



TWEED
SHIRE COUNCIL

Draft Policy Directions Paper

**Draft policy directions
for rural land Tweed Shire**

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Draft Policy Direction Paper

This Draft Policy Direction Paper has been prepared to guide preparation of the Rural Land Strategy in the final stage of the project, and provides a framework and directions for the future use and management of rural land in Tweed Shire.

The draft Strategy to be prepared in Stage 4 will be consistent with the final policy direction to be endorsed by Council once public exhibition is concluded and submissions considered.





Background

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Why develop a Rural Land Strategy?

Rural land serves a range of functions and values, including the protection of the environment, farming, tourism, rural industries, extractive industries, forestry, cultural, recreation and rural housing.

The biophysical and social composition of rural land in the Tweed is highly diverse, comprising highly productive agricultural land, much of which is prone to flooding, undulating arable and grazing land transitioning to steep timbered slopes surrounding the rim of the Mount Warning Caldera.

This stark contrast of landforms, and associated landuses has made the Tweed valley a highly attractive area to live and work or just visit. With increasing demand for more places to live has come pressure to subdivide rural properties for more lifestyle focused opportunities, at the expense of agriculture. With a reduction in lot size has come an associated escalation in land values making it more difficult for more traditional farmers to purchase adjoining properties to develop scales of enterprise required for more traditional farming practices such as dairy farming, beef cattle and bananas, further compounding the demise of agriculture and associated rural industries.

With escalating prices and the ageing of farming communities has come the opportunity for city dwellers seeking a 'green change', often at or near retirement, to purchase into the local market. While not skilled in the more traditional farming practices, many prefer a quiet rural lifestyle; however, others have demonstrated a desire to see their properties utilised for some form of productive agricultural pursuit, bringing in new ideas and supporting a diversification of the rural produce of the Tweed.

Notwithstanding this transition away from the more traditional farming practices, some farmers are now taking advantage of establishing boutique markets close to the South East Queensland population centre, favourable climate, and alternative farming practices, enabling innovative farmers to explore alternative rural enterprises capable of generating income from smaller property sizes.

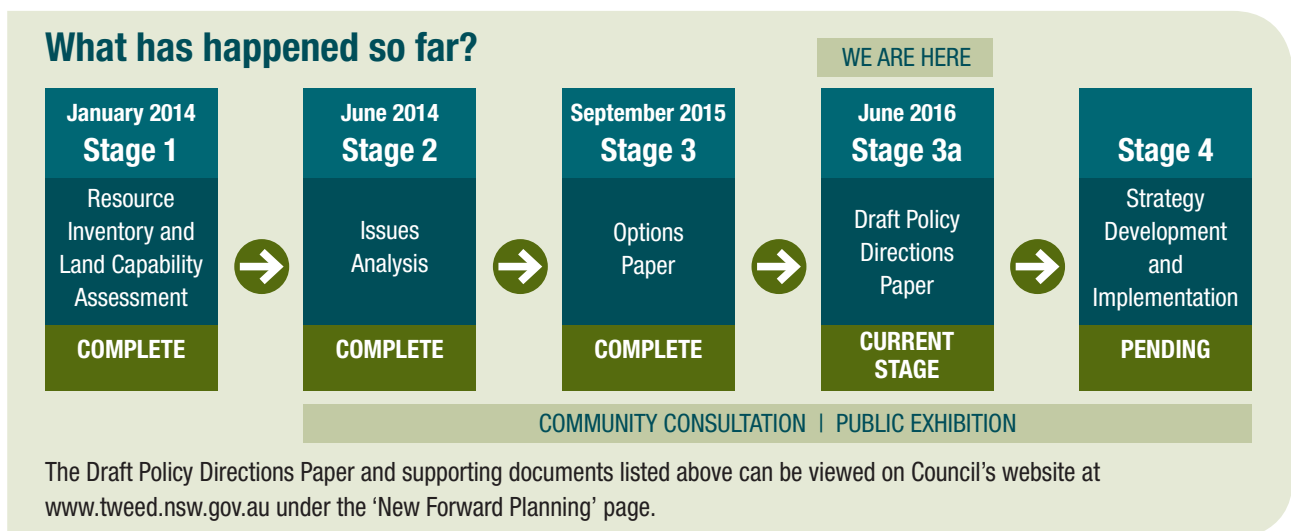
With increasing diversity of landuses and landowner backgrounds has come increasing conflict, with rural landowners at times feeling 'squeezed out' by adjoining residential and other non-rural landuses.

The Rural Land Strategy seeks to develop a holistic framework for balanced planning and management of rural land, providing flexibility but also certainty about how future development of rural land will impact the amenity and character of rural Tweed.

While the Rural Land Strategy is not a rural-residential strategy, it will be linked to other strategies and policies of Council, including the Economic Development Strategy, Rural Villages Strategy, Vegetation Management Strategy, and draft Sustainable Agriculture Strategy.

How is the strategy being prepared?

A four stage process was established to provide a clear pathway for the preparation of the final strategy as seen below. Following community consultation during Stage 3 it was decided to prepare a Draft Policy Directions Paper which would clearly outline the proposed policy direction for the strategy in the final stage.



What happens next?

Following the public exhibition of this Draft Policy Directions Paper, Council will consider all submissions, finalise the policy directions, and commence preparation of a draft Rural Land Strategy which will also be placed on public exhibition. The draft strategy will include specific actions directing at supporting the proposed outcomes of each policy direction.



Introduction

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

The purpose of the Rural Land Strategy is to set a clear vision and policy framework for the future of the Shire's rural areas through the establishment of planning guidelines and tangible actions for the planning, development and management of all rural land in Tweed Shire.

What are policy directions?

A policy direction is an overarching statement of intent used to guide strategies and actions.

What do the draft policy directions address?

In response to the diverse range of issues and options previously identified, the following broad policy directions have been identified.

1. Encourage sustainable agricultural production and protect agricultural land;
2. Protect and improve environmental values and respond to natural hazards;
3. Support economic development;
4. Grow rural tourism;
5. Greater rural housing opportunities;
6. Council requirements are transparent and planning procedures streamlined where possible;
7. An informed, connected and resilient community;
8. Promote more sustainable landuse practices, and
9. Extractive industries are protected and landuse conflict minimised.

While nine policy directions have been identified, no one policy direction operates totally independent of the others, and as such, each policy direction should be read in conjunction with the others.

Each Policy Directions is structured as follows:

Intent – Outlines the aim of the policy direction.

What outcomes will be achieved? – Identifies the desired outcomes from implementation of the policy direction, and

Rationale – Provides background and justification for the policy direction.





Draft Policy Direction 1

Encourage sustainable agricultural production and protect agricultural land

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Ensure that existing and future agricultural production on rural land is facilitated and encouraged through the planning framework, and that land capable of agricultural use is protected.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. Productive and potentially productive agricultural land is zoned appropriately to ensure long term access for agricultural purposes.
2. Subdivision of rural zoned land is restricted where potential for conflict with existing or potentially productive agricultural land could occur, or where the use of the land for agricultural purposes would be reduced.
3. Small properties are used for agricultural purposes where possible.
4. Allotment and property amalgamation is facilitated and encouraged.
5. Existing and potential land use conflicts are identified and managed.
6. Residents living in or near rural zoned land, or people enquiring about living in these locations are aware of the issues associated with living in or near rural land.
7. Best management practices are applied for land, water and biodiversity management.

Rationale:

The productive potential of rural land will vary significantly and is dependent upon the capability and suitability of the land, and whether the soil forms the basis for production.

In the Tweed, the diversity of rural production is broad and reflects its coastal climate, proximity to the South East Queensland market and international airport at Coolangatta.

While the land might be capable and suitable for rural production and associated rural industries, due to pressure for further lifestyle and rural living opportunities and expansion of adjoining residential and rural residential development, conflict between adjoining landuses has led to rural landowners feeling 'squeezed out' leading to a loss of productive agricultural land.

Most agriculturally productive rural land is classified as Class 1, 2, 3 or 4 under the Land and Soil Classification and Agricultural Land Suitability systems. Generally, these classes equate to the floodplains and that undulating land typically used for grazing and general farm practices. The majority of this land is zoned RU1 Primary Production or RU2 Rural Landscape. The use of these zones reflects the intention to see agricultural land retained for productive agricultural activities.

While some may see agricultural land as land 'banked' for further development, agriculture is a landuse like any other landuse, whether it is cows or factories, the land has been classified to reflect the desired future use of that land and as such, agricultural land is a legitimate long term landuse like any other and should not be viewed as an interim landuse until some future development opportunity arises.



The NSW Government has recently released the NSW Right to Farm Policy (December 2015) which reinforces rights and responsibilities of rural landowners, and reinforces the ability of existing legal agricultural activities to operate without being pressured to change or move as a result of conflict with owners of adjoining land.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries has highlighted the need to retain resource access, that is, the ability for agricultural land or land with potential for agricultural use to be available for use now and into the future regardless of whether it is currently being used for agriculture or not, ensuring that the land is available when markets change, or new technology enables new crops or farming practices to be conducted on that land.

The history of rural land subdivision within the Tweed has seen lot sizes diminish significantly to the point where the majority of lots in the RU1 Primary Production and RU2 Rural Landscape zones are well below the 40 hectare minimum lot size requirement of the NSW Government and the Tweed Local Environmental Plan 2014.

In the RU2 Rural Landscape zone, only 10% of all allotments are 40 hectares or more, with more than 71% of lots less than 10 hectares and 61% less than 5 hectares. The majority of these small area properties are assumed to be used for lifestyle purposes and not for agricultural purposes. Further reduction in lot size will alienate more land from productive agricultural use and is contradictory to ensuring continued access for agricultural production.

Planning requirements for subdivision should provide an appropriate balance between facilitating change and growth in rural activities whilst avoiding fragmentation that may result in a loss of land for primary production or an increase in land use conflicts. In considering the application of subdivision and other controls, Council must be consistent with the principles outlined in State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008 (See Policy Direction 6).

While minimising landuse conflict is a key issue, providing flexibility and opportunities to encourage value-adding and diversification while having regard to the scale and impact of the activity on the main purpose of the land for primary production, the scenic amenity and character of the locality generally are seen as important to the future of rural Tweed.



Overview of the general purpose of the RU1, RU2 and RU4 zones

RU1 Primary Production Zone

This zone covers land used for most kinds of commercial primary industry production, including extensive agriculture, intensive livestock and intensive plant agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, mining and extractive industries. The zone is aimed at utilising the natural resource base in a sustainable manner.

The zone is not a default zone for non-urban land. The zone is allocated to land where the principal function is primary production.

RU2 Rural Landscape

This zone is for rural land used for commercial primary production that is compatible with ecological or scenic landscape qualities that have been conserved (often due to topography).

It may apply to land that is suitable for grazing and other forms of extensive agriculture, or intensive plant agriculture (such as 'viticulture'), but where the permitted uses are usually more limited due to landscape constraints and differ from RU1.

RU4 Primary Production Small Lots Zone

This zone is for land which is to be used for commercial primary industry production, including emerging primary industries and agricultural uses that operate on smaller rural holdings.

The objectives of the zone encourage employment opportunities in relation to primary production on small lots and to minimise fragmentation and alienation of resource lands important for food security.

The core zone objectives and mandated permissible uses ('intensive plant agriculture' and 'plant nursery') reflect the intent of the zone – being an agricultural industry/food production focus and not a rural residential lifestyle zone.

The Tweed currently does not have a RU4 zone.

(Department of Planning and Environment Practice Note PN 11-002)





Draft Policy Direction 2

Protect and improve environmental values and respond to natural hazards

Avondale Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Ensure rural development and land use does not adversely impact on scenic, environmental or cultural values, and that environmental hazards are avoided, and climate change is responded to.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. Native vegetation and wildlife habitat of environmental, social or cultural significance is protected, rehabilitated and managed.
2. Local programs for rehabilitation of degraded land are developed through collaboration with relevant agencies and landowners.
3. The drinking water catchment is protected from inappropriate development or land degradation.
4. The scenic landscape is protected and development does not adversely impact the amenity or desired future character of the locality.
5. Mechanisms to improve the understanding of Aboriginal culture and heritage, and ensure appropriate management and protection of cultural and heritage items and places are developed with the local Aboriginal community.
6. Environmental weeds and pest animals are control.
7. The rural community is more prepared and resilient to changing climatic conditions.
8. Landowners are aware of natural resource issues and best practice.
9. Aquatic habitat is adequately conserved and protected from degradation of upslope and adjoining land.

Rationale:

The attractiveness of the Tweed as a place to live, work and recreate is closely linked to the natural environment which encompasses the Shire.

Approximately half of the shire (68,570 hectares or 52.1%) is covered by native vegetation and most of this (48,584ha)

occurs outside national parks (which occupy 16.1% of the Shire). Much of this vegetation is of National or International significance; however, of the 50 distinct vegetation communities within the shire, many are highly depleted, inadequately conserved or listed as 'endangered' under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (TSC Act) (1995).

Identifying environmental, cultural or scenic values will assist land owners to plan farm activities with appropriate up-to-date information provided up-front. It is also important that these values are recognised in the planning system, including in the strategic planning and development assessment processes.

Council can also work with relevant agencies and land owners to develop locally appropriate programs for addressing a range of natural hazards, such as bushfire hazard reduction, weed and pest control, and to ensure land owners have relevant information to assist them when planning and implementing farm activities.

In addition to natural hazards likely to pose a risk to life or property, or result in degradation of the environment, the more insidious invasion of noxious weeds and pests have been raised as a threat to farming activities. The spread of weeds along roads and drainage lines requires direct action to prevent infestations from spreading.

While pest and weed management requires a whole-of-community approach, a review of procedures for the management of noxious weeds on Council-owned roads and reserves will assist in supporting viable agricultural operations.

The 2007 CSIRO publication *Climate Change in the Northern Rivers Catchment* identifies that the future climate of the Northern Rivers Catchment is likely to be warmer with projected increases in evaporation. Although projected changes in average rainfall are currently not clear, the catchment is likely to be drier. Such climate change is also expected to increase the regularity and intensity of heat waves, extreme winds and fire risk. Despite this trend toward drier conditions, there is also potential for seasonal increases in extreme rainfall events and subsequent flooding events.

Raising awareness, building a strong knowledge base in the local community about individual, community and local government roles in addressing climate change will assist local communities develop resilience to the impacts of climate change.



Draft Policy Direction 3

Support economic development

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Facilitate a vibrant, diverse and economically sustainable future for agricultural land and associated rural industries in the Tweed.

What outcomes will be achieved?

- local rural produce is supported and promoted.
- Innovation, diversification and value-added farming enterprises and activities are encouraged and supported.
- Improvements in local rural communication networks, information sharing, skills development, education, landuse, farming and business practices and marketing methods are facilitated.
- The use of existing public infrastructure and planning for additional infrastructure is reviewed to support development of rural industries and agricultural activities.
- Development of rural industry-specific growth strategies are supported and encouraged.
- Initiatives targeting youth employment are encouraged.

Rationale:

Notwithstanding the significant increase in rural landowners living on the land primarily for lifestyle purposes, for many rural landowners, the farm is their livelihood, a business like any other business operated at a scale often much larger than many small businesses.

While many landowners believe it is possible to generate their entire income from the property, not all farmers are able to generate an income solely from their property and many rely on off-farm employment. Some landowners have embarked on development of less traditional farming ventures, seeking to either value-add to farm produce, or diversify into alternative farming or rural landuse activities.

In June 2016, the Department of Planning and Environment released statistics showing that approximately 12,415 people living in the Tweed work elsewhere, and while not all of these people would live in rural Tweed, employment of rural Tweed

residents is highly specialised in tertiary industries compared to rural NSW, with skilled white collar occupations representing the largest employer for rural Tweed.

Reducing the number of people who travel elsewhere to work is seen as a key issue of both the State Government within the draft North Coast Regional Plan and supported by Council's Economic Development Strategy and the Rural Land Strategy under this draft policy direction.

Due to the relatively small size of many properties, the ability to find alternative on-farm income is seen as an important aspect of living and working in rural Tweed.

Establishing a positive and pro-active approach to awareness of business opportunities and encouragement of appropriate economic development in rural areas where initiatives consistent with the rural character of the location are supported and encouraged is seen as an important role for Council which will be discussed further in Policy Direction 4.

While there is already a diverse range of farming activities in the Shire, there is potential for greater use of innovation, value-adding, and diversification.

The development of the skills necessary to run a rural enterprise and having access to information upon which critical business decisions can be based is a multi-faceted aspect of working and living on the land which is primarily the responsibility of the landowner to acquire. This is often supported through programmes run by education providers and government, but without access to information, many landowners may not know where to find information that will assist in making the best decisions for the economic viability of their farming operation.

Establishment of a rural land information hub or website for the sharing of information should support development of a resilient rural community which is informed, well connected, and engaged, able to access information at a single point of entry. Good telecommunications infrastructure will be an important aspect of implementing this policy direction.

Tourism is seen as an important and high potential economic development opportunity for rural Tweed which is addressed separately in Draft Policy Direction 4.



Draft Policy Direction 4

Grow rural tourism

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Encourage and support rural tourism development and activities, in appropriate locations having regard to agricultural, environmental and scenic values.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. Rural-based tourism development and activities are seen as an opportunity to value-add and diversify where the productive capacity of agricultural land is not reduced.
2. Tourism development which does not adversely impact environmental, and scenic values in rural areas is encouraged.
3. Rural-based tourism is included within broader tourism planning framework.
4. Council's planning instruments facilitate a greater diversity of compatible tourist landuses in the rural and environmental zones where appropriate.
5. Barriers to establishment and growth of rural tourism in the Tweed are reduced or eliminated.
6. The rural community and entrepreneurs are aware of the potential tourism opportunities in rural Tweed.
7. Opportunities for Aboriginal culture to be promoted as a tourist activity or destination are identified.

Rationale:

The Tweed valley is recognised as a preferred destination for day trips and short stay accommodation, its contrasting landuses and topography ranging from flood plains covered in sugar cane surrounded by the dramatic rim of the Mount Warning caldera providing views from rolling grazing land surrounded by world heritage rainforest.

Protection of the scenic values of this landscape is paramount. The Tweed's scenic values are highly valued by the Tweed community and a feature which has made the Tweed a highly desirable place to live, work and recreate. Any development in rural Tweed must respect these values and ensure that rural tourism development is compatible with the locality and does not detract from the scenic amenity of the location.

While professionals and service industries are major employers in the Shire, with substantial numbers of people living here but work elsewhere, and the younger generation not prepared in many instances to attempt making a living off the land, the opportunity to provide an alternative to the farm that is close to home is seen as an important direction for the future of rural Tweed.

Tourism is seen as a desirable and stable employment opportunity if well planned and located.

As discussed in Draft Policy Direction 1, any tourism development must ensure that agricultural activities and associated rural industries are not adversely impacted or cause landuse conflict.

A well designed tourism development which respects the natural features of the setting and locality whether predominantly agriculture or environmental could provide opportunities for innovation and diversification.

A review of Council's planning policies is required to ensure that appropriate tourism development is facilitated. Further discussion on streamlining assessment of development proposals can be seen in Draft Policy Direction 6.

While the benefits of tourism development are recognised, there is a lack of information regarding the potential demand for specific types of tourism. This shortage of information may be an inhibitor for some landowners in developing proposals. With the support of local tourism organisations, further information is required to ascertain the potential nature of tourism development opportunities and establish mechanisms to facilitate them.

Potential criteria for identifying areas suitable for rural-based tourism

The following criteria should be included in a more comprehensive list for assessment of development of rural-based tourism:

- Avoid productive or potentially productive rural land, except where the tourism activity is value-adding to existing agriculture and will not create land use conflicts or impact on the future use of adjoining land for agriculture.
- The environment is protected and enhanced.
- Avoid land identified for future urban development.
- Focus tourism on land:
 - o In close proximity to existing tourism products and infrastructure nodes;
 - o In close proximity to National or State Parks, coastal parks or ocean beaches or linked to a tourism route or major access route identified in a tourism strategy;
 - o That provides easy access to a major road, highway or tourism route;
 - o That may be serviced with telecommunications, water, sewer etc.
 - o That provides an attractive setting.

A scenic photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are tall, golden-brown grasses. In the middle ground, a large, dark-colored barn with a light-colored roof is visible. The background features rolling green hills and a large, forested mountain range under a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Draft Policy Direction 5

Greater diversity of rural housing

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Facilitate opportunities for more diverse rural housing which supports agricultural enterprises and rural industries, provides opportunities to work close to home and have regard for environmental, agricultural and scenic impacts.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. Opportunities provided for additional dwellings in the RU1 Primary Production and RU2 Rural Landscape where:
 - o subdivision is not required;
 - o will have minimal impacts on services and infrastructure;
 - o will not adversely impact scenic amenity or landscape character;
 - o will not create landuse conflict, and
 - o will not reduce the area of productive or potentially productive agricultural land.
2. The land's natural values are enhanced in a manner which more than offsets the impact of an additional dwelling on the property.
3. Buildings and structures are designed and sited to minimise cut and fill.
4. Alternative approaches to housing and land tenure investigated and responded to appropriately.
5. Infrastructure services and facilities are capable of accommodating the increase in demand from development.
6. Consolidation of allotments and properties promoted.
7. Subdivision of properties in existing small lot clusters where appropriate.
8. Expansion of rural villages investigated.

9. Potential for dwellings on existing lots smaller than the minimum lot size reviewed and the need for 'dwelling entitlement' investigations eliminated.
10. Opportunities for subdivision of fragmented properties investigated.
11. The proper and orderly development of future urban growth areas is not hindered by inappropriate development.

Rationale:

Feedback received during community consultation and public exhibition supported the option of providing additional housing which did not involve subdivision of land for purposes ranging from provision of accommodation for extended family, workers accommodation, and rental income.

Apart from those wishing to provide additional housing, a number of submissions received during the public exhibition of the Issues Paper in Stage 2, and the Options Paper in Stage 3, emphasised the desire to have their properties subdivided to generate income in retirement, often while still resident on the property.

Apart from the already extensive subdivision of rural zoned land for lifestyle purposes, the Rural Land Strategy is not a rural residential strategy and as such opportunities for broadscale subdivision of rural land for rural-residential purposes have not been fully investigated.

The Far North Coast Regional Strategy, 2006 states that for land in the non-coastal area (defined as being west of the Pacific Highway), rural-residential land release will occur in accordance with existing local rural residential strategies or in a review negotiated between councils and the Department of Planning and Environment, consistent with the Regional Strategy, and that local environmental plans will ensure that all new development reinforces existing urban and rural centres, towns and villages.



The retention of the existing minimum lot sizes as proposed in the Options Paper would prevent further subdivision of the majority of rural land; however, opportunities to provide additional housing diversity have been proposed under this policy direction, along with further consideration of intensifying development in existing small lot clusters.

Any longer term planning for additional housing or subdivision for rural residential of lifestyle purposes will have to consider a range of factors, some of which would include:

- Avoiding productive or potentially productive agricultural land;
- Proximity of the land to existing towns and settlements;
- The efficient use and economic provision of services, roads and other infrastructure; and
- Avoiding land and vegetation of high conservation value or high environmental hazard areas.

On land which is at or greater than the minimum lot size for that zone, the ability to lodge a development application for

construction of a dwelling is automatically assumed; however, the Tweed has a significant number of rural zoned allotments which are less than the minimum lot size and uncertainty surrounds whether these allotments have a dwelling entitlement.

Investigation of dwelling entitlements is a complex and time consuming process derived from historical planning instruments but carried forward until today. Streamlining procedures for the determination of dwelling entitlements is seen as a contribution to better planning process and practice.

Where there is a dwelling entitlement, current local planning provisions only permit attached dual occupancies, but not detached dual occupancy or secondary dwellings, thereby limiting housing opportunities.

Dual Occupancy (detached) and secondary dwellings would provide housing opportunities for farm workers or family members, to support farm growth or succession planning in certain circumstances and will be addressed in the Draft Strategy; as will opportunities to support further housing within existing large lot residential areas.



Rural Planning and Subdivision Principles

The **Rural Planning Principles** are as follows:


- (a) the promotion and protection of opportunities for current and potential productive and sustainable economic activities in rural areas,
- (b) recognition of the importance of rural lands and agriculture and the changing nature of agriculture and of trends, demands and issues in agriculture in the area, region or State,
- (c) recognition of the significance of rural land uses to the State and rural communities, including the social and economic benefits of rural land use and development,
- (d) in planning for rural lands, to balance the social, economic and environmental interests of the community,
- (e) the identification and protection of natural resources, having regard to maintaining biodiversity, the protection of native vegetation, the importance of water resources and avoiding constrained land,
- (f) the provision of opportunities for rural lifestyle, settlement and housing that contribute to the social and economic welfare of rural communities,
- (g) the consideration of impacts on services and infrastructure and appropriate location when providing for rural housing,
- (h) ensuring consistency with any applicable regional strategy of the Department of Planning or any applicable local strategy endorsed by the Director-General.

The **Rural Subdivision Principles** are as follows:

- (a) the minimisation of rural land fragmentation,
- (b) the minimisation of rural land use conflicts, particularly between residential land uses and other rural land uses,
- (c) the consideration of the nature of existing agricultural holdings and the existing and planned future supply of rural residential land when considering lot sizes for rural lands,
- (d) the consideration of the natural and physical constraints and opportunities of land,
- (e) ensuring that planning for dwelling opportunities takes account of those constraints.

(State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008)





Draft Policy Direction 6

**Council requirements are
transparent and planning
procedures streamlined
where possible**

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Assist rural production and development by simplifying planning requirements and streamlining procedures where possible; producing better planning outcomes.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. Council is seen as being more open and supportive of innovative approaches which value-add and diversify agricultural production and rural industry.
2. Council policies and planning requirements are more flexible where possible.
3. Planning and development application procedures minimise requirements, cost and time delays for landowners and applicants where possible.
4. Planning procedures and controls are transparent and legible.
5. Planning provisions provide opportunities for innovation, diversification or value-adding.
6. Opportunities provided to discuss with Council development proposals at the conceptual stages of planning, or at other critical stages.
7. Council and the community advocate for changes which will assist agricultural production, rural industries and associated landuses.
8. Planning requirements and systems are regularly reviewed and updated.

Rationale:

State planning legislation, Acts of parliament, local planning instruments, and policies can often seem to be complex documents with extensive criteria and requirements. Such complexity can lead to a lack of understanding of the intentions, a real or perceived lack of flexibility and a sense of over-regulation. Legislation can also appear complex because it is written using legalistic language.

Tweed's local planning instruments are currently more complex than desired; by virtue of the deferral of some land from Tweed Local Environmental Plan 2014 (the LEP) while the recommendations from Department of Planning and

Environment's Review of the Environmental Zones in the Far North Coast Councils are applied. This has resulted in two Local Environmental Plans applying to large areas of rural Tweed.

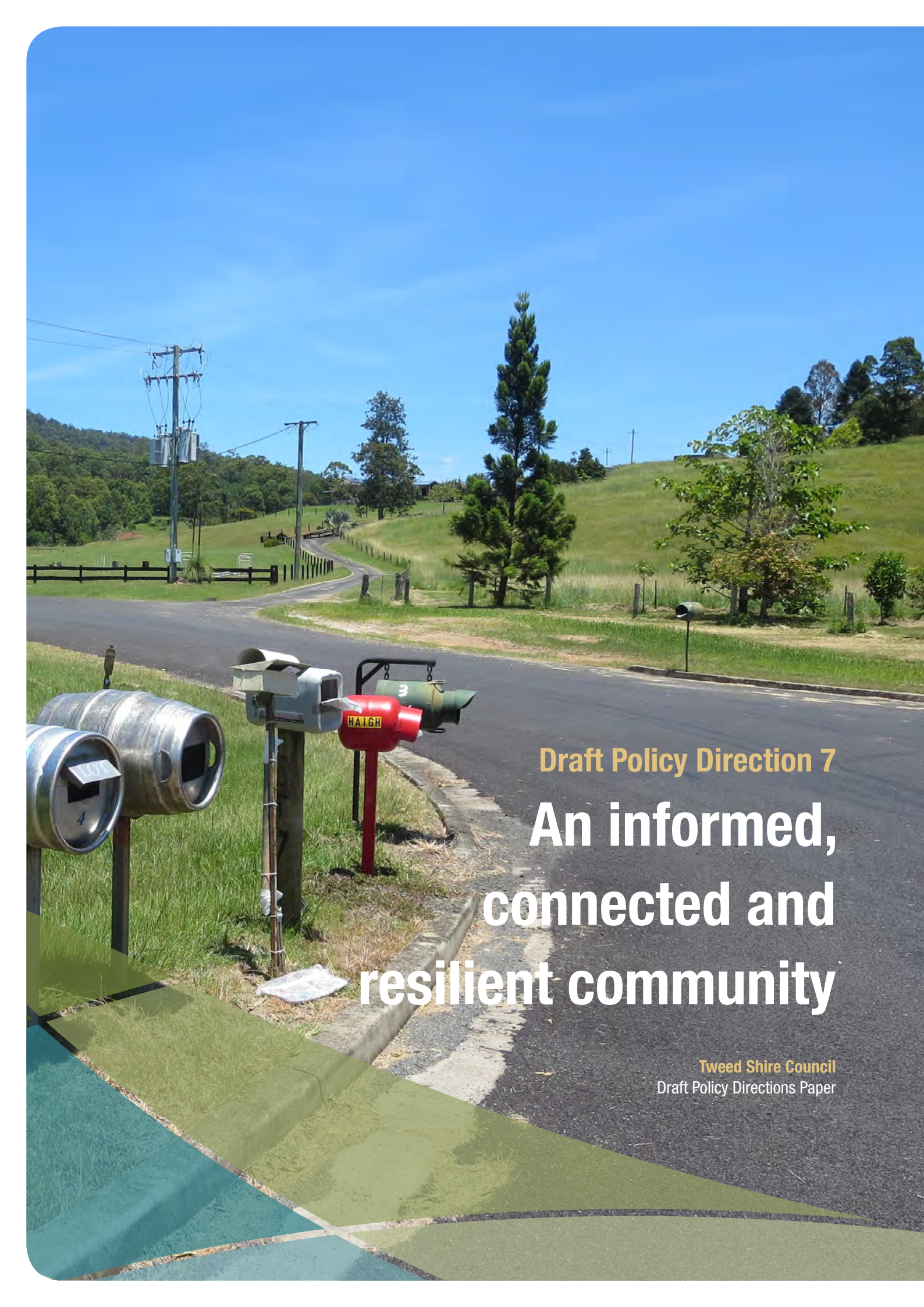
Local planning documents such as Development Control Plans (DCPs) which provide guidance and more detail on implementation of the requirements of the LEP should be written in easy to understand plain English and where necessary supported by fact sheets explaining the relevant provisions.

Feedback received during public consultation raised concerns about procedures, the time taken to process development applications, the costs associated with securing development approval, the transparency of the planning process, understanding of the requirements, and need for such requirements in certain circumstances.

While much of the legislation under which Council operates comes from other levels of government and outside the scope of Council to review or amend, a review of local planning processes could highlight how to improve understanding of the process and requirements, and present a clear pathway for the assessment of planning proposals for rezoning of land, and development applications. The provision of Council officers who understand the nature of rural land issues could assist in providing access to Council and better understanding of the process.

It is not uncommon for proponents to approach Council only after significant time and money has been expended in the preparation of documents; which at times could lead to a sense of frustration when it is realised that the proposal presented has not adequately considered the requirements of legislation or Council. The ability of proponents to meet with Council officers to discuss concepts early in the planning process is encouraged to make the process and requirements clearer, thereby minimising the potential for delays once plans and documents are finally lodged with Council.

The ability of landowners to implement innovative practices or activities, value-add to local produce or diversify into alternative landuses complementary to the principle purpose of the land is supported and will require a review of the LEP to facilitate the ability of such landuses to occur without the need to undertake rezoning of land.



Draft Policy Direction 7

An informed, connected and resilient community

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Encourage and facilitate access to information, enhanced networking opportunities, up-skilling and development of a connected, informed and resilient community.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. A community that is better informed about working and living in rural Tweed.
2. A community that is better connected and able to establish networks or identify existing organisations or networks.
3. A rural community that is resilient and capable of adapting to change including changes in climate.
4. Local community and rural industry groups supported.
5. A community that is aware of the potential conflicts that can arise from living in or near rural zoned land.

Rationale:

Feedback received during development of the Issues Analysis Paper in Stage 2 showed that the community wanted more information and was prepared to undertake skill development.

Technology, including roll out of the NBN in rural Tweed, is now opening opportunities to access information far more easily, but knowing how to find that information and remain up-to-date is not always as easy. Farmers typically work long hours and at the end of the day often do not have time to focus on both the learning about new technology and searching for information.

While a shortage of time and perhaps necessary skills to take advantage of technology is a barrier to some rural landowners finding alternatives to their present farming methods, it is none-the-less one way that rural landowners can connect with farmers in similar positions, learn about new technology, find

out about upcoming events, and keep up-to-date generally with what is happening locally and further afield.

Establishment of a dedicated website for the sharing of information, including links to relevant government agencies, updates, local community group activities, rural business, grower and breeder associations news will assist rural landowners in finding information quickly and assist in networking with other members of the rural community and its associated industry and support groups. Such information would be of benefit not only for existing rural landowners, but for anyone thinking of living in or near rural zoned land.

Having a realistic understanding of the potential inconvenience associated with living next to or near rural properties and the nature of routine farming operations would assist many people considering purchasing property better understand what typical rural landuse activities are and how adjoining land and land owners might be impacted, helping to reduce the potential for conflict.

Changing climatic conditions and the potential for more extreme climatic events is projected to be a feature of climate. With these more extreme events comes the need for individuals and communities to be prepared; this preparedness borne from knowledge of the potential implications and being adaptable to changes as they occur. Supporting development of resilient communities is not just a role for local government, but is an area that Council be involved with.

Encouraging the community to be better connected, know who their neighbours are, who are undertaking similar rural enterprises or simply being able to connect with their local community will assist in developing a stronger sense of community.





Draft Policy Direction 8
**Promote more
sustainable landuse
practices**

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Ensure that natural resources such as land, water and native vegetation are managed in a more sustainable manner, providing long-term resource access, diversification opportunities for rural landholders and on-going improvement in the health of these ecosystems and catchments.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. Information on sustainable land management practices and standards across all agricultural, rural and extractive industries and enterprises is available.
2. The Tweed Sustainable Agriculture Strategy is finalised and implemented.
3. Adverse environmental impacts are minimised and where appropriate, rehabilitation of degraded land occurs.
4. Forestry activities on private land are conducted in a more sustainable manner.
5. The quality of runoff water improves in accord with improved land management practices.

Rationale:

The environment, in particular the base soil and water resources that sustain life are finite resources, which once depleted or deteriorated cannot be readily replaced or repaired.

Poor land management practices can have lasting impact on the health of the environment and ecosystems that rely on these resources.

Vegetation is seen as a key aspect in the protection of soil and water resources and as a benefit, provides the air we breathe and the quality of life we experience, the scenic vistas we value and the overall wellbeing we seek for our communities.

Water quality and availability is important for all forms of primary production, but in particular for the aquaculture industry. Good quality and supply of water also supports tourism and recreation activities, the health of the environment and population through the supply of drinking water.

The continual drive towards more sustainable land management practices has been led in part by rural land owners, with the support of Council, industry bodies and Government agencies. Council can support sustainable land management through delivery of other strategies such as the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy which will provide impetus for application of more sustainable agricultural practices.

Other pathways to support more sustainable landuse practices could include support of groups such as Landcare, and projects targeting issues such as pest and weed management, native vegetation corridor establishment through initiatives such as Koala Connections, the conducting of industry based workshops, facilitating access to information and establishment of networks for the dissemination of advice on best practice; all of which will assist in developing a more sustainable approach to landuse and land management, and help in the building of resilience in individuals, the community and the environment.





Draft Policy Direction 9

**Extractive industries are
protected and landuse
conflict minimised**

Tweed Shire Council
Draft Policy Directions Paper

Intent:

Ensure that extractive resources such as minerals, gravel, sand and soil are identified, protected and managed to ensure on-going resource availability for the broader community and economy, and that potential landuse conflicts are minimised.

What outcomes will be achieved?

1. Information on sustainable land management practices and standards across all extractive industries and enterprises is available.
2. Extractive industry sites and operations are protected by appropriate zoning.
3. Landuse conflict is minimised between adjoining or nearby landuses.
4. Adverse environmental impacts are minimised and rehabilitation of degraded land occurs under the advice of the relevant government agencies.
5. The quality of runoff water improves in accord with improved land management practices.

Rationale:

Extractive industries are important providers of raw materials for infrastructure in the Tweed, and the construction industry. While maintaining access to extractive resources is important, the potential for conflict between these industries and agriculture or nearby urban, peri-urban and rural village development, and the potential environmental impacts of extractive activities need to be carefully managed.

While local government may be the consent authority for many of the smaller extractive industries, the licencing, regulation and enforcement of these sites often lies with government agencies such as the Environment Protection Authority. However, Council can play a role in ensuring that extractive industry sites and resources are identified and appropriately zoned, and that the potential for conflict with adjoining landuses or landowners is minimised through establishment of appropriate buffers and adjoining landuses.





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