal people. Wollumbin, which means 'cloud catcher' was 'renamed' Mount Warning by the white settlers. There is now compelling evidence of the Aboriginal recognition of major features.

The first Europeans to settle in our region were cedar-getters followed by graziers and crop farmers. The rich volcanic soils and sub-tropical climatic conditions attributed to the success of these ventures. The new activities such as specialised horticulture, alternative lifestyle and urban development caters for the needs of more recent settlers, retirees and tourists which are now the major land uses.

Biodiversity

Our region is one of Australia's most diverse areas - and it is *the* most biologically diverse area in New South Wales and southern Queensland. It is the third most bio-diverse region in Australia with 380 species, 5 populations and 13 communities listed as endangered or vulnerable under the *NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. We have a variety of significant habitats: subtropical rainforest, wet sclerophyll forest, mountain headlands, rocky outcrops and transition zones between forests. Our region is also home to a number of significant sites including the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (CERRA) World Heritage Area (Gondwana Rainforests of Australia), Ramsar Wetlands and a number of nationally important wetlands. Two Interim Biographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) Bioregions occur here including most of the North Coast bioregion and the eastern interface of the New England Tablelands bioregion.

These habitats support a huge variety of bird and macropod species. Many are rare or threatened: the Richmond Bird-wing Butterfly, Fleay's Frog, Hastings River Mouse, Long-nosed Potoroo, Spotted-tailed Quoll, Eastern Bristle Bird, Rufous Scrub-bird and the critically endangered Coxen's Fig parrot.

Historically, vast areas of our region have been cleared for agriculture, particularly on the alluvial floodplains and the tablelands. Timber harvesting has also occurred through much of the mid-slopes and ranges. The region's current high population growth, with associated urban and tourist developments particularly along the coastal fringe, is a major cause of continued habitat loss and fragmentation. While some 22% of the region is within protected areas (i.e. national parks and nature reserves), not all vegetation communities or habitat types are well represented and for some threatened species, like the Koala, significant habitat occurs on private lands.

The Northern Rivers also includes the NSW component of the Border Ranges biodiversity hotspot, a nationally recognised region that supports largely intact natural ecosystems where native species and communities associated with rainforest ecosystems are well represented.

National Parks, World Heritage Areas

The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia cover only about 0.3 % of Australia, but they contain about half of all Australian plant families and about a third of Australia's mammal and bird species, have an extremely high conservation value and provide habitat for more than 200 rare or threatened plant and animal species. The parks and reserves making up this World Heritage Area are variously comprised of five major recognised rainforest types, and include some of the few remaining stands of old growth (undisturbed) forest in NSW. The balance is made up of large remnant pockets and regrowth areas of rainforest which were able to meet the criteria for World Heritage listing. There are now more than 50 World Heritage listed national parks, flora reserves and nature reserves stretching in a broken series of properties of various rainforest types, for more than 500 kilometres, from Boonah in QLD, just north of the border with NSW, to Gloucester in the NSW Hunter region, less than 300 km north of Sydney. The total area is 366,507 hectares; with 59,223 hectares in Qld and 307,284 in NSW.

National Parks

Park Name	Locality
Arakwal National Park	Lismore
Border Ranges National Park	Kyogle
Broadwater National Park	Lismore
Bundjalung National Park	Lismore
Burleigh Heads National Park	Burleigh Heads
Cape Byron Marine Park	Byron Bay
Koreelah National Park	Kyogle
Lennox Head Aboriginal Area	Lismore
Mallanganee National Park	Kyogle
Mebbin National Park	Murwillumbah
Mooball National Park	Murwillumbah
Mount Jerusalem National Park	Lismore
Mount Warning National Park	Murwillumbah
Nightcap National Park	Lismore
Richmond Range National Park	Kyogle
Toooloom Falls Aboriginal Place	Kyogle
Toooloom National Park	Kyogle
Toonumbar National Park	Kyogle
Tweed Heads Historic Site (Minjungbul)	Murwillumbah
Wollumbin National Park and State Conservation Area	Murwillumbah

Nature Reserves and Wildlife Refuges

Some Nature Reserves and Wildlife Refuges are on private properties where the owners have made agreements with NPWS, or are local council reserves managed with assistance from the local community.

Name	Locality
Boatharbour Nature Reserve	Lismore
Broken Head Nature Reserve	Lismore
Brunswick Heads Nature Reserve	Lismore
Brunswick Valley Heritage Park	Mullumbimby
Cape Byron State Conservation Area	Byron Bay
Cudgen Nature Reserve	Murwillumbah
Iluka Nature Reserve	Grafton
Julian Rocks Nature Reserve	Lismore
Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens Inc	Tintenbar

Moore Park Nature Reserve	Kyogle
Richmond River Nature Reserve	Lismore
Tucki Tucki Nature Reserve	Lismore
Tweed Bicentennial Environmental Park	Pottsville
Tyagarah Nature Reserve	Lismore
Victoria Park Nature Reserve	Lismore
Whian Whian State Conservation Area	Lismore
Wilson Nature Reserve	Lismore

State Forests and Flora Reserves

Name	Locality
Big Scrub Flora Reserve	Casino
Black Scrub Flora Reserve	Casino
Boogarem Falls Flora Reserve	Casino
Boomerang Falls Flora Reserve	Casino
Forty Spur Flora Reserve	Casino
Goonengerry State Forest	Casino
Ironbark Grove Flora Reserve	Casino
Minyon Falls Flora Reserve	Casino
Whian Whian State Conservation Area	Casino

The forests of our region are also a significant asset managed for timber production, biodiversity conservation, recreation and other purposes. Substantial native forests are located on both private and public lands in the catchment, and a private forest plantation industry has been rapidly growing since the late 1990s (NNSW Forestry Service, 2005).

Water Resources

Our region is supplied with water from numerous sources administered through various authorities. Tweed Shire Council administers water from the Clarrie Hall Dam on the Tweed River. Rous Water supplies the majority of the towns and villages in and around Lismore, Ballina, Byron and the lower Richmond Valley via Rocky Creek Dam, Emigrant Creek Dam and groundwater from the Alstonville Plateau. A supplementary source is now provided by extractions from high flow periods in the Wilson River. Kyogle and Casino have separate water schemes supplied from the Richmond River. Wardell is supplied from Marom Creek, Nimbin from Mulgum Creek, with Mullumbimby supplied from Wilson's Creek, which is within the Brunswick River catchment. Urban water supplies for the Clarence are adequate to meet expected demand to 2031 following the completion of the Shannon Creek Dam and the filling of the new Cowarra Dam. The Clarence River alone discharges approximately 3.7 million megalitres each year, the highest of all the State's coastal rivers.

Councils are developing Integrated Water Cycle Management Plans to reduce water extraction from rivers and groundwater through demand management strategies, recycling effluent for reuse and managing stormwater runoff. These measures, in addition to other council and community initiatives, will lead to improvements in water quality throughout our waterways, especially within town water supply catchments.

Dual use reticulation systems are now being incorporated into some new residential release areas. In addition, all new houses must comply with the targets set by BASIX for reducing water and energy consumption in NSW. These demand management and reuse options along with the new Wilson River source indicates there will be sufficient water to meet population forecasts in the medium term. There is a need, however, given the lead time for major infrastructure planning and approval, to consider long term supply adequacy and security in light of regional population projections. State government agencies, in conjunction with local water supply authorities, will review future supply options to ensure long term regional water efficiencies and improved drought security, and this is currently a priority for Tweed Council and Rous Water.

The NSW Government is determining environmental flow and water access rules for both surface and groundwater through the macro water-sharing process. The major use of water from the unregulated rivers in the region is for town water supplies and irrigation. Consequently, within this planning process it is acknowledged that towns have a higher priority for access to water. These macro water plans will recognise this priority by ensuring that a full share of water is allocated for annual urban water supplies, except where exceptional drought conditions prevent this (NSW Department of Planning Far North and Mid North Coast Regional Strategies 2006 and 2009).

Changes in rainfall and higher evaporation rates are likely to lead to less water for streams and rivers in our catchments, which will have downstream consequences for storages and water resources. However, given increases in extreme rainfall events that periodically deliver large volumes to storages, the effects of long-term reductions in average rainfall on storages may be moderate. Water storages in our region are currently relatively secure (CSIRO 2007).

Energy Resources

Energy generation is undertaken by private companies and State owned corporations. Transgrid, which is owned by the NSW Government, operates the high voltage transmission network while the supply of energy to customers is the responsibility of Country Energy. The identification of substantial coal seam gas reserves provides the opportunity for the development of a local energy industry, and local power generation.

Electricity: Country Energy has a Bulk Supply Point located at South Casino and has identified the future need for a North Casino Zone Substation with preliminary planning for this investment currently underway. Existing TransGrid feeder lines to Casino stem from: 66 kV line 0893 – Lismore – Casino. 132 kV line 96L Tenterfield – Casino – Lismore. Planned upgrades to the above are: Dumaresq – Lismore 330 kV Line contemplated for late 2011 with the additional construction of a new 2.330 kV line between Lismore and Casino.

Gas: Metgasco Limited is a petroleum exploration company that is a major interest party and operator in the Petroleum Exploration Leases in our region. The PEL 16 area alone, that includes Casino and surrounds, covers a gross area of 830km² with proven and probable reserves of coal seam gas currently at 247 PJ (net) with a possible reserve of 1,389 PJ (net). Metgasco has recently had a 30 MW coal seam methane power station proposal at Casino approved. Metgasco is also seeking NSW Planning approval to construct an \$80 million pipeline from Casino to Swanbank gas-fired power station near Ipswich. This pipeline will carry 18 petajoules, or 5,000 GWh, of gas per year. As a baseload power station this would be equivalent to 57 MW (NSW Environmental Defenders Office [EDO] Northern Rivers 2009). In December 2009, Metgasco announced a much larger natural gas discovery under Casino.

Other: There are also two new cogeneration plants producing electricity for the network from the Broadwater and Condong sugar mills. There appears to have been a higher than average uptake of rebates for domestic solar power and solar hot water systems on the Northern Rivers. (pers comm.: NSW EDO, Byrne, M 2010).

Other major new low carbon energy supplies on the north coast are likely to come from bioenergy and wave energy (North Coast Energy Forum, 2010) and a recent CSIRO study has found that "10 per cent of the energy produced in waves near the shore along the southern coast would be enough to meet half of the country's present-day electricity needs". Whilst this study didn't include the north coast, at least one company has already shown interest.

Following the North Coast Energy Forum held in Bellingen in June 2010 there is a strong movement to develop a regional energy strategy for the north coast. In conjunction with various government bodies, NGO's and Sustain Northern Rivers (SNR), a first step is to research regional energy strategies in other countries.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In 1990 Australia had total greenhouse emissions of 544 million tonnes. Currently Australian per capita emissions are about 26 tonnes each year, one of the highest in the world. The Kyoto target for Australia of 108% of 1990 emissions will amount to annual average emissions of approximately 587 million tonnes between 2008-2012. The 2002 National Greenhouse Inventory (the most recent incorporating Australian States and Territories data) shows total national greenhouse gas emissions of 537 million tonnes in that year. At this time Australia is on target to meet the 108% target set under the Kyoto Protocol (Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme 2007).

It has been estimated that a third of greenhouse gas emissions result from electricity generation. With the region's current population of 292,000, this means that emissions attributable to the region's electricity consumption are around 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, just under 1 % of the total greenhouse emissions in NSW per year. A projected increase in demand of 46% by 2017 would see total emissions attributable to electricity generation by the regional population rise by nearly 700,000 tonnes per year. If this projected increase was met in equal proportions from gas and renewable sources, it could result in a decrease in emissions of around 525,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year by 2017 (pers comm; NSW EDO Northern Rivers, 2009).

The Australian Government has a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 8% above 1990 levels by 2010. The Cities for Climate Protection Australia program was established to assist local governments and their communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions. All of the Northern Rivers Councils have commenced the Cities for Climate Protection Program¹⁸ and are at varying stages of addressing this challenge.

¹⁸ The Cities for Climate Protection Program (CCP) was developed by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI A/NZ) and is delivered in Australia in collaboration with the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO). The objective is to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions at the local government level on an international scale. On a worldwide basis there are currently over four hundred councils participating in the CCP Campaign. In Australia there are just over two hundred Councils, which have participated in the program.

Significant Regional Projects

Consultation with our local councils has identified significant regional projects and development as well as major local initiatives. These projects will have an impact on the majority of local communities and activities including social inclusion and employment. A summary of the major projects identified by councils only is provided here.

Councils recognise the up-coming pressures to provide residential and industrial lands to service our rapid population growth. The projected increases with the foreseeable economic drivers such as the new industries associated with renewable energies and transport changes means that adequate land is sought. However, development must also be undertaken in a sustainable and manageable manner in order to preserve the essence of our region. The education and health care industries, especially aged care, are also seen as having a major influence on future development with soft and hard infrastructure being required.

Major projects such as the proposed gas development can also have substantial implications beyond our region especially through the provision of renewable energy sources and the reduction in the production and distribution of electricity from fossil fuel.

The inter-modal freight centre proposed for Casino presents opportunity for substantial economic benefits as well as improvements in the ways commodities are distributed, which will be especially beneficial for products with a limited shelf life. The Australian Rail Track Corporation is making a \$2.4 billion investment into upgrading the Namoonah siding loop at Casino as part of the interstate network between Brisbane and Melbourne.

The up-grade of the Pacific and Bruxner Highways are catalysts for change, relative to distribution of goods, in and out, tourism and environmental impacts. There are both positive outcomes and some challenges to be handled as a consequence.

Tweed

- Banora Point Upgrade
- Jack Evans Boat Harbour
- Tweed River Regional Museum
- Tweed District Water Supply Augmentation

Byron

- Byron Bay Town Bypass
- Byron Regional Sport and Cultural Complex
- Extension to Landfill
- Brunswick Area Sewerage Augmentation Scheme
- Water Cycle and Waste Management Strategies

Ballina

- Pacific Highway Ballina Bypass
- Bruxner Highway Alstonville Bypass
- Pacific Highway Tintenbar-Ewingsdale re-alignment
- West Ballina Sewerage Treatment Plant upgrade
- Major expansion of bulky goods retailing (42,000m² retail floor space)

Lismore

- Education facilities
- Residential development
- Hospital and ancillary services

Richmond Valley

- Gas development – DA consent for 30 MWatt gas fired power station
- Multi-modal freight centre
- Evans Head Airpark
- Evans Head Aged Care Facility
- Industrial Estates
- Motor Home Related Industry

Clarence Valley

- Timber Mill Co-generation plant
- Yamba expansion
- Clarence Creative
- Timber
- Industrial Lands

Rous Water

- Future Water Strategies – Dunoon Dam
- Catchment Action Planning

Appendices:

1. Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACC	Area Consultative Committee
CERRA	Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves of Australia
CMA	NSW Catchment Management Authority
CVC	Clarence Valley Council
DECCW	NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations
DET	NSW Department of Education & Training
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DOP	NSW Department of Planning
DUAP	Department of Urban Affairs and Planning
EDO	Environmental Defenders Office
GP	General Practitioner
GRP	Gross Regional Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
I&I NSW	Industry and Investment NSW
IT	Information Technology
KAW	Keep Australia Working
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LEC	Local Employment Coordinator
LEP	Local Environment Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
NCAHS	North Coast Area Health Service
NCEC	North Coast Environment Council
NCIF	North Coast Innovation Festival
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NOREDO	Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Organisation
NOROC	Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils
NPWS	National Parks & Wildlife Service (now under DECCW)
NR	Northern Rivers
NRCMA	Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRRS	Northern Rivers Regional Strategy
NRSDC	Northern Rivers Social Development Council
NRUDRH	Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health

RDA	Regional Development Australia
RDAC	Regional Development Advisory Council
RDANR	Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers
RFI	Regional Futures Institute
RIEP	Regional Industry and Economic Plan
RMN	Regional Managers Network
SCU	Southern Cross University
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SNR	Sustain Northern Rivers
STS	State Training Services
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

2. Regional Plan Consultation

Stakeholders Consulted/Invited to Participate

Local Government

- Tweed Shire Council
- Ballina Shire Council
- Byron Shire Council
- Lismore City Council
- Kyogle Council
- Richmond Valley Shire Council
- Clarence Valley Council
- Rous Water

Regional Organisations

- Northern Rivers Social Development Council (NRSDC)
- Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils
- Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
- Southern Cross University
- Regional Futures Institute
- Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health
- Northern Rivers Social Development Council

Australian Government

- Keep Australia Working
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

NSW Government

- Industry and Investment NSW
- North Coast Area Health Service
- Communities NSW
- Planning NSW
- Office of Water

Other

Valley-based open forums participant lists are identified in Appendix 4 at the end of each Hot Topics Report

Targeted industry consultation was undertaken during the Data Update of the RIEP in 2009

Meetings were held with all State and Federal Government local Members of Parliament

The regional community (including community services, schools, youth, industry and business) was invited to participate in the Gift for the Future Competition (see Appendix 5 for the outcomes of this consultation)

Consultation Program

MECHANISM	TARGET STAKEHOLDERS	TIMING	PLANNING STAGE
Valley-based Open Forums	Local community groups and interests in the catchments of Tweed, Richmond and Clarence	February 2010 (Tweed) April 2010 (Richmond) June 2010 (Clarence)	Plan preparation
Regional stakeholder consultations	Regional organisations Key government agencies Targets include NOROC, RMN, General Manager's Group, NRCMA, NRSDC, NCEC	Ongoing Key focus Sept – Dec 2010	Plan preparation Development of action plan Plan implementation Plan review (timing to be determined)
Regional Hot Topics Reports	Regional organisations – NOROC, NRSDC, CMA, SCU, TAFE, RMN Key government agencies	Oct 2009 Feb 2010 June 2010	Plan preparation
Valley-based Hot Topics Reports	Local community groups and interests in the catchments of Tweed, Richmond and Clarence	Feb - May 2010 (Tweed) April - May 2010 (Richmond) June - July 2010 (Clarence)	Plan preparation Attachment to Regional Plan
Local Government Area Priority Papers	Local councils	May – July 2010 (drafts for council review)	Plan preparation Attachment to Regional Plan
The GIFT for the Future Competition (online essays, videos and photos)	Community members, youth, business, community groups / organisations, individuals	May – June 2010	Plan preparation
Industry &/or Issue Sector roundtables (including development of Regional Position Statements)	Specific industry sectors or key issue stakeholders (e.g. NRM, education, community services, health, creative industries, tourism, aged care, affordable housing, natural infrastructure etc)	Sept 2010 – June 2011	Development of action plan Plan implementation Plan review (timing to be determined)
Written submissions	Individuals, government agencies, local councils, community groups / organisations	Sept – Dec 2010	Development of action plan Plan review (timing to be determined)
Sector specific consultations	Youth leadership forum Aboriginal consultations Regional Summit (to be determined)	Feb - April 2011	Development of action plan Plan review (timing to be determined)

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4. Hot Topics Reports for Tweed, Richmond and Clarence Valleys

RDA- Northern Rivers held community open forums in the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence Valleys. Participants were asked to provide papers and to comment on the draft Hot Topics Reports for each of the valleys. The following Hot Topics Reports are a summary of these forums and the participation in them.

Tweed Valley Catchment Area - Hot Topics Report: 2010

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Population growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average growth rate 2.1% per annum compared 0.7% for NSW Estimated population growth in Tweed between 2006-2031 is 35,000 people An estimated 19,000 new dwellings will be required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects and programs to strengthen community life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information/communication about what is available Beach safety
<p>Spectacular natural environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East West Biodiversity second to the Daintree – Gondwana land rainforest Real acknowledgement of ecological sustainability 112 threatened fauna species in the Tweed Tweed coast being loved to death Impacts of marinas on river integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of urban consolidation as the primary driver to protect the Valley's natural assets. Bush regeneration, Landcare/Dune Care programs Green Cauldron Masterplan Tweed Koala Atlas (1996) Sustainable Streets Program Tweed Coast Koala Plan of Management – first stage of Koala Habitat Study commenced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment into crown lands – coastline maintenance and protection Biosphere Reserve Status (UNESCO) for Mount Warning Shield Volcano Wildlife monitoring and research
<p>Planning is more than managing urban growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning process for land development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Tweed LEP 2010 and Draft Tweed City Centres LEP 2009 - emphasise mixed use living and employment generation as the driver to change the demography Future major urban release areas and employment lands identified in Far North Coast Regional Strategy 2006 and Tweed Urban and Employment Land Release Strategy 2009 Urban release areas under investigation (Cobaki Lakes and Kingsforest represents about 58% of the estimated 19,000 new dwellings required between 2006-2031) Electronic Housing Code Pilot online development application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease lead times for land use planning/ planning reform
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water supply and quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tweed District Water Supply Augmentation Integrated Water Cycle Management Approach Total per person consumption dropped by 40% since 1991 	<p>Despite demand reduction actions additional water source is required. Four options shortlisted by Council. Group formed to advise Council on preferred option</p>

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Ageing population- significant needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22% of population older than 65 • Aged care facilities lack diversity, and predominantly in floodprone areas • Limited access to public transport and other services (medical, recreational, social), • Elder abuse is becoming more prevalent 	<p>Retirement projects investments - \$151 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalise on volunteer contribution • Policies to prevent facilities being developed in flood prone areas
<p>Unemployment and low workforce participation (42%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current skill shortages: engineers, town planners, case workers, laboratory staff (chemists, technicians), information technology staff, specialist professionals, mechanics • Proximity to Gold Coast and Brisbane • Lack of large scale local employers • Lack entry level/trainee/apprentice opportunities within region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job creation is a priority • Draft Tweed City Centres LEP 2009 - 25 year Plan providing 3,000 new jobs • Jack Evans Boat Harbour - revitalise Tweed Heads CB; encourage business growth through increased visitation • Master planned estates: Innovation at Wardrop – example of live, work and play in one community; and Industry Central • Soft product tourism development /experiences • Festival and events destination (Tweed Valley Banana Festival, Speed on Tweed, Tyalgum Classical Music Festival etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic diversification • Incentives for small business development • Investment promotion to attract business • Eastern Regional Corridor National Broadband Network (NBN) investment • Greater use of river – transport and tourism • Build on sporting assets and infrastructure • Sustainable industries to support include agriculture, primary industries, creative industries, ecotourism, education and communications • Infrastructure to support events
<p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-border movement of people – 52,000 vehicles per day, predicted to increase to 150,000 by 2026 • Freight load differentials between NSW and Qld 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car pooling – council involvement • Banora Point Upgrade (note Tweed Heads South businesses fear freeway construction will deter traffic from entering area and trade will suffer) • Tweed Valley Trail Network – rail to trail link 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal rail connecting Tweed to SEQ • Bicycle tourism • Local bus transport • Carbon neutral solutions
<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack understanding of cultural heritage values • Loss of cultural heritage 	<p>Tweed River Regional Museum - three sites; Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah and Uki; creating a cultural path - unifying the places, people & stories of Tweed Shire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal cultural values survey • Strategy for addressing community issues and needs
<p>Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment, lack of activities/infrastructure / opportunities 		<p>Infrastructure to support youth activities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health services and hospital facilities 		
<p>Climate change and sea level rise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant land and infrastructure subject to increased levels of flooding • Impacts of Emissions Trading Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caldera Economic Transition Program – Uki, Chillingham and Tyalgum • Pottsville campaign to eliminate plastic bags – example local community awareness and response to climate change 	

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viability of agriculture – changing markets • Ageing farming population • Sugar cane co-generation viability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caldera Economic Transition Program – paddock to plate and farmers markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support solutions for agriculture • Preservation of agricultural land • Maintain co-generation operation • Alternative agriculture
Emergency management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile phone coverage for emergencies • Better gauges to measure flood heights and improved flood warning systems
Affordable housing		
Cross-border issues		

Written submissions/presentations provided by:

- Tweed Shire Council
- Caldera Environment Centre
- Cr Katie Milne
- Ms Kim Hollingsworth
- Kingscliff Ratepayers and Progress Association
- Tweed Economic Development Corporation
- Uki Sustainability Project
- NSW Cane Growers Association: Tweed River Branch

Additional information provided by Councillors Kevin Skinner, Joan van Lieshout, Barry Longland and Katie Milne

Presentations given by:

- Mike Rayner, Tweed Shire Council
- Tom Senti, Tweed Economic Development Corporation
- Robert Quirk, Tweed Branch of NSW Cane Growers Association
- Geoff Dawes, Caldera Environment Centre
- Tania Murdoch, Pottsville Business Chamber
- Darryl Anderson, on behalf of Innovation at Wardrop
- Anne Duke and Eddie Roberts, Caldera Sustainable Communities Project
- Toni Zuschke and Pryce Allsop, Murwillumbah District Business Chamber
- Julie Murray, Kingscliff Ratepayers Association
- Alan McIntosh, Kingscliff District Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Richmond Valley Catchment Area - Hot Topics Report: 2010

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Biodiversity Loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest biodiversity in NSW, second highest in Australia • Impacts of population growth • Impacts of land management (e.g. cattle in creeks) • Erosion of protection of threatened species (e.g. NSW Planning Reforms); environmental weeds and invasive species; fish kills; loss of amenity; forest health (Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD) in upper Richmond Catchment); decreasing koala numbers; fire planning threats • Water security and river health – maintenance of environmental flow needs, habitat and healthy riparian areas • Coastal protection • Environmental management under-resourced - volunteer groups overwhelmed with bureaucratic demands; rural community's ability to adapting to change; lack of resources for wildlife conservation (note local veterinarians are not trained in wildlife veterinary medicine) • Too many funding bodies and departments – confusing to landholder • Decreasing awareness of forest / bushland / biodiversity issues • Inter-generational legacy • Absentee landowners • Bio-banking eroding biodiversity – open to exploitation by developers at the cost of the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landcare projects • Friends of Koala – koala rescue, rehabilitation, advocacy, habitat • NRCMA Catchment Action Plan • Individual landholder regeneration/on-ground restoration projects assisted by various grant programs • Natural resource management training, workshops, field days and forums • Activities of Landcare, National Toxics Network etc • Biodiversity conservation strategies (Byron Council, Lismore – 2011?) • Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (DECCW/NCT – connectivity) • Advocacy and lobbying (North Coast Environment Council) • Advocacy and policy reform (Environmental Defenders Office) • Tourism industry requires maintenance of biodiversity and environmental values • Caring for Country • Environmental Trust • Northern Rivers Biodiversity Management Plan • Professional Aboriginal Green Teams • Marine park declaration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance and improvement of natural environment • Increase funding and government investment for natural resource management and environmental projects • Coordinate and streamline effective inter-government collaboration on environmental management/natural resource management from Federal to Local level • Additional support to councils to meet natural resource management responsibilities • Review Planning Reforms, reinstate community rights, strengthen protection for threatened species (Review and amend SEPP 44 (Koala Habitat Protection) to reflect recent research; koala listing under <i>Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act</i>) • Aboriginal involvement in decision making and the solution, including Aboriginal training in natural resource management, combined with European knowledge • Support farmers to address environmental/ natural management issues (e.g. fencing creeks, beef industry) • Insurance, governance and training support for volunteer environmental groups • Redevelopment of Lismore Koala Care, Education and Research Centre (including provision of specialised veterinary services) • Regional commitment to the NSW Koala Recovery Plan (koala management plans for all council areas) • Use industry-reliance as the basis for lobbying government for targeted funding (e.g. tourism industry and native fauna and flora management)
<p>Law enforcement - increase assaults, violence, break-ins, vandalism, drug and alcohol issues</p>	<p>Recognise and acknowledge this issue is increasing Increased police resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase policing hours (24 hours) and numbers of police officers

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern that there is too much emphasis on tourism, and potential impacts on communities Narrow economic base – particularly in upper catchment Large plantation areas – limited benefit to community Surety of gas supply to justify infrastructure Impacts of marine park declaration on commercial and recreational fishing industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casino gas development Intermodal freight/rail project Aged care and airpark project at Evans Head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local power generation based on recent gas finds Value-adding to plantation products Support opportunities for diversification of the economic base Integrated planning and policy to coordinate tourism development
<p>Unemployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particularly for people with poor literacy skills, lack of work experience and Indigenous people Low employment of Indigenous people except in identified jobs or Aboriginal organisations Long term unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job creation programs Linkages between education networks and employment programs Community based social enterprise (e.g. Chill Café at Evans Head) Funding application from Kyogle Together, Real Artworks and Bonalbo Aboriginal Corporation for skills training to enable local Aboriginal women to work from home Working to make Kyogle Showground viable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism product with a focus on sustainability and the arts Establish creative ways to improve literacy skills Coordinated approach to traineeships
<p>Community Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key target groups include the aged, people with special needs and disabilities, families Viability of neighbourhood and community centres (no increase in recurrent funding for 25 years) Poor preventative health measures Mental health issues Lack of doctors Cross-border services, no transport, reliance on volunteer community transport Aboriginal Community Development worker to needed in Casino and surrounding areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood centres services and programs Active Kyogle Healthy Communities Program Nimbin Integrated Services (NIS) Project – a community based clinical mental health/AOD (Alcohol and other drugs) service Community health reform actions Campbell Hospital at Coraki to meet needs of lower Richmond river residents, particularly ageing population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancillary support services needed (especially dental and speech therapy) Increased doctors in regional areas Maintain and improve Casino Memorial Hospital services Replicate NIS model Aged care and disabled accommodation required Assistance to people in rural and remote areas in times of floods Improve resourcing of Campbell Hospital at Casino
<p>Volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining/growing volunteer numbers and capacity Government reliance on volunteer workforce Lack of recurrent funding for many community services Bureaucratic requirements overwhelming 	<p>Casino Neighbourhood Centre program using skills of retirees to provide additional resources to non-government organisations and community-based management committees</p> <p>Use of the skills of retirees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insurance and operational support/funding, plus assistance with compliance issues Government policies to attract and retain volunteers Set up volunteer registers Develop mechanisms for community groups to share resources

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Cross border issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health service provision • Differential freight loads – NSW industry cannot compete • Differing time zones • Red tape for business – NSW payroll tax is crippling compared to QLD 	<p>Integrated transport planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA collaboration and planning with cross border RDAs
<p>Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food security • Sustainable agriculture • Viability of rural industries • Land use conflicts • Age of farmers – succession planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural land protection • Farmers markets, food production and post harvest processing • Share farming/leasing/aggregation of properties • Diversification e.g. dryland rice farming, Farm and Nature Tourism project • Northern Rivers Food Link project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate feasibility of options for value adding agricultural produce • Improve beef grazing returns through genetic gains and more effective targeting of graded beef markets • Explore development of food coops • New crop developments
<p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public transport – impacts on capacity to access work, education/training, services, sport • Metropolitan focus of NSW State Plan Transport Plan • No access for children/youth for sport • Vision for Summerland Way (Grafton bridge, bigger trucks/heavy transport route) – will community support this? • Centrelink breaches can be influenced by lack of transport (e.g. one bus only from Tabulum, Woodenbong, Bonalbo to Casino for medical services only) • Dangers of hitch-hiking • Conflicts between passenger and freight needs – pre-determined transport interchanges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community transport services – limited to people with disabilities or on ageing pension • Free courtesy buses of pubs – only used at night • Car pooling scheme (e-carpool) – www.nrcarpool.org website • Integrated Regional Transport Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options of small commuter buses with greater frequency, electric community buses powered by renewable energy charging stations • Ensure a range of transport options accessible to people with disabilities and frail aged • Explore access to courtesy buses of clubs/pubs etc to provide transport to sport/during the day • Survey needs, package demand management strategy for bus companies – gather statistics and case studies (i.e. youth transport on weekends) • Inter-governmental communication to understand transport barriers and impacts for disadvantaged groups • Integrate local transport plans
<p>Sustainability and climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about Transgrid proposal relying on coal resources and levels of community support • Pesticide spray drift – impacts of exposure on humans, wildlife and environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre Solar project • Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre Sustainability project • Community garden projects (Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley) • Sustainability training in Kyogle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore plastic bag and plastic bottled water free communities • Leadership from local government on climate change and sustainability • Increase subsidies for stand alone power (solar) and water for domestic supply

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
Low incomes/cost of living	Increased employment and diversification of economic base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency relief for pensioners(e.g. electricity, rate increases, cost of living) • Mid North Coast Neighbourhood Centre to collect data on the living cost issues for those on low incomes
Climate Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about the emphasis in RDA-NR Headline Issues report and omission of biodiversity • Lack of leadership on these issues • Lack of community understanding/awareness of these issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional planning/focus on climate change issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned wildlife corridors and refugia will be needed to mitigate further biodiversity loss from climate change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Region Young Women’s Accommodation Service • New policy – granny flat legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public and community housing and support locally • Easy access to emergency housing for women and children and young people • Low cost rental accommodation in a range of locations • Options for greater flexibility in dual occupancy
Social inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few opportunities for Indigenous, youth, people with disabilities and mental health issues • Youth centre and service needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood centres services and programs • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Access Service • Richmond Employment Access Learning (REAL) service (Casino, Kyogle, Lismore, Ballina) • Kyogle Together formed to build local community capacity • Establishment of a community centre which brings services and training opportunities to key localities including Casino and Kyogle – amalgamation with youth programs to ensure their sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-purpose youth centre in Casino area • Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Keeping Place) • Improve resourcing and capacity of neighbourhood and community centres
Local government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to truly represent ratepayers and residents hindered by State government processes • Capacity to finance service and infrastructure delivery • Inequitable rating increases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council processes for sub-contracting public works • Outcomes focused inter-governmental funding arrangements • Inter-governmental strategic planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove State Government, and let local government truly represent ratepayers and residents • Find ways of spreading financial burden that are fairer to pensioners and those in financial need – identify income sources other than rates

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Upper catchment issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No jobs • Few off farm employment opportunities • Population decline • Declining enrolments in schools, low educational expectations • Indigenous population centres face community prejudice, alcohol, drug and health issues • Isolated rural population • Divided voice, low levels of community engagement, high levels of cynicism, low sense of community • Pasture production for beef industry limited by climatic variability as go further west 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain population at critical mass to retain services • Aboriginal driver training • Widen local economic base – nature based and Indigenous tourism; local utilisation of plantation resources; value-adding agricultural produce • Horticulture project at Muli • Community development initiatives – community health, education, social capital, leadership, youth training, elderly • Explore options for pasture seed production / distribution to assist the productivity of the beef industry, increasing soil organic matter / carbon sequestration, reduction of soil erosion etc

Written submissions/presentations provided by:

- Casino Neighbourhood Centre
- Friends of the Koala Inc.
- Bonalbo and District Development Association
- North Coast Environment Council
- Richmond Valley Ratepayers and Residents Association
- Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre
- Kyogle CTC and Kyogle Together
- Northern Landcare Support Services

Richmond Valley Council participants:

- Brian Wilkinson, General Manager
- Cr Col Sullivan, Mayor
- Cr Shirley Wheatly
- Cr Charlie Cox
- Cr Owen Crawford
- Cr Donella Kinnish
- Ken Exley, Director Environmental Development Services
- Gary Murphy, Director Works
- Rod Caldicott, Tourism Promotions Officer

Community participants:

- P. Horton, Richmond Valley Ratepayers and Residents Association
- M. Mohammed, Richmond Valley Ratepayers and Residents Association
- Bob Jarman, Northern Landcare Support Services
- Carol Holmes, Mid-Richmond Neighbourhood Centre
- Pat Anderson, Kyogle Together
- Lorraine Vass, Friends of the Koalas
- Therese Schier, Casino Website Project
- Malcolm Wallis, Kyogle Council
- Jim Morrison, North Coast Environment Council
- Terry Moody (part)

Clarence Valley Catchment Area - Hot Topics Report: 2010

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing tourism visitation patterns • Not engaging Gen Y in tourism • Accommodation for events • Tourism and destination management – social impacts on communities • Tourism peaks on infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarence River Way – tourism product development • Sport, culture – ways/ means to connect to community • Unique events (eg ArtsFest) • Saraton entertainment centre • TQUAL grant for implementation of Clarence River Way • Skill development program for events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource tourism management or development – rather than marketing • Institute of Sport or Stadium for Grafton region or other large tourism/educational facility • Untouched coastal land provides opportunities for sustainable ecotourism
<p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacific Highway and Grafton Bridge • Lack public transport and viability (marketing problems with some examples) • Lack of information about transport demand • Lack of critical mass to sustain public transport • Commuting between Coffs and Grafton • Transport difficulties with Port of Brisbane • Need to reduce dependency on vehicles • Lack of public transport between cities for employment and services access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club courtesy buses (Iluka, races) • Going Places page in Yellow/White Pages • Water taxi (Maclean) • Highway truck transport hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-city rail links (Coffs to Grafton) • Cycle paths link outer suburbs into town; out of town parking hubs (with free transport to CBD) • View transport investment not only as a cost • Integrated transport planning – within and across regions; identify corridors for future transport needs; coordination required • Value of Grafton corridor in the transport planning framework • New bridge and access link for Summerland Way/TRAIN project in vicinity of Tyndale region to divert heavy vehicles from coast highway and away • Development of Grafton Airport and facilities as a cargo destination/terminal – improve road access, security • Cargo and passenger facilities in Clarence Valley with transport hub (road, rail, air, ship) servicing surrounding and inland regions
<p>Ageing population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial growth • Not taking advantage of opportunities to harness the skills of this sector of the community 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate Golden Gurus or other mentoring programs • Older person's employment strategy – promote employment • Support age friendly organisations • Funding for rehabilitation unit for older people in Maclean
<p>Management Capability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Losing all middle management out of regional agencies (govt and private) • These positions are not being replaced • Loss of corporate knowledge and govt advocacy 		

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Business growth and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business marketing • Paperwork for small business • Compliance issues for business • Tax incentives for sole operators are not fair compared to those for companies • 3,800 small businesses in Clarence Valley • GST turnover of \$75,000 too low to define small business • Lack of business advisory support from NORBAS in the Clarence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Big Ideas for Regions – NSW Business Chamber Policy papers • Promote good news stories of business as a local employer • Increased private investment in the Clarence reflects greater confidence • The Clarence Edge: Economic Development Strategy • Clarence Creative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review definition of business size in regional areas • Address tax incentives for small business • Expand SCU Health Sciences and Social Sciences • Invest in new industry, relocation to region and business expansion
<p>Employment, Skills and Workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment/job creation • Lack skilled workforce (GPs, allied health, community/social workers, counsellors, community aged care coordinators, community support workers) • Work readiness of employees • TAFE standards falling in the local area (diversity/quality?) • TAFE fulfils an unemployment services function rather than training benefit • Integration of government regarding delivery of employment services for businesses • Business subsidies for unemployed/traineeships etc • Competition between employment agencies – causes confusion, clients fall through cracks • If you lose a job in the region, you have to move your home • Training facilities not located where demand for delivery is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rea initiatives coming from the private sector despite lack of support • Clarence Industry Education Forum • Industrial lands strategy • Maclean & Queen St Medical Practice – provides practical work placement/ training • Clinical placements at Grafton and Maclean hospitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical school on the North Coast • Allied Health School in the region • Local allied health training • RTOs need to educate employers about packages on offer • Need good community facilities such as child care, schools
<p>High population growth – highest region has ever seen</p>	<p>Council planning framework and land rezoning</p>	
<p>Local government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council viability due to rate pegging limitations and widening gap on the expenditure of infrastructure maintenance • Devolution of state government responsibilities • Council's role in development – lack consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New integrated planning and reporting framework • CVC Sustainability Planning Framework • 2020 Valley Vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for a percentage of commonwealth government revenue for local councils • Devolution of additional state government responsibilities must be accompanied by adequate resourcing to implement

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarence Valley misses out because of location between Coffs and Lismore • Always outreach site • Sense of “regional” identity – Northern Rivers, North Coast, Mid North Coast • Valley divided by State and/or Federal government authority boundaries • Tyranny of distance – can we expect top end services 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large sections of coastal land have remained untouched for many decades and should be locked up and protected from future development/through development before this opportunity is lost. Potential to safeguard biodiversity for future generations. • Combine state and local authorities to decentralise and create new entities in regional centres
<p>Agricultural/forestry industries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of transport, market access, diversity, viability • Capacity to meet compliance requirements • Major plantation companies viability and survival • Lack of agricultural diversity • Compliance, regulation, processes and hurdles closing local markets and favouring “blandness” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarence food mapping – supply and demand and distribution analysis • Gate to Plate event • Sugar invest project of council • New timber mill proposed for Clarence Valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural development allotment sizes (40 vs 100 ha) • Increase agricultural diversity through incentives for small farmers and growers, including regional markets • Restructure food market and agricultural selling to support small industry
<p>Housing affordability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing targets for developers, and objectives set in all new rezonings 	
<p>Arts and culture – question why this is not included in the headline issues</p>		
<p>Community capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of advocates in the valley • Lack of leadership and understanding to encourage an ethos of investment and development • Insufficient promotion or coordination of opportunities, recruitment and support of volunteers • Lack a non-profit community based organisation in the lower Clarence to act as a sponsoring body to apply for Commonwealth and State funding • Capacity limited in areas with a high ratio of people over 65 years old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a community vision and encourage strategic planning in partnership with town centres and villages • Encourage regional towns to focus on a particular aspect to become a centre of excellence (e.g. languages, sport, music, training etc) • Establish website and database to coordinate opportunities with available volunteers • Promote corporate volunteering programs within the corporate sector • Establish Street by Street program

Headline Issues	Solutions	Future Needs
<p>Infrastructure and service delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police stations are not open and/or a lack of staff on the ground • In a regional area you must travel to Coffs or Grafton for services (especially health) • Why are services limited? Lack coordination, availability, centralisation • Govt allocation models for key services (e.g. health, education, police) not based on regional needs • Lack specialist health services (cancer, dialysis, mental health) • Telecommunications • Optus towers very controversial developments • Iluka is the largest unsewered village in Australia • Maintenance of roads and bridges (especially timber bridges) • Libraries and cultural infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maclean – new business coming bringing e-medicine • Video conferencing at Maclean and Grafton hospitals • Cooperation in the NBN rollout proposal • Benefits from Federal Government investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination/collaboration in service delivery • Decentralise govt agencies into regions • Review govt allocation models for service provision in regions (e.g. health, education, police) • Require an increase in policing numbers • Hospital and health facilities – rehabilitation unit and non-acute mental health inpatient facility in Maclean; GP/community health centre in Yamba • University campus – tertiary education • Broadband infrastructure to address health services • Royal flying Dr service to bring specialists into population • Regional plan to identify infrastructure priorities • Broadband rollout requires cooperation to develop relationships between local government, facility providers, investors and consumers (also a need to manage expectations) • Health to be identified as a headline issue in its own right • Provision of community facilities including child care, extra curricula opportunities for children, strong cultural and sporting opportunities

Written submissions/presentations:

- Clarence Valley Council Community Development Officer
- Grafton Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Clarence Valley Council participants:

- Stuart McPherson, General Manager
- Cr Jim Simmons
- Cr Karen Toms
- Cr Sue Hughes
- Cr Margaret McKenna
- Des Schroder, Deputy General Manager Economic, Environment and Community Support Services

Apology from Cr Richie Williamson (Mayor)

Community participants:

- Susan Howland, Clarence Valley Women Inc
- Peter Bastian, NSW Business Chamber
- James Patterson, Grafton Business Chamber
- Peter Ellem, advisor to Janelle Saffin Federal Member for Page
- Jenny Massie, Clarence River Tourism
- Kaylene Dore, Grafton Arts Fest
- Faye Wood, Grafton Arts Fest
- David Bancroft, Grafton Daily Examiner

5. The Gift Competition: Summary of Ideas

RDA-NR developed a community engagement plan and campaign that aimed to link very closely with the development of the Northern Rivers Regional Plan. The campaign was titled Gifting the Future Generations of the Northern Rivers, and planned to inform both the Regional Plan and the work of RDA-NR. Community members were encouraged to get involved in shaping the Regional Plan.

The campaign was designed to be consistent with the RDA charter to ensure social inclusion, by engaging and empowering new and old voices in the regional development debate and discussion.

The competition was promoted across our region and gained good coverage of themes and issues.

Below are extracts from entries covering a variety of themes and issues across a wide geographical zone.

Geographical Area	Themes	Concept
any area	Festival Employment environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community folk festival/ craft fair/ showground type event to 'improve the prosperity of our region ,or at least maintains it without prejudicing the capacity for future generations to enjoy the environment' Sustainable tourism Conserving natural beauty Acknowledge the natural assets of the Northern Rivers-scenery, wildlife habitat, local produce, musical & artistic talent and eco knowledge Event to include produce expos, NP and cultural excursions, workshops and concerts to showcase the region in a sustainable and responsible manner The event will generate income for the area, jobs, skills and ability to share our treasures with others
Clarence	events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lower Clarence Celebration Coast (Triple C) – Australia's Wedding Epicentre. The True heart of the perfect Host of the Coast with the Most
	Governance Environment culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NR can be global leader in sustainable development with a reputation for our custodianship of the landscape and innovative land use , our quality products and services as well as our healthy lifestyles Gift to NR – to work together to enhance its governance so that our regional institutions can move as one and sing in tune, working towards our destiny as an integrated region ,adopting region specific principles to help guide its governance and plan for its development and adaptation needs Adopt a long term vision to act as a true bio- region with common goals towards improving quality of life & resilience of resident communities, the protection and regeneration of nat env., biodiversity & heritage and active investment in exercising our duty of care for the land we live on A region that values and promotes cultural diversity, values indig knowledge, builds on history & membership of South Pacific Community Region open to change & acts as a learning region celebrating local excellence – collective transition to low carbon economy Centre of excellence in transport-develop infrastructure for ageing population to interconnect as a Region of Villages. Reduce carbon footprint

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote local food security, greater regional self reliance & food quality, encouraging organic, niche agricultural products, markets, local value adding , regional marketing capacity • To enable a shared vision to grow and prosper The Gift needs to continue as an initiative from RDA who need to consult widely with youth and community so as to give ongoing practical guidance to provide bottom up motivation to enhance the NR
Whole region	economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organised Barter system • Not just individuals but organisations such as local councils, schools and charities.
Clarence Valley	Outdoors Community culture	<p><u>A Great outdoor space</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for communities with diverse cultural and economic demographics such as the Clarence valley to connect are scarce. • Providing a space where people can interact with each other and the environment would certainly improve personal and community wellbeing; develop a real sense of community connections and a sense of belonging to the Valley itself. • Clarence Valley create a 'Great Outdoor Space'. A 'Great Outdoor Space' contains permanent activities accessible to the whole community, as well as any number of specially designed spaces to accommodate opportunities such as whole community get togethers. A giant screen would allow for community events such as 'Opera in the garden', 'Ballet in the park' or bringing the community together to view events such as the Governments 'Sorry' speech to be possible. • A series of sculptures, as well as local dreaming stories can provide permanent activities in a garden setting - a place where words and language and arts connect. By providing written language, verbal language, song and music in combination with the sculptures we create an interactive and exciting space. Use of English as well as the local indigenous languages provides opportunities for the different community cultures to develop deeper understandings and appreciations of each other. These scenes and sculptures featured in a garden space provide a space to play and interact incidentally with other families in our community. In addition a community owned space such as this provides the community the benefit of opportunities for being outdoors, connected to the environment. • E.g. "Hunter Valley Gardens, Story book garden". A wonderful space created to bring people together to enjoy the wonder of our surroundings and the sense of wellbeing and connection that it fosters in that entire visit.
	Economy Food resilience Whole of community Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Farm Trail for the Northern Rivers agricultural region would create a greater awareness of healthy living and local foods, which is the theme in the global and local world. • A brochure with an area map with farms designated on the map along with interpretive information could go a long way. Increasing communication and correspondence with the farmers and the general public will create a greater sense of community and bring tourism to the area. Everyone can benefit from the Farm Trail • Farmers would need to participate in this program for it to work. They would have product available for sale, have set hours of operation to be listed on a guide. They would need to be able to speak about their farm and what they produce as well. They could offer hand picking for the "hands-on" experience as well. • School Children – By inviting school children to visit the farms and learn about where their food comes from will impact them in the short term as they learn about what they eat. It also impacts them on the long term, which, in turn, will help out the future generations as well as the existing generations as those children later enter the workforce and have dollars to spend. Education and exposing the children of today in the agricultural realm will help to shape our future in that way. If they have an idea of what it is like now they, as children do, can think up

		<p>alternative ways and build on what already exists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Tourism – Farmers bring their fresh goods to farmers markets each week so that locals can stock up for the week. Taking it a step further and inviting those patrons and others to visit the farm where their lettuce comes from, or learn about the cheese making process at the farm where their cheese is molded. It would take their experience regarding food to the next level. They will see how their dollar affects the farmer directly and vice versa the farmer will see how their product affects the patron directly. Those same patrons of the farmers markets will start to demand more local ingredients in the food they buy when dining out. • International Tourism – People around the world are striving to become more “green” and to live on food produced closer to their homes. There are travelers who are also seeking to learn more about this in other countries. Marketing to the international green communities would bring tourism dollars and increase awareness as well. Packages could be offered where guests stay in a local establishment, take guided tours to the different farms and dine in restaurants featuring local fresh foods.
All	community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community garden, such as that which is blossoming in Lismore. • life-affirming activity as a teacher and also as a volunteer working with refugees, seniors, people with disabilities, disengaged adults and many more from the community who all congregate and find meaning in the garden. • ultimate community meeting place, where roles, identities and stereotypes are cast aside and people gather in a shared love for the earth and its fruits • Provides a forum for sharing one’s stories, ideas, trials and tribulations. • Workshops are offered, new innovations in conservation, sustainability, healthy living practices and climate change solutions are presented for digestion. • Community garden is the opportunity and abundance of generosity it attracts. It has an inexplicable power to trigger goodness and a willingness to share that goodwill with others. This is an immediate exchange with immediate benefits. • funding is required to empower the project managers to extend the invitation to every school, community group, organisation, family and individual to take up a plot
	Economy community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • entry On Behalf of the Byron Shire Community Exchange • BSCE is an online group, where members join by registering the skills and goods they wish to offer, and also their wants. It is as simple and straightforward as that. From the moment they are registered, they are able to start trading • Great advantages of this system, is the members great freedom of access the group ‘skills and offerings’, before they ‘earn’ anything. • To foster creativity, innovation and enterprise; as members of the BSCE, there is the scope to advertise, and share practical working methods, and develop the skills needed to grow a business or idea, through the slow beginning stages, without financial pressure. • Healthy people, places and communities. This is a ‘local’ group-and the advantage of that is the members are often those who have a connection with the land, and know and care for their environment. The community exchange network has been found to be a strong ‘connector’s a community group. Members new to the area are able to immediately trade with locals, and find innovative ways to access skills, groups, and information through the many wide varieties of these available. • Connectivity and mobility. Certainly to be able to ring local people and chat about personal needs, without having to pay a professional charge, is a great enhancement, especially for someone who is unemployed. Often the system holds the name of a member who offers driving or

		<p>transport services. In a world where transient living affects many, there is a need for groups to meet local people, without having to pay or devise a structured activity. This group offers connection through sharing needs as well as skills. It is a Connector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and a sustainable future. This very competition is an acknowledgment that solutions must be sought locally. It is in fact, part of the problem that on a large scale we do things such as transport foods across the ocean, instead of using local supplies. This adds to the wastage of fuels, and increases the levels of pollution. The BSCE members trade in fresh, local produce, especially at the Markets.
Byron Shire	Land use Arts Tourism Culture festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we use private land to enhance our economy and creative industries while regenerating some of the region’s most important habitats? • A small group of people formed the Billinudgel Property Trust in 2006 with the vision of creating a socially and environmentally viable home for events and celebrations. • Culture and celebration have always been important in the Northern Rivers. A viable cultural economy needs events of all sizes for the young, old and everyone in between as it’s the variety within the local cultural economy that gives it sustainability and vitality. Large events can support small events, which are culturally necessary yet often economically unviable. • The space needed to be located close to a major highway, have few immediate neighbours, be large enough to host major events and have the same amount of space again to let nature breathe alone by herself. After a long search the space was found. Pasture land used for grazing covered two thirds of the 660 acre property, which also had numerous forested areas. Many of these were in need of rehabilitation. The group worked out that even with the largest event they would use less than half the land, leaving the majority for habitat use only. • Owning this land set about a chain of events which have refined the original vision. Providing a space for events and celebrations has become the means through which to nurture an enterprise that in turn can generate enough business within the local region to ensure its economic stability. • The limited event use required from the land allows for intensive regeneration and reforestation works which can be funded by proceeds from the enterprise. Much can be done on the land to restore and enhance the adjoining nature reserve and the currently fragmented wildlife corridor which straddles the property. • The vision had by now become threefold. • Maximum event use was set at 20 days each year, with 12 of these days being for “major” events. Splendour in the Grass, an event known within the local community, would occupy three of the 12 major event days. • Recent economic estimates (RPS Group 2010) of the total multiplier effect of the enterprise operating at capacity are \$192 million annually. The enterprise fosters industries which have been identified as being of foremost importance to our region – cultural tourism and the creative industries. Creating 210 full time equivalent jobs, the enterprise would be one of the largest employers in the Northern Rivers. <p>The vision would be realised gradually over a period of up to ten years, with up to two major events held in the first year.</p> <p>The legacy provided by what is now known as North Byron Parklands includes far greater opportunities for employment including within creative industries and cultural tourism, a robust local economy, enhancement of the biological values of a 660 acre property in the Byron shire and a valuable increase in the size and function of the Marshalls Ridge wildlife corridor.</p> <p>northbyronshireparklands.com.au</p>
	Events Employment environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small group of people formed the Billinudgel Property Trust in 2006 with the vision of creating a space for events. The space needed to be close to a major highway, have few immediate neighbours, be large enough for major events and leave room for nature to breathe by herself. • After a long search the space was found. Pasture land used for grazing covered two thirds of the 660 acre property and there were numerous forested areas, many in need of rehabilitation. The group worked out that even the largest event would use less than half the land.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a space for events has become the means through which to nurture a sustainable enterprise which can generate enough business within the local region to ensure its economic stability. Estimates (RPS Group 2010) of the total multiplier effect of the enterprise operating at capacity are \$192 million annually. • The enterprise would foster industries identified by State Government as being of foremost importance to our region – cultural tourism and the creative industries. Creating 210 full time equivalent jobs, the enterprise would be one of the largest employers in the region. • Using part of the property for events for a maximum of 20 days each year, up to 12 of these days being for major events, allows for intensive regeneration and reforestation works which can restore and enhance both the fragmented wildlife corridor straddling the land and the adjoining nature reserve.
All	Youth community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making the Lismore Community the National Leader in Bully Prevention
All	community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Gardens = Bright Future
All	Youth outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children aged 8-18 years old should be able to access local sport and recreational activities, regardless of their socio-economic background. Children or young people who play some form of sport in their younger years develop skills for life. Whether that be in the form of their physical development or cognitive skills or they are learning social skills to enable them to interact with others, of different social and ethnic backgrounds. • To enable all children within our Local Government Area to have access to sporting clubs, or whatever physical or social activity they would like to participate in. • I am proposing that an administered fund be set up, to subsidise all children to participate in sporting / social / life skill activities to enable them to grow in a healthy, active and socially enhanced manner. • children will have access to appropriate role models, i.e. coaches / trainers or team leaders
all	Environment Community Transport Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WILDLIFE PROTECTION - Build a wildlife hospital in Murwillumbah with 24/7 wildlife veterinarians, including facilities for wildlife rehabilitation. Supply food, medication and housing for all animal patients. Reimburse people bringing in injured animals for transport costs. • MORE WILDLIFE ROAD SIGNS - Alert drivers as to where certain animals use the road to cross - remind them to slow down from dusk to dawn. • COMMUNITY-FRIENDLY FARMING - Farmlands currently used for grazing cows which devastate our planet, could be replaced by fruit orchards, vegetables, and hemp for textiles, oil, nutritious food and paper. • CAR-FREE CITIES - Make Murwillumbah a car-free city. People could park just out of town and rent a bicycle which all have either shopping baskets or tow trolleys. This would eliminate parking problems, pollution, accidents, and traffic lights and help people get fit. More people could utilise Murwillumbah as the road would be used by bicycles. Delivery vans would operate outside normal hours and traffic would be detoured around the city. Handicapped people could rent motorised scooters. • TRAIN LINK - The train line from Murwillumbah to Lismore should be reopened. This would minimise pollution from traffic, car accidents (people and animals) and encourage more commerce to both cities. A new train line could be built from Murwillumbah to Pottsville and north to Robina. • CLIMATE CHANGE - Plant more trees. Outlaw the chopping of old growth trees. Pay people to plant native trees or eliminate camphor's (provided no animals are living in them). The more rainforests the more rain (The Secrets of Rainforests). Eliminate livestock from the land as they contribute more methane and Co2 than the entire transport sector. Supporting a plant-based diet is the most powerful thing any of us can do to help the planet and our community.

All	Community Health Disability All ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pet therapy centre in the Northern Rivers region. - A pet therapy centre would provide a variety of benefits including: therapy for children that have been traumatised, older people, lonely people, and new emigrants, indigenous and disabled. • Great number of benefits for all these people to pursue a relationship with animals. Empathy increases when spending time with animals. Humans are not as direct and pets can shift our narrow focus beyond ourselves helping us to connect to a larger world. The physical contact which animals provide does not always come from the environment that people live in. • Disability - Animal therapy has massive advantages for people with disabilities as the animals can be matched with a person's abilities providing physical and emotional support. In order for a relationship to be formed with an animal self-discipline is needed. The physical sensations encountered when petting animals can be loving and relaxing. Spending time with animals can increase people's mobility. • Indigenous and new immigrant cultures - The cultural barriers that society has created are not defined the benefits of animal therapy. There is an increased opportunity to gain communication for all languages and cultures for all ages. • Children - There are significant learning advantages for children spending time with animals. Often subjects are raised that effect their lives such as reproduction, family, birth, and the protection for off spring which may all help with the hard reality of daily life. • Older people - As many older people have moved from the busy lifestyles due to children leaving home and retiring from paid employment, they would play an important role in a pet therapy centre being the most committed group with lifetimes of useful skills. Being able to teach the younger clients the skills to be able to look after the animals would bring people together with a common interest. This shared interest helps bridge the gap between children and the elderly. • All people - The centre would provide voluntary employment in compatible positions in exchange for spending time in a special place with animals. Many people of all ages and cultures have had to give up their animals for one reason or another and this would give them contact with the world they are missing. The environment would be healthy and wholesome with equal opportunities for all stakeholders. There would be a mobile unit so the animals could visit nursing homes, schools and groups in the community. It would be self-funded. The companionship that is brought by spending time with animals is second to none. Caring, feeding and watering animals increase responsibility. Loneliness is a big problem in society and the company animals provide is invaluable.
	Community Festival arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to see various NR agencies along with Councils and RDA, working jointly towards promoting the area as the 'Festival Region'. A committee could be formed of representatives from key stakeholders and current event committees. Already we have many different types of events in this category from music to food and herb festivals, to the agricultural shows, Mardi Grass, Writers, Arts cape and so on. Each of these festivals has the potential to draw huge numbers of target groups to the area for short or long term stays. There is also the potential over the long term to develop other complementary to the region festivals
Ballina (all)	Youth Radio arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Radio is one of the most potent. It has the potential to encourage the creative voice of our young, for, as quoted by 3CR Community Radio, 'Youth Apathy is huge mythical Unicorn. Most youth are drowning in enthusiasm'. • Currently Kate Ellis, the Minister for Youth is encouraging debate on <i>young people in the media, are they seen in a negative light?</i> She asks "what could be done to encourage a more balanced /positive portrayal of young people in the media?" The responding answers were positive, intelligent, succinct and passionate. One young woman said "What we need to do as a generation of exceptional young people is to share our lives with the world and to make sure that the youth in our communities are putting themselves out there with their talents, dreams, passions and skills" • So I say, give them a platform.....Ballina Youth FM, which could Develop skills - Potentially lead towards the development of youth-oriented enterprises - Give voice to youth issues and a forum to discuss and debate these. - Provide a ground for creative expression via

		<p>music, speech, stories and reports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people would have a place where they can express their feelings and opinions, all who take part, would have their own stories to tell. • Youth Radio would promote youth related activities, events, programs, music and opportunities. • Bands could showcase their music through interviews, music reviews, broadcasting gig guides of local venues etc. By sending in their cd's there would be a presentation of local talent. • Training could be offered to develop the skills and knowledge needed for becoming program presenters and producers of Ballina Youth FM. Initially on air shows would be supervised by mentors who would be assisting with their training until students graduated to the unsupervised shows. This training could be linked to schools and media study, providing a wonderfully experiential component to the curriculum.
all	Environment waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Sewerage Treatment Plants can be converted, at their appropriate refurbishment/replacement dates, to Bio-digestors • Extraction of Methane Gas (it is after all the methane gas components of Coal, Oil, Petrol and Gas that burns with oxygen). This provides councils with local energy supply to be used for heating, cooling, and lighting and can be used to power any engine converted to LPG. • Water - a natural by product of the microbial activity in Bio-digesting process is pure, clean water that is high in minerals and ideal for re-use in playing fields and agricultural irrigation. Therefore augmenting local water supplies and reducing the need to expand catchments. • Bio-Char - when burning of Methane is required at a cantralised site to produce electricity, the excess heat can be captured and "char" the Sludge (solids) from the sewerage, thus removing the last of the Calories (energy) from it, maximising energy and Carbon capture. This provides a mulch to be used in the soil, to return carbon and minerals.
all	Indigenous land ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custodianship is the right to acquire and express inherited knowledge earned through participation in the processes of belonging. To custodianship is attached a sense of responsibility, a sense of 'profound honour that sustains dignity and morale' (Ngarjno, Ungudman and Nyawarr, 2000). Gained through an appreciation of relatedness, custodianship ensures the execution of respect in all dealings with the land, sky, plant, animal and human derivatives with which one shares the earth. • This irrevocable custodial connection is experienced by the Bundjalung peoples of Lismore; and this is what I believe needs to be nurtured amongst all Northern Rivers inhabitants in a climate of reciprocity and awareness of differences—and a sensitivity to the legitimacy of such differences—because only in this way is there hope for a shared sense of respect and balance. • As the custodians of our borrowed land, the Bundjalung peoples willingly share with us the knowledge that any impact on the environment, or exposure to exploitation through greed, exclusivity or political and social imbalance, will have a direct and inseparable impact on the wellbeing of all peoples across and beyond the land just as the seemingly unstoppable emissions from a disabled oil-rig have washed in ever-increasing globules of environmental destruction and political despair onto near and distant shores. • We all need to act as worthy and respectful custodians of the lands within our reach and care. We need to value the gifts of Mother Nature bestowed on us through the notion of the Dreaming. Beginning locally, we must develop a sense of global responsibility, and accommodate all differences with respect; otherwise we will not have learned the lesson of settlement. • We inhabit a borrowed landscape. Only if we dare to care will we remain fortunate enough to witness it spreading steadfastly out before us across a mighty Northern Rivers region to sustain our dignity and our morale. We must feel the honour attached to the gift.
Maclean	Housing Disability Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this area of Maclean we need affordable houses to rent for the many of us who are on pensions especially those like me who are on a carer's pension and cant work to supplement our incomes as caring for someone with a disability is a full time job. Which usually takes up 7 days and nights a week. Rents are too high and keep going up without our pensions going up to help with the rise.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We also need more services for our disabled young people who have left school and need to be occupied daily to help them with their life skills. There needs to be more funding from state and local governments to help with this, these kids are also our future and unlike so called normal kids want to try to look after and support themselves.
all	Environment Health Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A network of safe, clearly marked and sign-posted scenic cycle/walking paths criss-crossing this beautiful part of Australia, at some stage providing 'exchange/ refill stations' for electrically supported bicycles. The disused railway track would be a great start and could be converted fairly quickly at reasonable cost (as has been done in other parts of Australia e.g. Newcastle, Waberton etc). I have seen a railway track conversion in Germany (done about 10 years ago) which is not only used by daily commuters but also by thousands of weekenders and holiday makers. Cafes have sprung up at various points as well as bike hire businesses. Local villages along the route enjoy the regular influx of hungry cyclist and walkers, filling restaurants and Cafes. Local bike shops do a good trade especially as they are now becoming "swap stations" for electric bicycle batteries. Electric bicycles are all the rage in Europe, a Trent jet to be followed down-under. Switzerland has nearly 500 stations across the country where you can 'refill' your electric bike and keep going, exploring the country side. My 85 year old Dad just spends 2 weeks riding his electrically supported bike, traveling some 40 odd kilometers a day. He loves it and so do thousands of other people who like the outdoors and want to stay fit and healthy. Imagine coming for a cycling holiday to the Northern Rivers, either on your own bike or you hire one locally. I don't need to elaborate what this type of tourism would do for the local economies, attracting a whole new segment of tourists to this part of the world. It seems that Noosa in QLD has understood the possibilities of this type of tourism and is putting in place the necessary infrastructure. Let's do the same here. Let's get serious about attracting recreational cyclists and walkers of all ages to our region. Lets build an interconnected network of scenic cycle paths, including the dis-used railway tracks and thus add another eco-friendly reason for lots of visitors to come here and for locals to explore their natural surroundings and leave their cars in their garages. This is a long-term project that would bring benefit to all of us now and into a sustainable future
Casino to Murwillumbah	Health Tourism Outdoor activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rainbow Cycleway - The Northern Rivers has a wonderful resource in the rail line from Casino to Murwillumbah which only needs to have the rail lines and sleepers removed to be transformed into a green corridor bicycle track for local, state, interstate and international visitors. The track would cater to different fitness levels and local communities and tourist operators could provide many accommodation and food outlets; bicycle repair shops; tourist activities, etc along its route. Cyclists could enter and exit the track along its route at Lismore, Bangalow, Byron Bay, etc. . It would encourage the use of a resource which is currently not in use.
Tweed	Employment Youth arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The transfer of skills from seasoned event producers to selected Tweed youth and the inheritance of 4 established, unique and sustainable events. The Tweed Economic Development Corporation has identified: a need to create 25,000 new jobs by 2031 for a Tweed work participation rate of 50%, that 36% of residents on some sort of government supported income, the Tweed Shire has an aging demographic, that new investment opportunities are needed to attract and retain young people to the Tweed, the arts and creative industries in the Northern Rivers have grown substantially faster annually than the remaining regional economy. Ethical Events is a newly formed business with a team of highly skilled, internationally experienced and qualified producers of events. It aims to create a season of events that showcase the burgeoning creative industry plus the numerous boutique agricultural producers in the Tweed with a bigger picture of creating training opportunities for youth and building major tourist attractions.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2010, Ethical Events aims to train 5 young people in key areas of event management; marketing, lighting, sound, administration and site decoration. In 2011, two trainees will be recruited in each area and three in 2012. By the end of 2012, 30 young people will either be trained or in training to plan and deliver the season of events. • Ethical Events is collaborating with major stakeholders including schools, community organisations, local and state government agencies, local business organisations, job network agencies and representatives of youth to implement the season of events and training component. • As each event grows, more youth will be recruited, providing them hands on training, ongoing paid work and eventual ownership of a season of sustainable and unique events.
Byron	Health Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we promote healthy people, places, and communities • Create a Health and Wellness Village, place of excellence in the heart of Byron Shire where there is an abundance of Health practitioners and a diversity of culture to enable Byron to be an International Tourist destination. Fact: According to New South Wales Statistical Local Area population projections, 2001-2031, people aged 50 and over will account for approximately 47.3 per cent of Byron's Shire's population by 2031. • There is little in Byron for that age group, it is well catered to the young backpackers but my age group want to continue to learn , to grow , to share and care by fostering community spirit. I hail from Dublin Ireland and have been living in Byron encouraging developers of land to produce a Health and Wellness Village, a one stop village of excellence, where services would include affordable retirement home, an Integrative Medical clinic with choice of conventional and complementary practices, and a step down convalescence which also fosters medical tourism. Medical tourism is a developing practice in Europe , and many from the US go to New Zealand to have Orthopedic surgery (hip and knee replacements) would cost 125,000 in the States whereas they have a holiday in NZ first week , have their operation and recoup in a five star hotel, all for the cost of 30.000. Our hospitals need to create step down facilities but in a beautiful environment. • The Village should have a state of the art conference centre so it can be used for the Shire's community, excellent seminars and visitors from all the world will come because they can holiday, have their yearly medical check up, see a doctor, dentist, skin specialist, have their feet cared for, hop into a state of the art Spa facility with hot plunge pools, very good for the tired bones and most important of all pop down to the cafe or bookshop and share communal and personal stories. Feeling the love and support of a vibrant community, hosting local, national and International acclaim.
Ocean Shores Brunswick Heads	Transport Health community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ocean Shores River Walk & Bikeway • To create employment, provide better access the natural environment and enhance the experience of visiting and living in Ocean Shores, it is proposed that a raised wooden river walk/bike way be built running behind the Ocean Shores shopping centre between the Brunswick River and North Ocean Shores bridge. • This would involve working with the developer of the Ocean Shores shopping centre with a view to providing a pleasant mosquito netted dining area looking towards the creek as opposed to the current focus on a cement car park. • The project would inject some soul into the Ocean Shores development and better connect the area with Brunswick Heads and New Brighton.
	Transport Youth access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport needs to become more flexible; bike racks on buses should become a mandatory addition to every bus so that where the bus can't take you young people can ride the rest of the way. If young people are to develop their independence and sense of adventure they need a transport system that encourages their mobility. This initiative would also give youth more things to do thus decreasing drug dependency. • Encourage the leaders of sustainability and community development to develop leadership programs for young people. Young people have so much potential but unless encouraged and inspired in a non-school fun environment it is difficult for this potential. There are many community leaders for education, youth, sustainability and leadership who could be united to bring such a project into reality.

All	Arts Community Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My idea is Expression Zone • A place in our community where artists, students, youth and anyone wishing to express themselves in an artistic form can come and have fun, This will be an open place in the view of the public eye for everyone to see. • This will be monitored by at least one volunteer of the community and will require a gold coin donation for people to take part; this will go to the future development of Expression Zone and the community. • Art Expression will be open on weekends from 9-5. There will be a schedule of the local regions best artists or any that would care to show their work and influence and encourage the younger generation by shearing their wisdom and techniques. • Expression Zone is an idea that is to help youth explore the artistic and innovative side of life and of course keep them occupied to prevent unwanted activity
Byron	Youth Community Safety Arts & culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My idea is a Youth Recreational Centre • Place you are able to go and feel safe. There could be a number of activities such as rock climbing, table tennis a computer lab act. • Similar to <u>Youth activity centre</u> or Yac. The problem with the “yac” is that anyone can just walk in and do what they want. There are no rules or guidelines or even care of any kind. This would be a good mould for the new <u>recreational centre</u>. • Idea’s for the <u>Recreational centre</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A single entry point with a checkpoint to ensure there no un-wanted visitors coming inside. - Facilities such as; free food, table tennis, computer lab, music room (drum kit, guitar, ECT) video game or television room and art rooms. - Caring staff to ensure you feel safe and at home. This centre could turn into a place of youth social and characteristic development. <p>There is a lot of youth talent in our area that if harnessed properly could mould and shape good adults and human beings. This centre doesn’t have to be about harnessing talent but just about having fun and being creative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There could be an incentive program. If the person comes back an amount of time maybe a music tutor or artist could donate some time and teach or have demonstrations. • Maybe even cooking classes could be run. • There would be <u>zero</u> alcohol and drug tolerance. • Contact information would be supplied and each new participant would have to fill out information such as contact, address info and a file on the person including past behavior. • This would be good to harness new talent and fun for coming generations, it would truly be a gift.
Byron	environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tallow Creek is beautiful but it could be much better. Clean up along the walkways, place some bins, and get some murals done by young people along the paths, much better signage regarding dogs, information signage regarding bird migration habits, community education regarding protection of flora & fauna. • Summer on Byron Beaches and walkways, we need more signage, bins, cleaning up, murals and good visual info in hotels, motels, backpackers etc. We need rangers to regularly check these areas, enforce dog walking zones to explain 'why' to people. If they don't know why they don't change negative behaviour.
Byron but adaptable	Arts community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A beautiful environment - Graffiti and Vandalism are issues that strike at every community but in a successful program with Country Energy we have managed to eradicate these completely with artworks on electrical pad stations. We have painted over 30 electrical pad mount stations.

across all communities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our gift for the future is to work in conjunction with the Byron Bay Malibu Club and the Byron Bay Board riders Association to turn a neglected alley in town that has been mentioned in security audits done by police into a vibrant street mural celebrating surf culture and the riders, shapers and personalities who have fostered surfing in Byron Bay. • One side of the alleyway will feature surfboards through the ages accompanied by the Clubs logos and a roll call of Byron Bay title holders and surfing identities. • The other side will feature a beach scene representing key surfing spots such as “the wreck”, “the pass”, Clarke’s Beach and Wategos with a safety message from the Byron Bay Surf Lifesaving Club. • We see this mural as a way to clean up a neglected part of town to represent Byron Bay’s strong surfing culture along with its creative spirit, as well as honor our local surfing identities for generations to come.
Byron but adaptable across all communities	Health community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Byron Bay Beachcise - Swimmers, joggers, riders and walkers of all ages will benefit from warm up, stretching and exercise stations located along the park area adjacent to Main Beach and Clarkes Beach, Byron Bay. • Perfect stretching and warm up points before a Swim or Paddle across the Bay, a Surf at the Pass, a Walk or Run to the Lighthouse, a Bike Ride to Lennox Head or for those moving on to other exercise areas strategically located throughout the parkway. The area will include instructions and guidelines for proper use. • The establishment of the Beachcise is an initiative of Byron United Inc. which will be seeking the endorsement and support of local sporting clubs and agencies, the Byron Shire Council and NSW Sport and Recreation.
all	Community arts	"The streets are alive with the sound of music...the glue that holds community together is music it reduces stress, raises smiles, brings people together, it is the backdrop to magical times for tourists and locals alike. It fosters love, hope, joy and togetherness. Our region is already known internationally for its colourful community and talent filled streets my vision is to keep it that way"

6. Local Government Area Priority Papers

Opportunities for Collaboration

Development of the Regional Plan involved a review of all Council plans for the region, and consultation with each council to develop Local Priority Papers. This process identified the following opportunities for regional collaboration and action at a local government level:

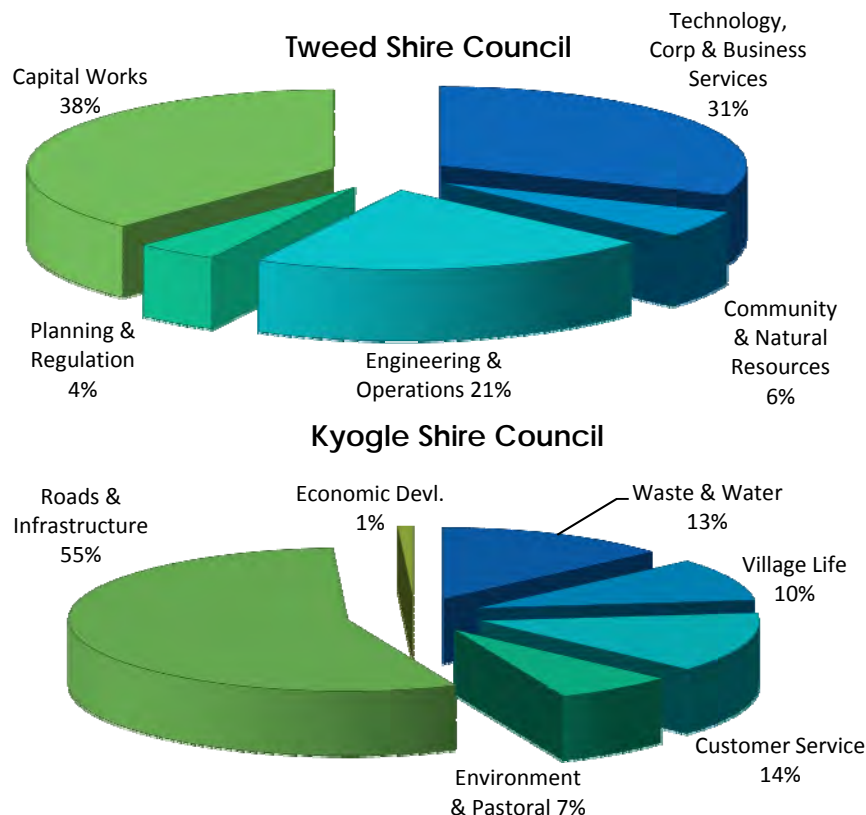
- regional promotion and marketing
- governance and accountability best practice
- economic development activities
- addressing environmental issues
- land use planning and decision making
- 'sense of place' promotion and development
- transport infrastructure development
- business incubation programs and facilities
- industry sector development
- funding
- community education – sustainability
- tourism
- information and data sharing
- water and waste management
- industry/sector networking
- cultural planning
- action on regional food security

Opportunities for sub regional collaboration and action were also identified and these include:

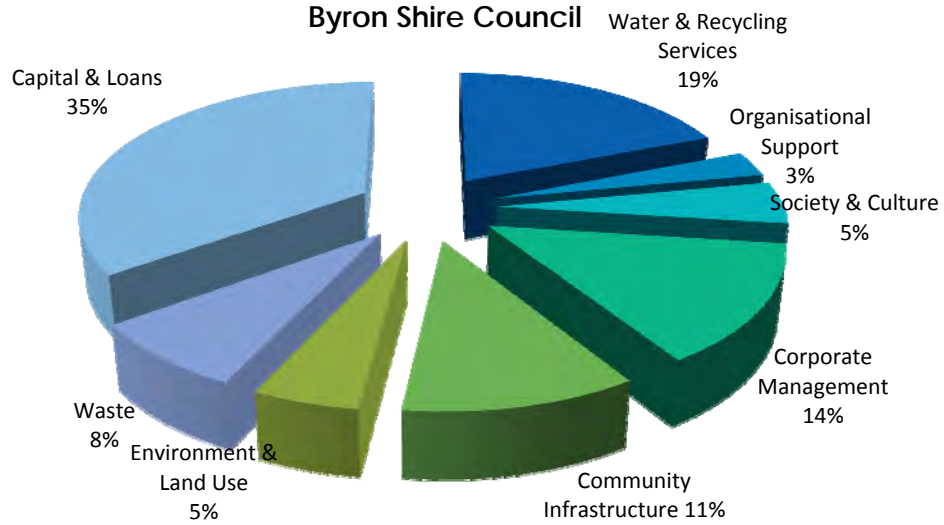
- climate change adaptation
- water management
- coastal management
- biodiversity conservation
- affordable housing
- bush fire management
- transport infrastructure
- sub-regional promotion and marketing
- urban design
- insurance
- bio diesel and natural gas
- joint tendering

2009-2010 Principle Activity Expenditure

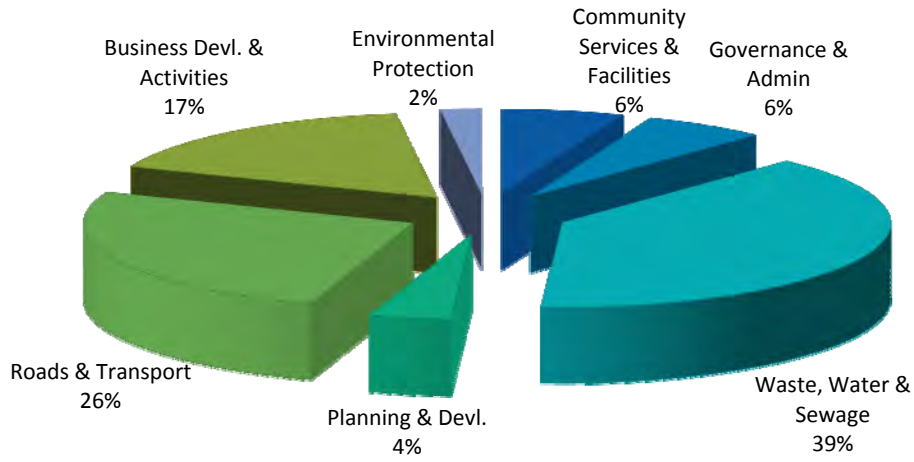
The preparation of these papers also involved a review of expenditure for each of the councils.



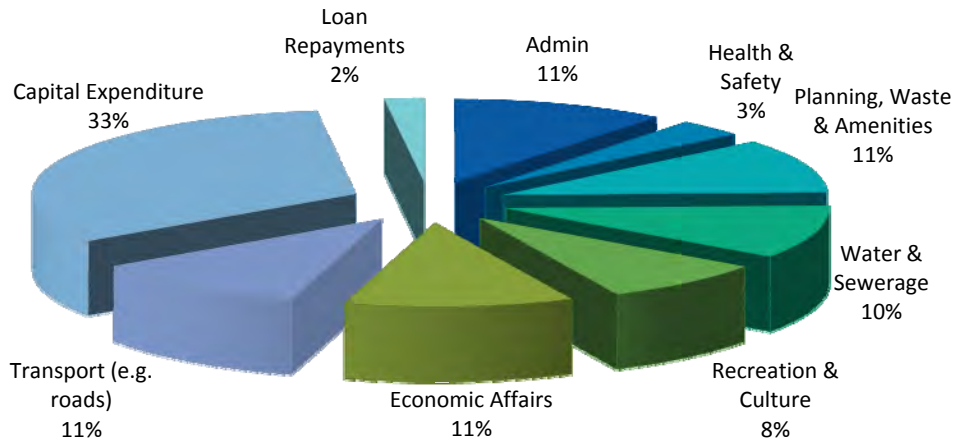
Byron Shire Council



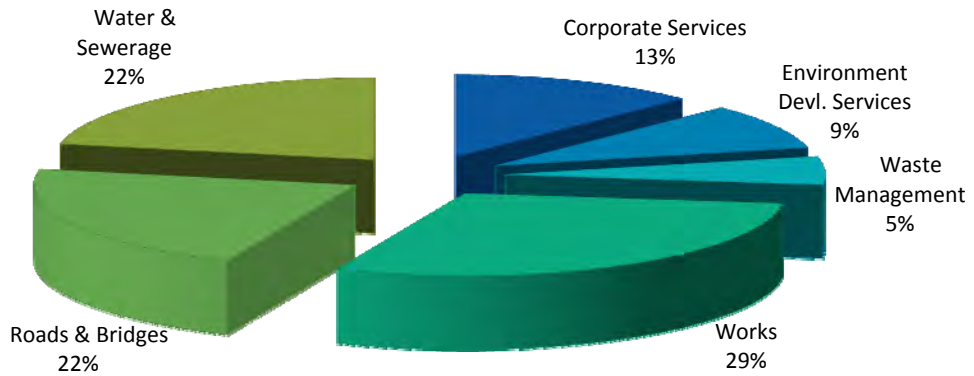
Ballina Shire Council



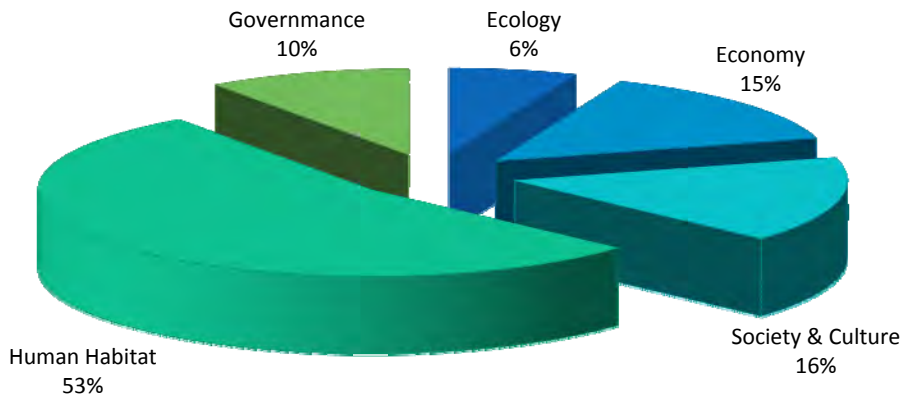
Lismore Shire Council



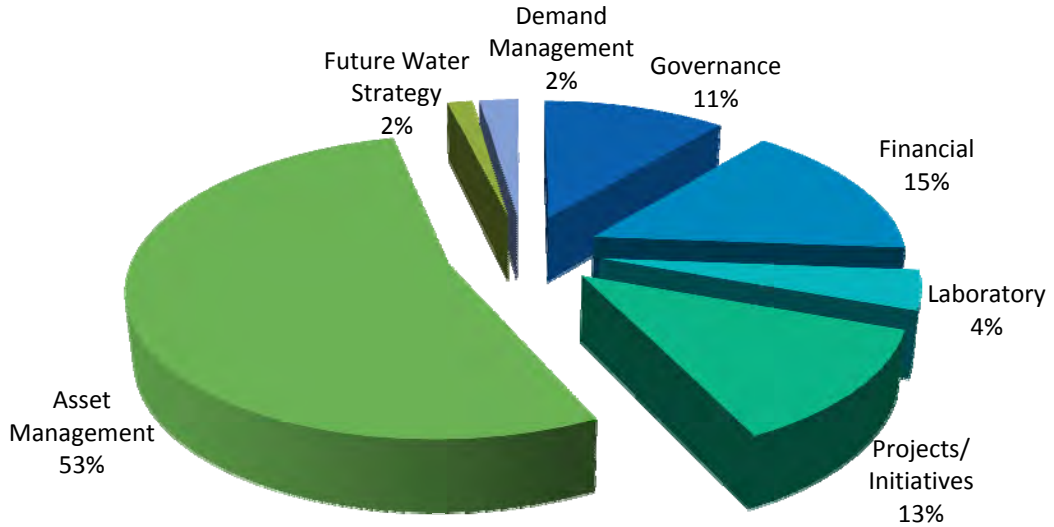
Richmond Valley Council



Clarence Valley Council



Rous Water



Tweed Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

The Tweed will be recognised for its desirable lifestyle, strong community, unique character and environment, and the opportunities its residents enjoy.

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL MISSION

Working with community and partners, provide leadership in facilitating and delivering services that manage growth sustainability; create opportunity; and enhance the value of our civic and natural assets for this and future generations.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF THE TWEED

- a biodiversity 'hotspot'
- international airport
- lifestyle opportunities
- university
- multiple towns & villages
- proximity to Brisbane

GOALS	CURRENT PRIORITIES
<i>To promote a sense of wellbeing and community cohesiveness through a coordinated approach to service delivery and in the provision of facilities, structures and open spaces.</i>	Parks & recreational facilities upgrades Community buildings maintenance Youth activities, services & transport Aboriginal Community Development Ageing & disability planning
<i>Support economic development within the Tweed based on fostering a strong economy that recognises the importance of conserving the unique environment and lifestyle of the Tweed.</i>	Tourism marketing Visitor Info Centres Support to Tweed Economic Dev. Corporation
<i>Safeguard the ecological sustainability of the Tweed's natural environment and diverse range of habitats using a coordinated response in the management of environmental pressures.</i>	Waterways health Coastal zone conservation Protection of bushland & biodiversity Floodplain sustainability Regional car pooling
<i>To guide future urban design through the principles of ecological sustainable development to produce liveable communities where the impact on the environment is minimised</i>	Implementation of integrated water cycle management strategies Landfill reduction Land use plans updating Expansion of emergency services
<i>To prepare sustainable social, environmental and financial strategic plans, policy and infrastructure specifications to ensure capacity availability and essential infrastructures can be provided prior to the approval of development whilst maintaining and improving existing levels of services</i>	River and floodplain management Extensive transport infrastructure projects Water & sewer infrastructure projects

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Tweed Shire Council Management Plan 2008-2011 (Incorporating 2008-2011 Action Plans – Social, Economic, Natural & Built Environment, Infrastructure)
- Tweed Economic Growth Management Strategy 2007-2010
- Tweed 4/24 Strategic Plan

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Banora Point Upgrade
- Jack Evans Boat Harbour
- Tweed River Regional Museum
- Tweed District Water Supply Augmentation

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- tourism
- CBD revitalisation
- commercial and industrial development
- marine industry
- services sector

Kyogle Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

Working together to balance Environment, Lifestyle, and Opportunity.

KYOGLE SHIRE COUNCIL MISSION

To meet the challenges of our unique and diverse region.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF KYOGLE

- world heritage
- diversity of environment & people
- interstate rail and road infrastructure
- affordable land
- strong rural heritage

GOALS	CURRENT PRIORITIES
WASTE AND WATER Waste management & recycling Water & sewerage infrastructure Flood and stormwater management	Maximising recycling and minimising waste to landfill Stormwater drainage Water supply and conservation
VILLAGE LIFE Strong sense of community Community and youth services	Address service decline in villages Develop strong sense of community Coordinate and support community services. Facilities and employment opportunities for young, elderly, disabled & indigenous
ENVIRONMENTAL & PASTORAL Parks and gardens Environmental education Planning and landuse Managing the environment	Aboriginal heritage mapping Cities for Climate Protection Program initiatives Community education Emergency services
ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE Footpaths and cycleways Traffic management and safety Asset management Highway bypass	Roads and infrastructure maintenance
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Additional funds Tourism development Rural Roads	Development of value adding industries Tourism promotion

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Community Strategic Plan 2007-2017
- Economic Development Plan 2005-2010
- Management Plan 2009/10
- Kyogle Social Plan 2009-2014
- Kyogle Settlement Strategy
- Pedestrian Access & Mobility Plan
- Kyogle Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy
- Community Cultural Plan

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- agritourism
- cultural tourism
- light manufacturing (food, furniture)
- plantation forestry

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Timber industry expansion
- Tourism opportunities
- Art Gallery

Byron Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

Byron Shire is a thriving and vibrant community where residents and visitors can live, work and play in a sustainable environment.

Our towns, villages and rural lands are developed and managed in a manner that protects and reinforces their character, in harmony with and protecting the natural environment.

We actively work to enhance biological diversity and ecological integrity, repairing past damage and strengthening biodiversity and landscape integrity.

Our residents and visitors live in diverse and tolerant communities, respecting different cultures including Aboriginal custodians, and enjoying a wide range of services, facilities and activities.

Council actively works in partnership with residents and visitors, business, industry and government, encouraging economic sustainability that protects our environment and supports our culture and lifestyles.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF BYRON

- diverse mix of people
- renowned natural environment
- lifestyle opportunities
- multiple and distinctive villages
- strong creative industries sector
- commitment to sustainability

THEMES	AIMS AND GOALS
<i>Caring for the Environment</i>	Conserve and enhance the biological diversity, ecological integrity and environmental sustainability of the land, coastal zone and waterways of the Shire.
<i>Prosperous Community & Business</i>	Support appropriate economic activity, investment, work and employment opportunities in harmony with our ecological and social goals.
<i>Creative & Caring Communities</i>	Encourage and support resilient, diverse and creative communities, caring for each other and feeling connected through networks, activities and services and a strong sense of local identity and place.
<i>Efficient & Liveable Communities</i>	Carefully develop sustainable human settlement in a manner that protects the natural environment and creates sustainable communities serviced equitably with a range of affordable facilities, essential services, transport and infrastructure.
<i>Effective Stewardship and Management</i>	Maintain a sustainable organisation and good stewardship, through effective leadership and accountable decision making, and manage available resources in mutually beneficial partnerships with our communities to help achieve this.

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Draft Community Strategic Plan currently under development
- Asset Management Plan
- Long Term Financial Plan
- Byron Shire Bike Strategy and Action Plan
- Byron Bay Drainage Strategy
- Byron Shire Local Disaster Plan (DisPlan)
- Emergency Risk Management Plan
- Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan
- Flood, Creeks and Estuary Studies and Plans
- Mullumbimby Long Term Water Supply Strategy
- Development Control Plans
- Greenhouse Action Strategy
- Settlement Strategies for five key areas in the Shire
- Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
- Tourism Management Plan
- Cultural Plan
- Community Based Heritage Study
- Disability and Access Inclusion Plan
- Sports Fields Strategies
- Waste Disposal Strategy
- Water Supply & Sewerage Strategic Business Plans

KEY OPPORTUNITIES/ FOCUS AREAS

- Agriculture and food
- Building and construction
- Creative industries
- Eco-forestry
- Education
- Green industry
- Health and natural therapies
- IT and Communications
- Sustainable Tourism & Hospitality
- Infrastructure

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Coastal Zone Management Plan
- Climate Change Mitigation
- Byron Bay Town Bypass
- Construction of cycleways
- Byron Regional Sport and Cultural Complex
- Extension to Landfill
- Brunswick Area Sewerage Augmentation Scheme
- Transport Management Plan

Ballina Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

A shire that provides a healthy lifestyle, a prosperous environment and a community with a strong sense of place.

BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL MISSION

To enhance community lifestyle and environment through effective leadership, community involvement and commitment to services.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF BALLINA

- diverse natural environment
- lifestyle opportunities
- character villages
- strong service sector
- strategic urban growth areas
- transport access (airport and highway network)
- recreational opportunities of Richmond River and coast

GOALS	CURRENT PRIORITIES
<i>A built environment contributing to health and wellbeing</i>	Community facility development
<i>A diverse and prosperous economy</i>	Industrial land release Streetscaping Development of Ballina Shire Prospectus
<i>A healthy natural environment</i>	River estuary management Sewage management
<i>Diverse and balanced use of our land</i>	Growth management and land use planning
<i>People attaining health and wellbeing</i>	Sporting facilities construction, community information
<i>Resilient and adaptable communities</i>	Events planning, housing supply, Airport operations Effective regional engagement
<i>Responsible and efficient use of resources</i>	Waste minimisation & management

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Pacific Highway Ballina Bypass
- Bruxner Highway Alstonville Bypass
- Pacific Highway Tintenbar-Ewingsdale re-alignment
- West Ballina Sewerage Treatment Plant upgrade
- Major expansion of bulky goods retailing (42,000m2 retail floor space)

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Ballina Shire Council Management Plan 2009-2012
- Ballina Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2010-2025
- Ballina Draft LEP 2010
- 2009 Social Plan

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Tourism
- Hospitality
- Residential & industrial development
- Infrastructure
- Service Sector

Lismore Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

Lismore: A great place to live and work.

LISMORE CITY COUNCIL MISSION

To work with the community to maintain Lismore as the regional centre in a healthy rural setting.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF LISMORE

- a regional service centre
- a university city/education hub
- health services hub
- justice hub
- creative arts
- vibrant village communities
- renowned natural environment
- industry and innovation

GOALS	CURRENT PRIORITIES
<i>Social inclusion and participation</i>	Arts Centre Recreation facilities & planning Foster youth Crime Prevention Public Art
<i>Sustainable economic growth and development</i>	Integrated transport planning City Marketing and promotion Revitalise CBD Event planning Infrastructure upgrading Business Facilitation Diversity of housing choice
<i>Protect, conserve and enhance the environment and biodiversity</i>	Integrated Waste Cycle Management Water supply & catchment management Sustainable Land-use planning Mitigate and adapt to climate change
<i>Best Practice Corporate Governance</i>	Effective Community Consultation Innovation, resource efficiency, ethical decisions

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Lismore Community Strategic Plan 2008-2018
- Management Plan 2009/10 – 2012

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Education facilities
- Residential Development
- Hospital and ancillary services

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- accommodation
- aged care
- aviation
- organic production
- health services
- hospitality
- conference facilities
- industrial and residential land development

Richmond Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

The development of community and natural attributes of the area to enable a pleasant and sustainable lifestyle.

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL MISSION

Develop our area with our community by effective leadership and efficient service.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF THE RICHMOND VALLEY

- significant national parks, state forests and natural reserves (30% of LGA)
- affordable land and infrastructure
- distinctive rural heritage
- lifestyle and liveability
- emerging energy sector
- rail and road transport links

GOALS

Maximise community wellbeing, public health and safety

Contribute to the promotion of a strong economy and diverse employment opportunities

Conserve biodiversity and natural attributes utilising ecologically sustainable development practices

Provide infrastructure of a high standard that supports community wellbeing, economic growth and environmental quality

CURRENT PRIORITIES

Implementation of Improvement Program for Sporting Grounds and Parks/Gardens Infrastructure

Implementation of Public Pool Improvement Program (incl provision of new facility at Evans Head)
Progression of Casino Community Centre Project as part of Casino CBD building rationalisation.
Progression of Casino CBD Upgrade Project

Ongoing improvement and upgrade of water and sewerage infrastructure across the Council area

Increase capacity for road construction and road maintenance funding
Implementation of Stormwater Drainage Capital Works Program.

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Richmond Valley Management Plan 2009/2012
- 2008 Locality Plans
- Urban Land Release Strategies

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Gas development
- Multi-modal freight centre
- Evans Head Airpark
- Evans Head Aged Care Facility

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- eco-tourism
- energy sector
- residential development
- industry development – manufacturing, aged care and air industries
- service sector
- regional foods

Clarence Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

Life in the Clarence Valley, now and in the future, is based on a culture of living sustainability that protects and carefully utilises the natural environment, its beauty and resources, our cultural heritage and unique identity of our valley and its communities.

CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL MISSION

To co-operatively plan for and achieve:

- Protection of ecological systems
- Positive social and community development
- Cultural diversity, expression and creativity
- Economic prosperity and efficient resource use
- Quality human habitat and essential services and
- Protection of our valuable natural and cultural heritage through supportive, accountable and participatory decision-making management and action that actively involves the wider community.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF THE CLARENCE

- the Clarence River
- national parks
- lifestyle and liveability
- environment
- industry and innovation
- people

GOALS	CURRENT PRIORITIES
ECOLOGY <i>Protecting the land</i> <i>Maintaining healthy waterways</i> <i>Protecting biodiversity</i>	Stormwater management Coastal vegetation rehabilitation Clarence Valley foreshore and riparian zone management Waterway and wetland restoration Climate change mitigation and adaptation
ECONOMY <i>Efficient and careful resource use</i> <i>Healthy economic activity</i> <i>Meaningful work and employment</i>	Clarence River Way Creative industry development Marine industry development Value adding – wood fibre, regional cuisine Transport hub Skilling workforce
SOCIETY AND CULTURE <i>Community health and wellbeing</i> <i>Creative culture and recreation</i> <i>Good community relations</i>	Community and cultural facilities development – new regional library Crime prevention Information dissemination
HUMAN HABITAT <i>Quality built environment and places</i> <i>Efficient transport and access</i> <i>Effective essential services</i>	Water and sewerage system upgrades Waste education Affordable housing development Local growth management under the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Clarence Valley Sustainability Framework
- Clarence Valley Management Plan
- Clarence Valley Social Plan
- Clarence Valley Settlement Strategy
- Clarence Valley Economic Development Strategy
- Clarence Valley Cultural Plan
- Clarence Valley Crime Prevention Plan
- Clarence Valley Affordable Housing Strategy
- Clarence Valley LEP

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Timber Mill Co-generation plant
- Yamba expansion
- Clarence Creative
- Timber Industry Expansion
- Industrial Lands

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- timber processing & products
- marine industry
- housing
- bio-energy
- transport and freight
- regional foods

Rous Local Government Area Priority Paper

VISION

To provide a healthy, reliable and an ecologically sustainable supply of water to present and future generations of consumers.

ROUS WATER COUNCIL MISSION

To meet or exceed industry standards of quality, reliability and environmental management for treated water provided to consumers of the county district.

COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF ROUS WATER

- Bulk Water supplier
- Regional approach

GOALS	CURRENT PRIORITIES
<i>To provide a high quality, sustainable and secure supply of water</i>	Manage demand through education and appropriate programs Provide an adequate supply of water to meet community needs Provide a healthy supply of water to consumers
<i>To establish long term financial sustainability</i>	Recover full cost of servicing future growth from developers Future water management strategy Manage assets on a consultative basis Adequately resource organisation to meet agreed levels of service, governance and financial needs
<i>To pursue environmental and business excellence in an evolving water industry To protect and manage the water environment and biodiversity</i>	Enhance Council's corporate recognition in the industry Manage catchments through regional arrangements and community engagement

STRATEGIC PLANS

- Future Water Strategy
- Demand Management Plan
- Catchment Management Plan

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS/PROJECTS

- Future Water Strategy
- Dunoon Dam proposal

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Water supply
- Residential

7. Northern Rivers Regional Business Growth Plan: I&I NSW August 2010

High Priority and High Impact Strategies to Address Barriers to Business Investment

Strategy 1 Strategies to improve regional business sustainability (including re-use and recycling of water and use of alternative energy technologies)

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Assist expanding businesses to take-up water saving technologies or techniques.
- Assist local companies to commercialise water saving technologies as a business opportunity.
- On a case by case basis, consider shared infrastructure for business to accommodate future water needs.
- Establish educational programs for business to tap into water saving expertise.
- Support the ongoing staged development of the pilot plant at Harwood for extraction of ethanol from cellulose derived from forest waste products and sugar bagasse.
- Pursue investment opportunities for the commercialisation of pyrolysis technology (Biochar) to connect waste streams from local government and the forest industry into renewable energy and agri-char.

Strategy 2 Balance demand for land and timely release of strategic enterprise zones to match residential growth

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Promote and implement Department of Planning's (DOP) *Far North Coast Regional Strategy* including the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan (2009 updated version).
- Anticipated job growth translates to a need for about 232 hectares of additional industrial and commercial land. Local Councils are identifying employment lands through the current reviews of their Local Environmental Plans (LEPs).
- Monitor supply and take up of employment lands through continued update of Department of Planning's Housing and Land Monitor.
- Work closely with local councils and investors to assist development of industrial and employment lands, including facilitation of Industrial Estate development in the Richmond Valley and Kyogle LGAs.

Strategy 3 Support growth through innovation of creative industries sector

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Support implementation of the Northern Rivers Arts and Creative Industries Strategy 2009.
- Support the establishment of key creative industry broker positions for the music, gaming and design sectors to foster new national and international markets.
- Support for the Northern Rivers Screenworks' skills and industry development activities of the screen industry.
- Northern Rivers Creative Industries Consortium to facilitate a regional Broadband Needs Survey and Services Audit across key industry sectors

Strategy 4 Provide infrastructure for business and to support population growth

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Construction of the Banora Point Pacific Highway upgrade will link the recently completed Tugun Bypass around the Gold Coast Airport to the Chinderah-Billinudgel Motorway ensuring improved access to SE Qld markets for NSW businesses.
- Support the establishment of a 30 megawatt gas-fired power station at Casino; the construction of a gas pipeline to Qld, and local gas reticulation projects.
- Support the development of industrial estates in the Richmond Valley and Kyogle Local Government Areas (LGAs). The provision of fully serviced industrial land close to rail infrastructure can provide a focus for the attraction of 'feeder' industries and enterprises.
- Government to deliver major infrastructure projects 2005/06 to 2015/16 as per the *Far North Coast Regional Strategy* and in line with *State Infrastructure Strategy* priorities.
- The Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers Regional Strategic Plan will identify regional infrastructure priorities
- Utilise the Broadband Needs Survey and Services Audit to establish a case for a Northern Rivers pilot under the National Broadband Network Initiative
- NOROC's proposed Integrated Regional Transport Study/Plan for the Northern Rivers and South East Queensland.
- Develop Far North Coast Regional Transport Strategy

Strategy 5 Implement the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Support strategies for the development of the Northern Rivers Food sector.
- Develop a Northern Rivers Integrated Transport Strategy
- Support the conduct of investment promotion activities across the region (including development of investment profiles and identification of opportunities for key industry sectors).
- In conjunction with Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers and Get Communities Working support the development of a Regional Jobs Plan

Strategy 6 Develop initiatives to bring skills to the region and to retrain the existing workforce

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Implement Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between I&I NSW and TAFE NSW - North Coast Institute to provide flexibility of training/skills development for industries and enterprises.
- Regional Managers' Network to undertake skills project to support vocational education and training by building better links between schools, TAFE and industry focussing on better skilling of young people.
- Continue to implement the Innovative Development of Excellent Aged-Care Service (IDEAS) Project.
- Inaugural North Coast Innovation Festival.
- Develop Career Pathway Maps for key industry sectors and identify innovative learning options to service business skill demands.
- Rapid response strategy to address impacts of sudden job losses in the manufacturing sector due to business/industry restructure/closure through support for retraining of displaced workers

8. Keep Australia Working Regional Employment Plan (2010) Richmond-Tweed and Clarence Valley Priority Employment Area

Goals:

- Maximising employment and business development opportunities created by the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan
- Generating jobs in the long term
- Helping retrenched workers
- Maximising employment and training opportunities created by the Jobs Fund and similar projects
- Improving the skills base of the region and addressing skills gaps and shortages
- Increasing opportunities for apprentices
- Promoting stronger links between stakeholders

Priority Projects:

- Tenterfield business retention and expansion program
- Richmond Valley economic development – gas field development and rail freight hub
- Green Teams Alliance
- Knowledge workers
- Assisting retrenched or at-risk workers
- Linking employers and contractors to infrastructure projects
- Provision of ongoing assistance and support to Jobs Fund projects
- Lived experience
- Maximizing opportunities in the forestry industry
- Aged care training roadshow
- Improving stakeholder communication and sector linkages
- Communicating with young people about regional industries
- Linking businesses to state and federal programs
- Training programs to overcome skills shortages