

Rural Land Strategy 2020–2036

The future of rural land in Tweed Shire

Statement of acknowledgement of the Bundjalung Aboriginal Nation

We wish to recognise the generations of the local Aboriginal people of the Bundjalung Nation who have lived in and derived their physical and spiritual needs from the forests, rivers, lakes and streams of this beautiful valley over many thousands of years as the traditional owners and custodians of these lands.

Disclaimer

Every care has been taken in preparing this publication, and to the best of our knowledge the content was correct at the time of publishing.

This document should not be used as a basis for investment or other private decision-making purposes in relation to land purchases or landuses.

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Any references to legislation are not an interpretation of the law; they are to be used as a guide only. The information in this publication is general and does not take into account individual circumstances or situations; where appropriate, independent legal or planning advice should be sought.

This document is subject to revision without notice and it is the responsibility of the reader to ensure that the latest version is being used.

This Strategy has no status until formally adopted by Council or endorsed by the Department of Planning and Environment.

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Members of the Rural Land Strategy Reference Panel who provided ongoing technical input into this strategy, including Anne Duke, Christopher Lyndon, Colin Brooks, Ian McBean, Max Boyd, Michael Davis, Peter Smith, Rhonda James, Robert Quirk, and Tom Senti.

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Consultants engaged by Council: EnPlan Partners and Urban Enterprises (Stages 1 and 2), and GHD Pty Ltd (Stage 3).

Stuart Russell (Senior Strategic Planner Tweed Shire Council)

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3	10 October 2018	Amendments to exhibited version	As reported to Council on 3 May, 5 July, 6 September 2018, and 25 October 2018
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Statement by the Mayor

The Tweed is renowned for its natural beauty. Its rural land represents some of the most memorable and iconic natural features in our region, engendering its popularity with holiday makers as it does for those of us who are fortunate to live, work or spend our time relaxing here.

World heritage listed rainforest, national parks, creeks and sugarcane covered floodplains epitomise this uniquely beautiful setting but it also conceals some of the more challenging social aspects confronting traditional farmers and those wishing to introduce alternative ways of generating a sustainable source of income from the land whether or not through food production, or just seeking a lifestyle change.

We have established a vision for our rural Tweed that will see greater opportunity and long-term economic sustainability for rural business enterprise combined with new rural housing opportunities that grow in parallel with the protection and management of the natural environment through innovative restorative planning practice. This will unfold over the next 20 years as the actions are progressively implemented to leverage short-term gains to meet the more immediate needs of the rural community and to meet challenges for securing a prosperous future over the longer-term.

The Rural Land Strategy has sought to address many of the broader social and economic challenges faced by rural landowners and rural land-use enterprise where it falls within reach of the Council's control and influence, and shows that Tweed Councillors have listened to the concerns of our community and where possible developed actions to bring about positive change.

We are committed to engaging with and learning from our rural community and ensuring that our policies embrace the innovation, ingenuity, preferences and cultural values inherent within it, to make sure rural Tweed is better placed in future to meet its potential, and improve the wellbeing and prosperity of all our communities and visitors.

This Rural Land Strategy marks a wonderful opportunity and exciting time in the history of our rural land policy and I look forward to working alongside the community and being part of this progressive change over the coming years.



Cr Katie Milne
Mayor of Tweed Shire

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Abbreviations and definitions

For the purposes of this document the following abbreviations and definitions will apply:

7(a)	Environmental Protection (Wetlands and Littoral Rainforests)
7(d)	Environmental Protection (Scenic/Escarpment) zone under Tweed LEP 2000
7(f)	Environmental Protection (Coastal Lands) zone under Tweed LEP 2000
7(l)	Environmental Protection (Habitat) zone under Tweed LEP 2000
Allotment	A parcel of land with a unique identifying number
BSAL	Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land
CSP	Tweed Shire Community Strategic Plan
DAU	Development Assessment Unit (of Tweed Shire Council)
DCP	<i>Tweed Development Control Plan 2008</i>
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
EPAA	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>
E Zone	Environmental zones as defined in Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006 and DPIE publication <i>Recommendations from the Review of E Zones in the Far North Coast</i>
IDO	Interim Development Order
LEP1987	<i>Tweed Local Environmental Plan 1987</i>
LEP 2000	<i>Tweed Local Environmental Plan 2000</i>
LEP 2014	<i>Tweed Local Environmental Plan 2014</i>
LSC	Land and Soil Classification System
LSPS	Local Strategic Planning Statement
MLS	Minimum lot size as defined in Tweed LEP 2014
MO	Multiple Occupancy
NCRP 2036	<i>North Coast Regional Plan 2036</i>
Property	A property may consist of a single allotment, multiple allotments and/or part allotments
R5	Large Lot Residential zone under Tweed LEP 2014
RLS	<i>Tweed Rural Land Strategy</i>
RMS	NSW Roads & Maritime Services
RU1	Primary Production zone under Tweed LEP 2014
RU2	Rural Landscape zone under Tweed LEP 2014
RU5	Village zone under Tweed LEP 2014
SEPP	<i>State Environmental Planning Policy</i>

Executive summary

Defined by the caldera of Mount Warning/Wollumbin, rural Tweed and the Tweed valley provides postcard scenery, a landscape diverse in natural features, which supports a complex mix of landuses.

This diversity is reflected in the people who have moved here to pursue a life either earning a living from the land or to enjoy being part of a community nestled in a coastal valley connected to the major growth area of Southeast Queensland.

Unlike most other landuse zones, rural land comprises a diverse mix of landuses ranging from agricultural and environmental, to tourism, rural residential lifestyle, extractive industries such as quarries, and a range of retail and commercial activities.

With this increasing diversity and demand for opportunities to be part of this rural area has come an escalation in conflict between landowners seeking to continue historical landuse practices, introduce alternative income generating opportunities or to simply enjoy a rural lifestyle.

The Rural Land Strategy seeks to balance the sometimes competing desires of the rural community for security in operation of legitimate agricultural enterprises, protect the environment and important extractive resources, provide income generating opportunities without the need to work off farm, and provide greater housing opportunities without destroying the character of the Tweed which makes it such a sought after destination.

While much of the prime agricultural land in the Tweed is already protected, and the Tweed is recognised as a State significant agricultural area, opportunities exist to diversify and add value to local produce through processing and establishment of niche markets.

Tourism in rural Tweed has been experiencing significant growth and is seen as a means for a diversification of farming activities which take advantage of the environmental and agricultural features of the Tweed.

To achieve these and other outcomes, the strategy has developed nine overarching policy directions which will deliver actions designed to ensure more sustainable use of rural land and less potential for conflict between landuses through better planning and management across all rural land.

More than 140 actions have been developed; with key stakeholders identified, and priorities listed to support implementation of the Strategy in coming years.



Part 1 Introduction

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.

Rural 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 comprising 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 properties for more lifestyle living 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 property 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.

While this transition away from more traditional farming practices is occurring, some farmers are now taking advantage of close proximity to the South East Queensland population centre, favorable climate, and alternative farming practices, enabling innovation into alternative rural enterprises and establish boutique markets 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 dilemma facing the future of rural land and rural landowners in the Tweed

Feedback from the community during each stage of the project has provided a valuable insight into the diversity of personal feelings, opinions and aspirations for the future of rural land.

The diversity of feedback provided reflects in large part the backgrounds and demography of landowners, and historical transitioning from the farm as the sole source of income, to the farm as a lifestyle choice which may or may not subsidise income. This diversity of landowners and landuse expectations has led to a stark contrast in the perceived future of rural land and a dilemma typical of rural land in close proximity to the coast and large urban centres.

The dilemmas facing the future of land and landowners in rural Tweed can be summarised as falling into three broad categories dependent upon the scale and type of rural enterprise, or the perception of the farm as an income generating asset, a lifestyle choice or component of a retirement package:

1. Scale:
 - Too big for boutique enterprises or too small for broadacre farming.
 - To make a living off the land or live on the land as lifestyle choice?
 - To need good quality soil or not rely on the soil at all?
 - Short term economic gains or longer term agricultural potential.
2. Retirement options:
 - To stay on the farm and struggle with maintenance or to sell and move elsewhere?
 - To have options to support family living on the farm or for children to move to the coast and urban centres.
 - To sell the lot or sell a bit if possible?
3. Everything is just fine as it is.

The Rural Land Strategy seeks to develop a holistic framework for planning and management of rural land, addressing these dilemmas, providing a balanced more flexible approach, but also certainty about future development of rural land that is consistent with the vision established for rural Tweed.

Vision

“Our rural lands will provide a balance of landuses where agricultural and rural activities exist in harmony with environmental and scenic values, rural character is enhanced, landowners supported, and employment opportunities encouraged through innovation, value-adding and diversification by a skilled and resilient community.”

To achieve this vision the Rural Land Strategy will:

- Protect agricultural land and support its productive use.
- Protected and enhance environmental land.
- Provide greater flexibility in the local landuse planning system.
- Expand employment and income generating opportunities.
- Provide a greater diversity of housing opportunities.



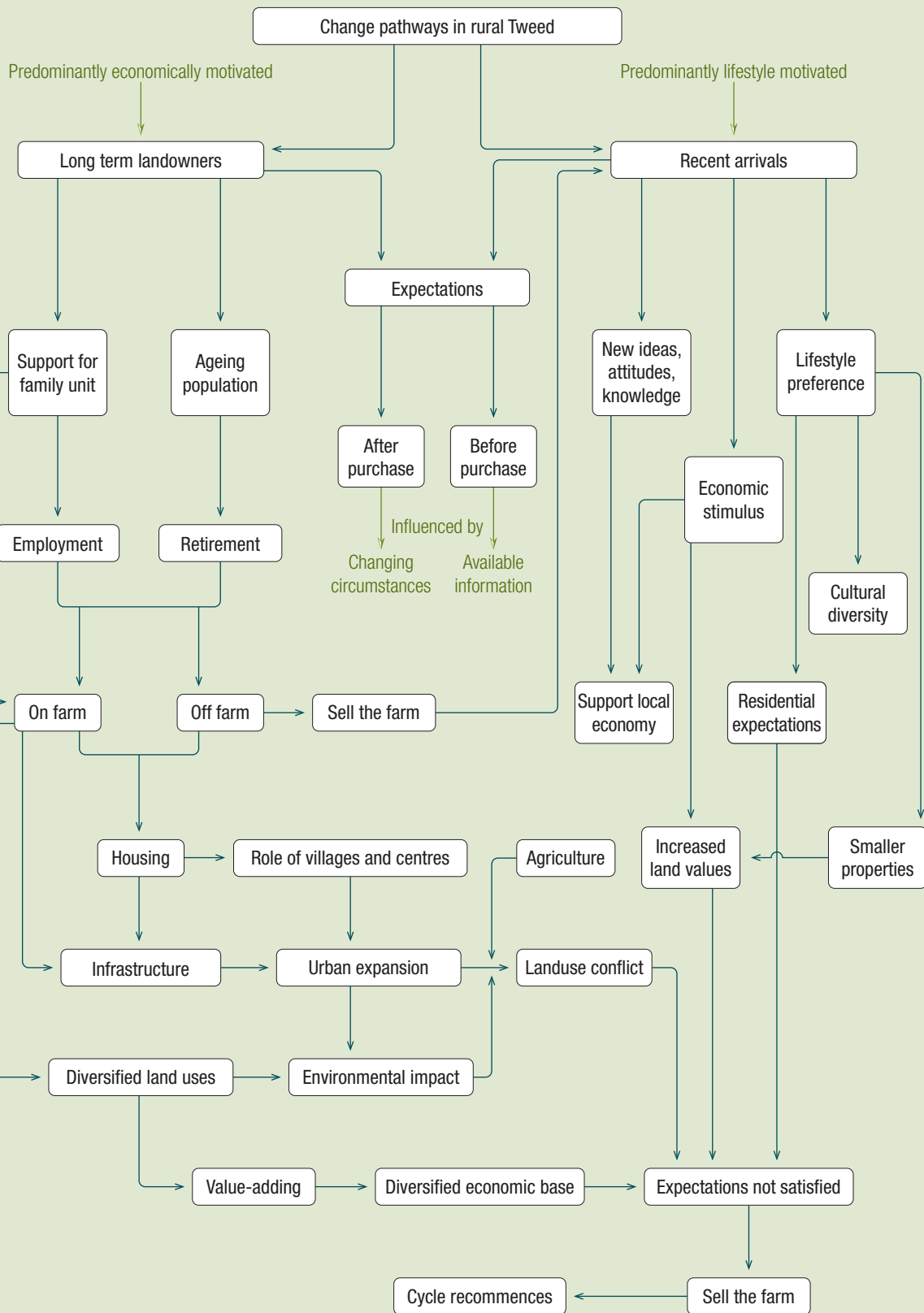


Figure 1: Change pathways in rural Tweed





Property

RU1 Primary Production **767**

RU2 Rural Landscape **4,194**

Rural residential median land value

\$277,000 in the Tweed (2012)
compared with:

\$407,000 – Ballina

\$349,000 – Byron

\$320,000 – Gold Coast

Semi-detached dwellings

3% of rural dwellings
(compared with 1% for rural NSW)



Employment

5,708 people (17%) of the Shire's total
employed population in 2011

Primary industries **10%**
(compared with 21% in rural NSW)

30% working outside the area

Largest employment sector **18%**
white collar workers

Value-added agricultural employment

0.6 (compared with 0.8 for the North Coast Region)

Rural weekly median income

\$998 (compared with \$816 for urban Tweed)



Agriculture

Agricultural production (2015 – 2016)

\$41 million

Bananas and sugarcane

30% of State's product value

Tropical orchard fruit

10% of State's product value

Change in total exports

2017/18 to 2018/19 **+\$2 million**



Tourism

27% of tourists visiting the Tweed

visited the rural areas of the Shire

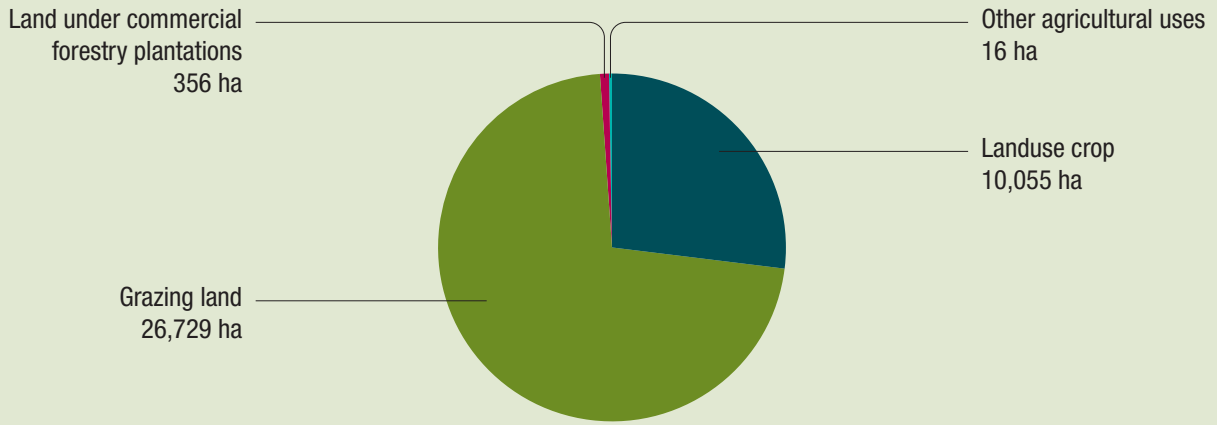
representing **1%** of international visitors

International visitor nights (Tweed)

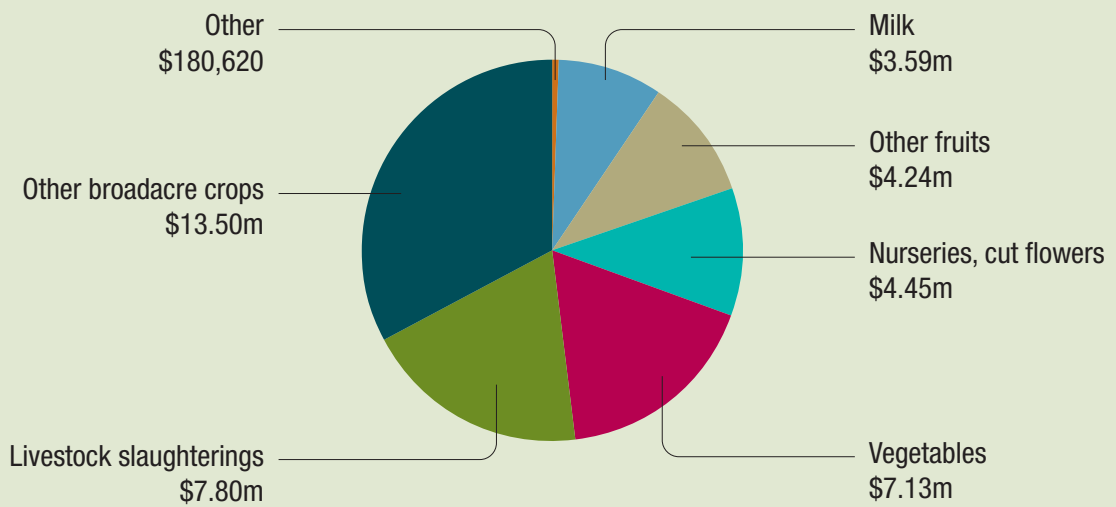
284,689 (2018/19)

Domestic visitor nights (Tweed)

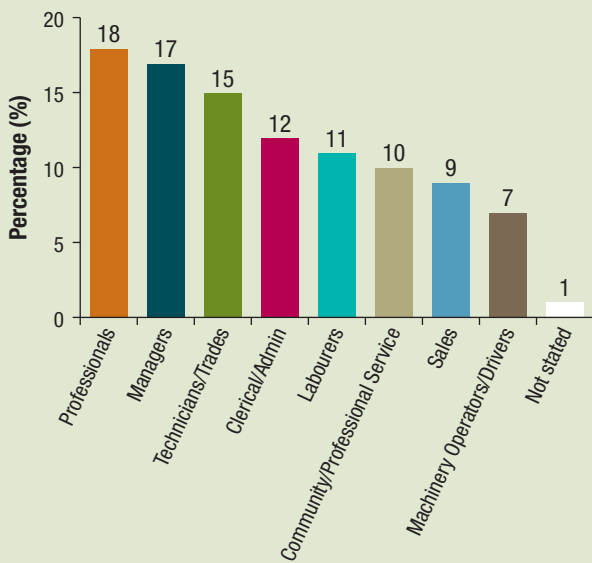
1.67 million (2018/19)



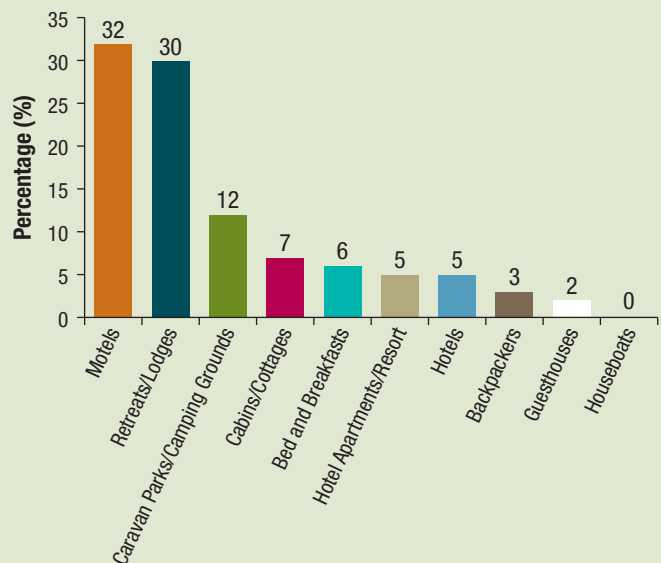
Rural landuse (2010–2011)



Top agricultural products (2015–2016)



Occupation type (2011)



Proportion of tourism room capacity (2011)

The Resource Inventory and Land Capability Assessment developed in Stage 2 provides a comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of rural Tweed.

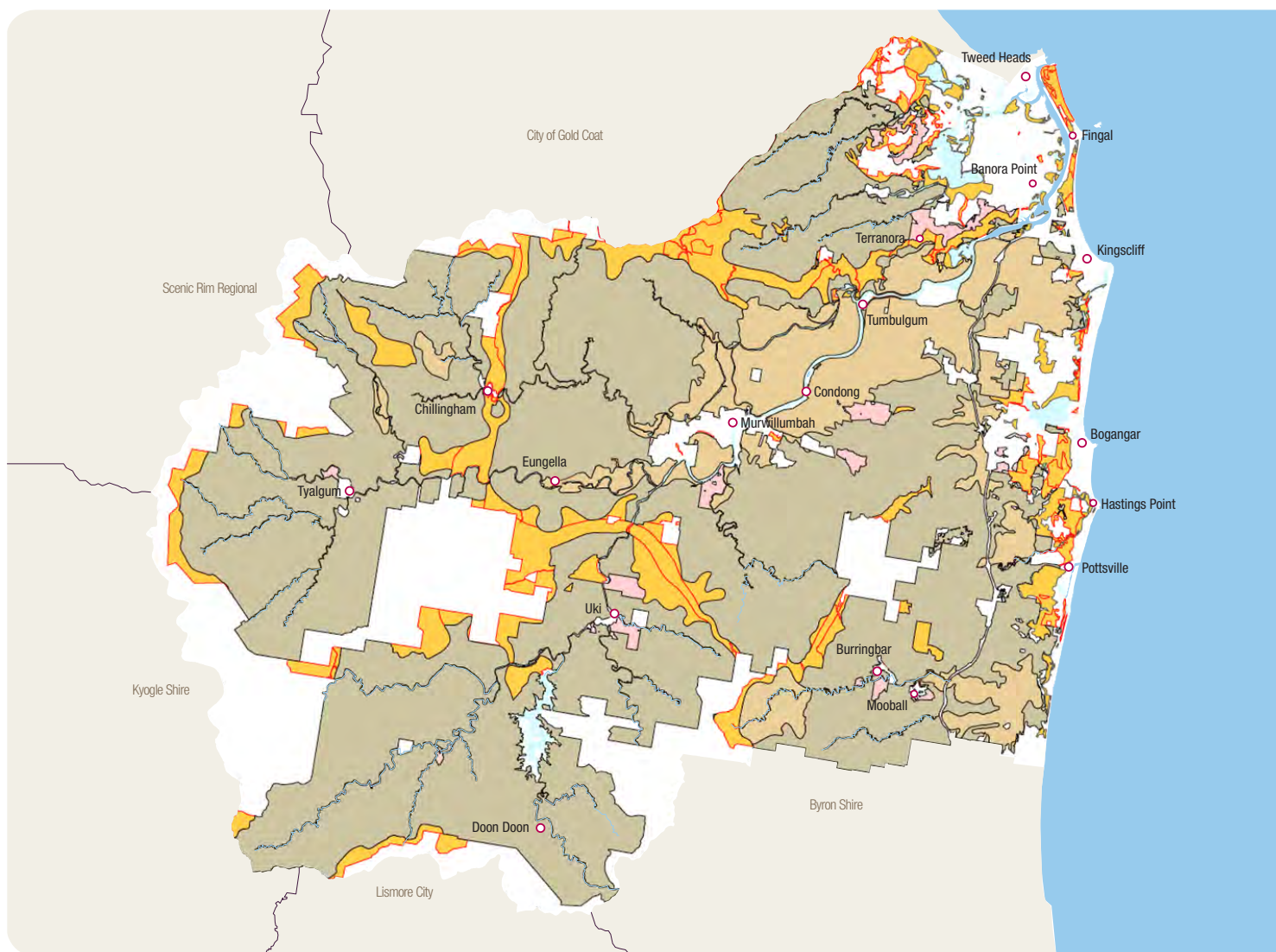
What land is affected by this strategy?

Rural land within the Tweed is predominantly a mix of land used for agricultural and environmental purposes, occupying 73.5% of the Shire, covering an area of approximately 97,000 hectares.

While the majority of agricultural land is zoned under Tweed LEP 2014, environmental land is currently zoned under Tweed LEP 2000 and will remain so until the final recommendations of the Northern Councils E Zone Review prepared by the Department of Planning and Environment are translated into LEP 2014.

The Rural Land Strategy applies to all land within the following zones:

- LEP 2014
 - RU1 Primary Production
 - RU2 Rural Landscape
 - R5 Large Lot Residential
- LEP 2000
 - 7(a) Environmental Protection (Wetlands and Littoral Rainforest)
 - 7(d) Environmental Protection (Scenic/Escarpment)
 - 7(l) Environmental Protection (Habitat)



LEP 2014 Zones

- RU1 Primary Production
- RU2 Rural Landscape
- R5 Large Lot Residential

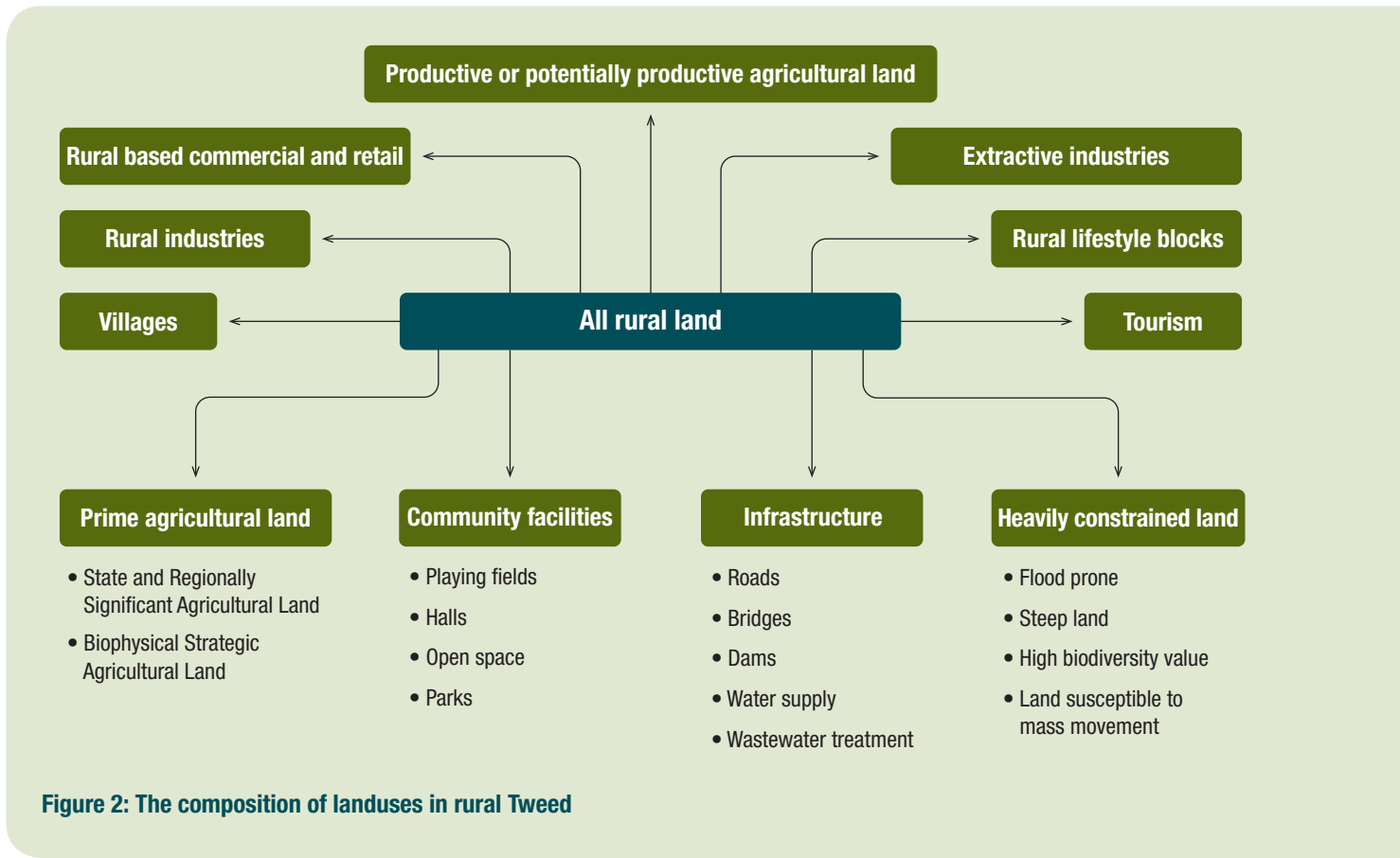
LEP 2000

- 7(a) Environmental Protection (wetlands and littoral rainforest)
- 7(d) Environmental Protection (scenic/escarpment)
- 7(l) Environmental Protection (habitat)

Area of rural Tweed – 96,665 hectares (73.5% of total area of Tweed Shire)

The diversity of landuses in rural Tweed





What does the Rural Land Strategy seek to achieve?

Snapshot

Understand the diversity and nature of rural resources and enterprises.

Change

Understand how change has affected the use of rural land, why and how farming practices have changed and likely outcomes from adoption of outcomes derived in this Strategy.

Issues

Identify and evaluate key issues of concern for rural communities, and opportunities for sustainable rural enterprises.

Future character

Define the desired future character of rural land.

Policy framework

Provide a policy framework for implementation of this strategy, to achieve outcomes consistent with the desired future character.

Strategies and actions

Provide workable strategies and actions for implementation of the policy directions generated by the Strategy.

Other

Identify additional studies and investigations required to support directions of this Strategy.

The Rural Land Strategy provides the details required to implement the Policy Directions endorsed by Council at the Planning Committee Meeting of 6 October 2016.

How was the Rural Land Strategy developed?

The RLS has been prepared utilising a staged process to ensure a factual basis to decision making and a clear pathway to development of the final strategy and actions for its implementation, as seen in Figure 3.

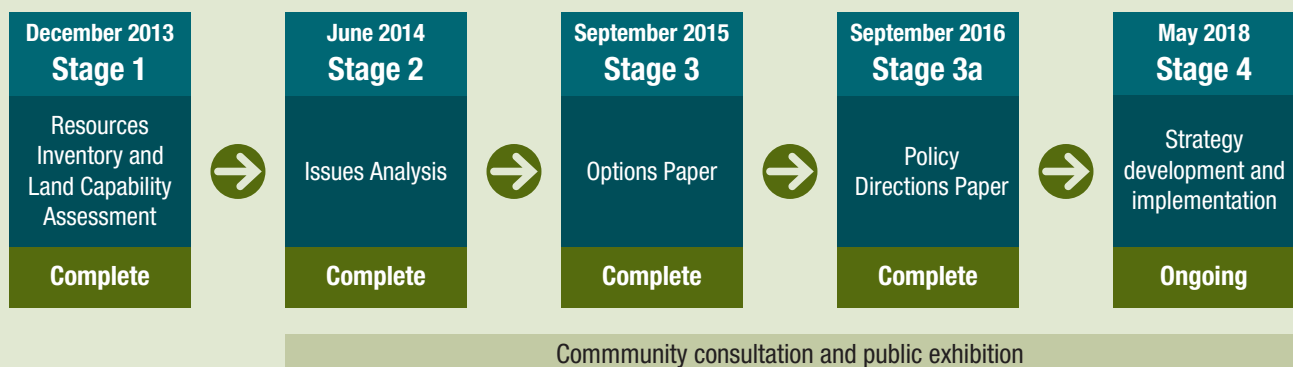


Figure 3: Stages in preparation of the Rural Land Strategy

Details of the process and documents developed in each stage of the project can be seen in Part 3 Appendix 5.

Community engagement has been crucial to understanding aspirations for the future of rural land, and has provided a range of opportunities for the community to have a say and be involved in development of the Strategy.

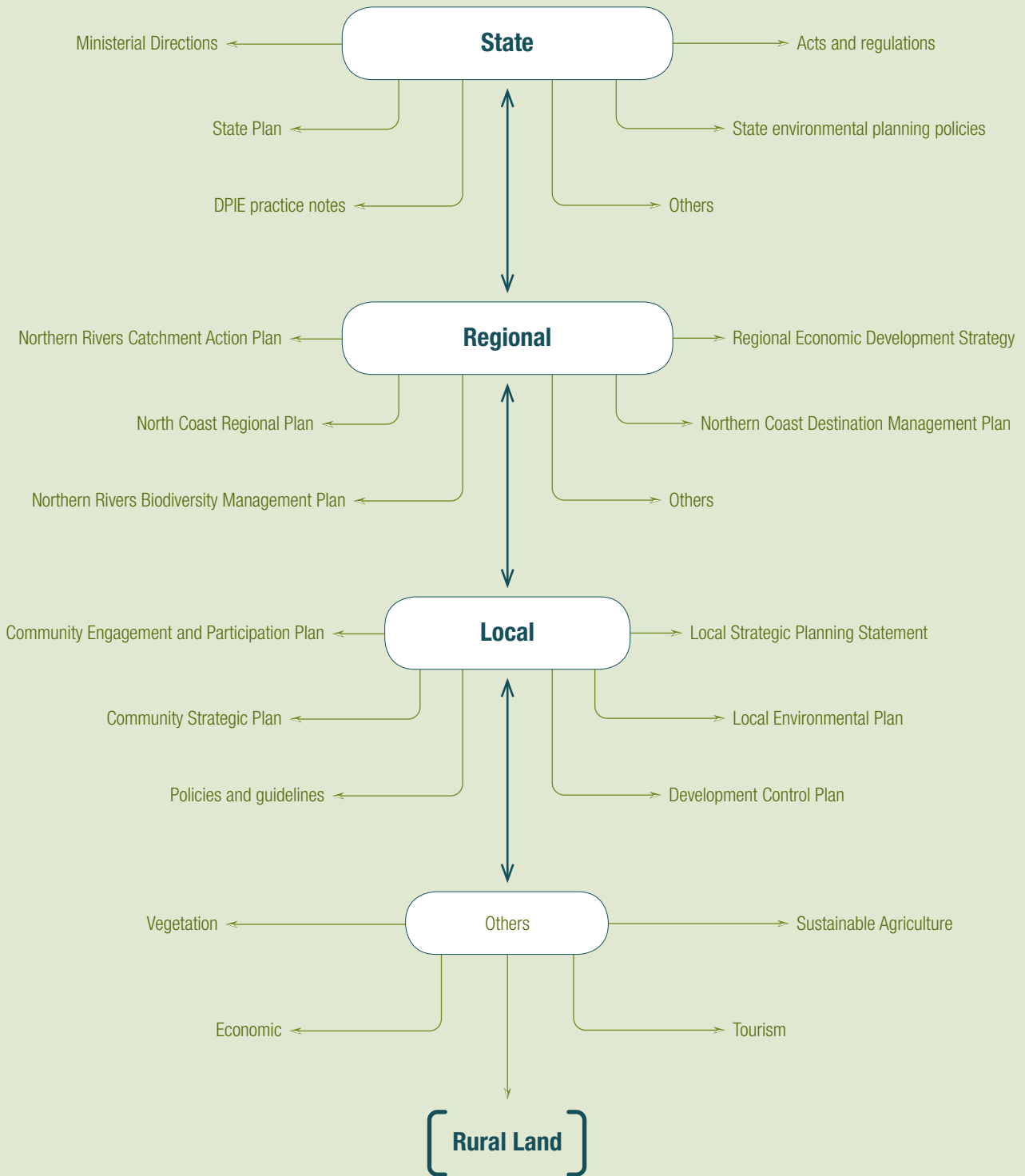
Feedback received during the public exhibition of documents has generated a diverse range of issues and opinions which have been considered alongside the findings of each stage of the project.

To find out more about how the community was engaged and their responses, go to Part 3 – Appendix 6 and 7.

While Stages 1, and 2 were completed by EnPlan Partners and Urban Enterprises, and Stage 3 by GHD Pty Ltd, consultants engaged by Council, investigations were also undertaken by Council to assess the consultants’ recommendations and prepare the Policy Directions Paper completed in Stage 3a, and the final Strategy, resulting in a range of informative maps being developed which can be seen in Part 4: Mapping.

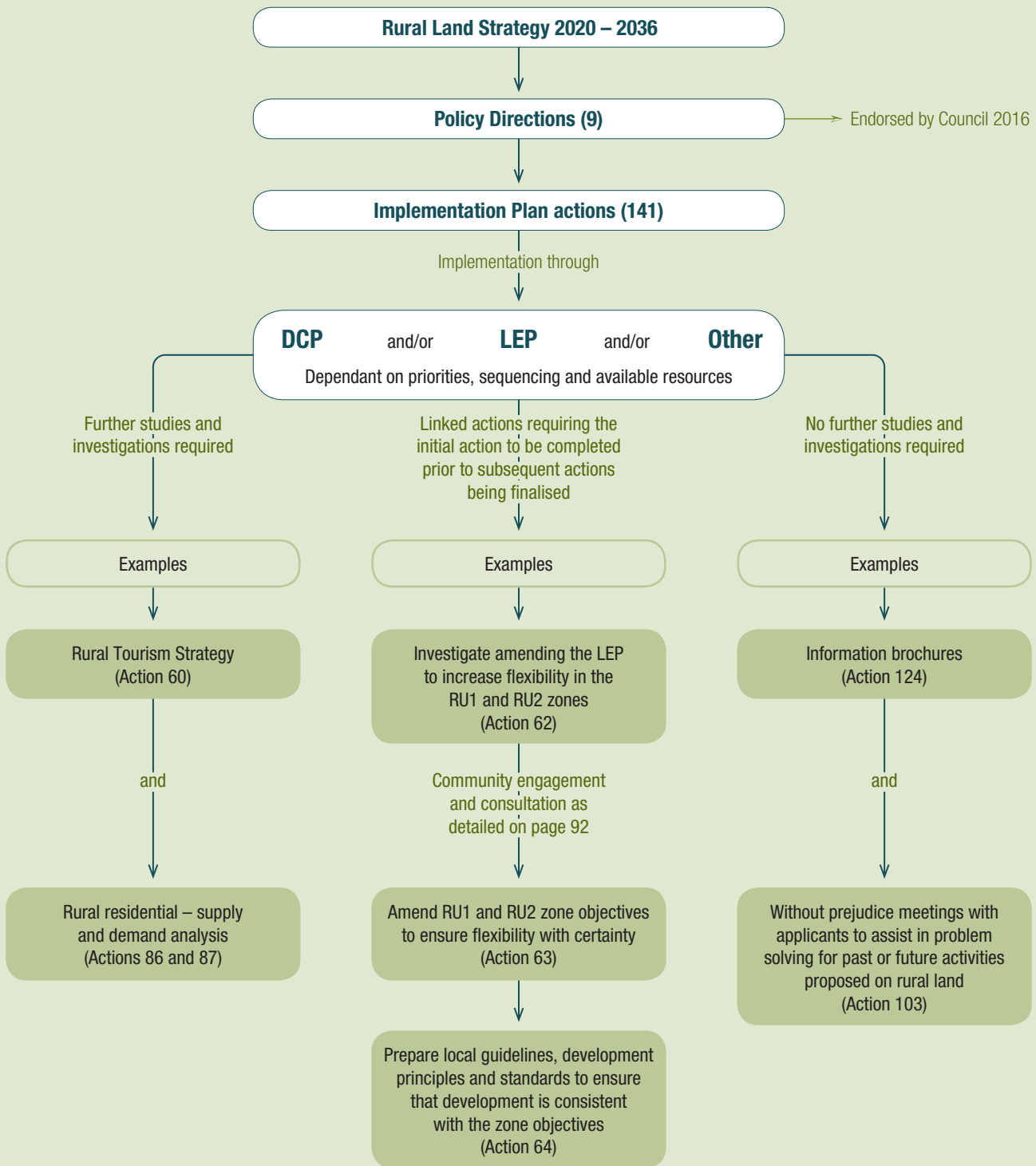


Context within the NSW land use planning hierarchy



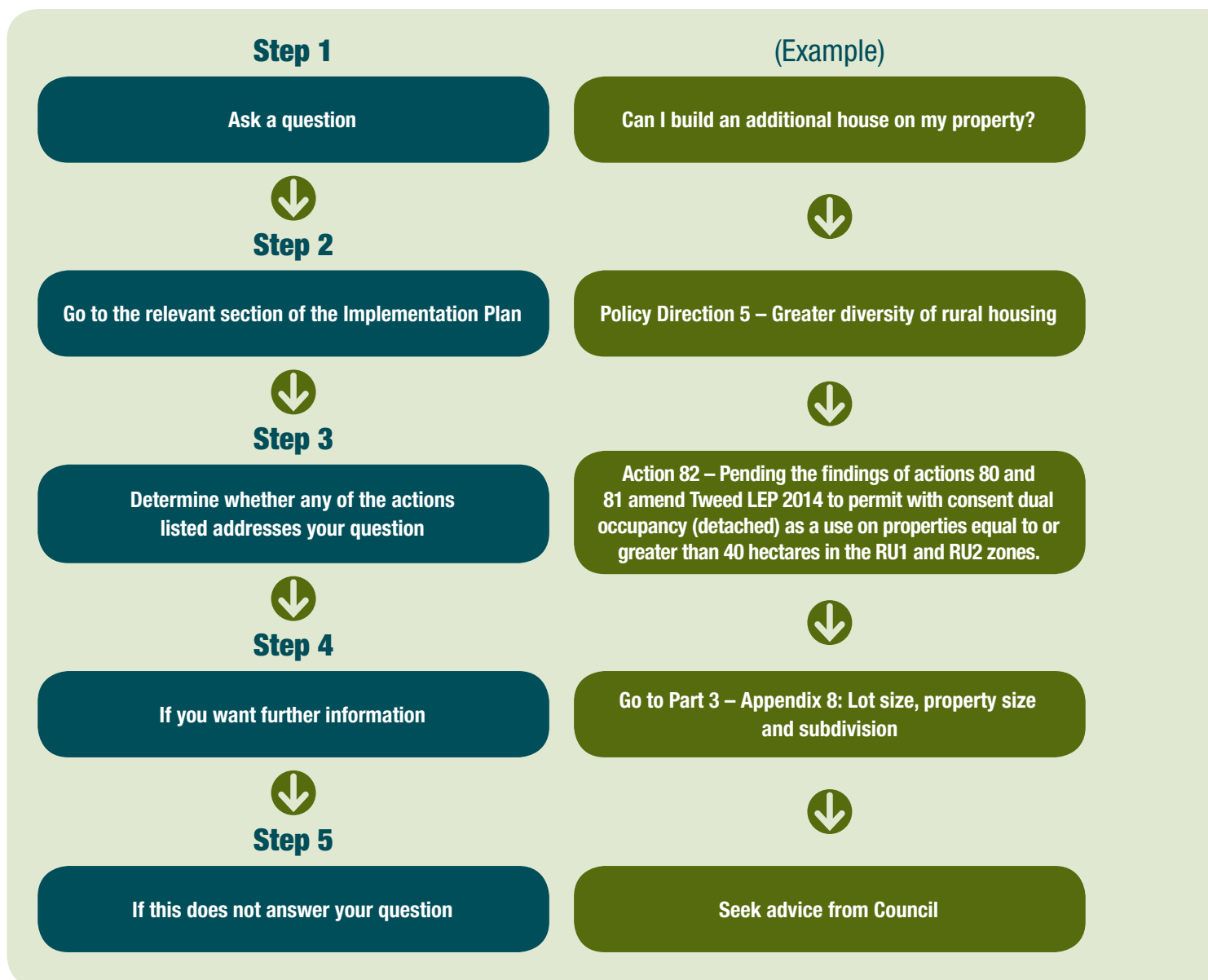
Note: Not all plans/strategies have been identified. For further details refer to Appendix 2.

Context within the RLS implementation framework



Note: For further details on how changes to the LEP and DCP occur, refer to page 91

How to use this document



The remaining parts of the Rural Land Strategy include:

Part 2 Implementation Plan

Part 3 Appendices

- Appendix 1 Description of rural zones
- Appendix 2 Relationship within the State and local landuse planning frameworks
- Appendix 3 Rural planning and subdivision principles
- Appendix 4 Rural Tweed in context
- Appendix 5 How has the Rural Land Strategy been developed?
- Appendix 6 Community engagement
- Appendix 7 Community aspirations
- Appendix 8 Lot size, property size and subdivision
- Appendix 9 Housing opportunities and dwelling entitlement
- Appendix 10 Consistency with North Coast Regional Plan 2036

Part 4 Maps