



# REGIONAL INDUSTRY & ECONOMIC PLAN

For the Northern Rivers

NOVEMBER 2005

A community road map to  
developing our future



Final Report  
Incorporating  
Feedback from  
Stakeholder  
Consultation

Preparation of this **Final Report** for the Regional Industry and Economic Plan has been facilitated by:



Funding for development of the RIEP has been provided by:



NSW GOVERNMENT  
**Department of Planning**



Other Project Partners include:



### **Disclaimer**

Preparation of this Final Report has been facilitated for the region's stakeholders by the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board, overseen by a Steering Group including representatives from:

- NSW Department of State and Regional Development;
- NSW Department of Planning;
- Southern Cross University;
- General Manager's Group; and
- Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee.

Preparation of this Final Report has required the expertise of the consultancy project team which developed the 2003 RIEP Working Paper and the Draft V2 and V3 of the RIEP. This team was comprised of:

- SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd; and
- O'Neil Pollock & Associates Pty Ltd.

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(Front cover photos provided by Northern Rivers Regional Development Board, Southern Cross University, TACTIC and Noel Hart)

## Status of this Report

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The Northern Rivers Regional Development Board (NRRDB) has facilitated the development a Regional Industry and Economic Plan (RIEP) for the Northern Rivers Region of NSW with the support, advice and guidance of a Steering Committee comprised of the following organisations:

- Northern Rivers Regional Development Board;
- NSW Department of State and Regional Development;
- NSW Department of Planning;
- Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee;
- General Manager's Group; and
- Southern Cross University.

The intent of the RIEP is to provide an overarching regional economic development framework geared to facilitating sustainable business and employment growth in the region for all organisations and individuals involved in economic development.

The RIEP is not intended to replace or override local economic development facilitation efforts. Rather the intent of the RIEP it is to provide guidance and direction to assist all stakeholders in the region with an interest in realising sustainable business and employment growth. Implementation is not the primary responsibility of any one organisation in the region. Rather the RIEP provides a consolidated framework to enable the identification of action plans to achieve industry-specific or local priorities.

This Final Report incorporates feedback from three rounds of targeted consultation throughout the region which was undertaken during February to June and August to November 2005.

While the document has been advanced earlier draft versions, upon reading the document, it will become evident that there are still some information gaps and areas where prioritisation of action is required. A series of industry-sector workshops will be held in February- March 2006 to provide the development of a Stage 1 Implementation Plan for self-selected industry and/or government priorities. The NRRDB in association with the RIEP Steering Committee will facilitate the initial round of workshops.

It is also noted that this document does not contain background profiling information on the Northern Rivers region. This has intentionally been left out of document to accord with the requests for a short, sharp action focussed document<sup>1</sup>. The actions are informed by the comprehensive policy information and data analysis undertaken during the preparation of the Working Paper for the RIEP in late 2003 and the three subsequent rounds of consultation mentioned above.

The NRRDB acknowledges that implementation of the RIEP is a long term project. However, the NRRDB is committed to progressing action and implementation concurrently. In this regard the Board will continue to facilitate action with stakeholders (both government and industry) on current projects, and would welcome the opportunity to assist industry groups with further action planning on issues identified herein.

Having noted the above qualifications, readers of the document are requested to forward any written comments / suggested priorities / emerging trends and data to the Board's Executive Director, Katrina Luckie.

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<sup>1</sup> Background profiling information can be found in the 2003 RIEP Working Paper

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Context – A Regional Framework for Local Economic Prosperity

The Clarence, Richmond and Tweed River Valleys, which collectively combine to form the Northern Rivers region of NSW, are undergoing substantial social and economic change. This is due to the effects of population shifts, global competition and industry restructuring. The rapid increase in the region's population, together with changing land use is impacting on the Northern Rivers' natural environment, on the hard and soft infrastructure requirements of the region and on the business and industry needs of the future.

The Northern Rivers Regional Development Board (NRRDB) and its partner agencies<sup>2</sup> have recognised the need to facilitate a transformation of the region's economic base. The aim is to be pro-active in this regard rather than respond to issues and opportunities for growth as they present themselves. It is also intended that this pro-active approach would enhance and protect the unique and creative lifestyle and culture which offers tremendous advantages to our region.

This Regional Industry and Economic Plan (RIEP) for the Northern Rivers has been prepared to provide guidance to the region's stakeholders regarding strategies and actions that can be implemented in order to develop a sustainable and robust regional economy which responds to emerging global economic forces and capitalises upon existing and emerging opportunities that are specific to the Northern Rivers. In order to achieve this aim, a collaborative approach to implementation is required.

The Plan recognises that the Northern Rivers region is diverse and that in order to maximise regional economic and employment outcomes, significant attention and effort must also be channelled into realising local / community economic and employment potential. In this regard the region's seven Local Government Areas are encouraged to embrace the tenor of the Plan in their individual economic development facilitation efforts and continue to seize upon local and community based economic and employment opportunities as they emerge.

**The plan intentionally is not prescriptive and is not intended to replace or override local economic development facilitation efforts.** Rather it seeks to highlight challenges and a means to address them via the identification of opportunities, strategies and actions. There is a primary focus on export job creation, rather than on the industry sectors that will grow as a result of population growth (eg retail, health and other community services etc).

Formal recognition and endorsement of the RIEP will continue to be sought from local, State and Commonwealth Governments. Via this process, the region will strive to maximise investment contributions from these tiers of government to assist in the realisation of the Plan's priorities.

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<sup>2</sup> NRRDB's partner agencies on the Steering Committee developing the Regional Industry and Economic Plan between 2003 to 2005 have included the NSW Department of Planning (previously DIPNR), the NSW Department of State & Regional Development (DSRD), Southern Cross University (SCU), the Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee (NRACC), the General Manager's Group, the Northern Rivers Organisation of Councils (NOROC) and the Far North East Sustainable Region's Committee.

## 1.2 Overview of the November 2003 RIEP Working Paper

A Working Paper for the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan was prepared in November 2003. It provides a detailed overview of issues that are likely to affect the development of the region's economy as well as highlighting a range of opportunities that could be capitalised upon.

The Working Paper documents a series of key **principles**, **actions** and **initiatives** that will advance the economic future of the region. The document is structured as follows:

- An overview of the **key attributes** of the Northern Rivers Region is provided including – existing physical, natural, infrastructure, human capacity and economic foundations upon which sustainable economic development can be based.
- **Aspects of globalisation and associated development trends** and the opportunities and imperatives that these present for the region are then profiled.
- An overview of the **region's aspirations** (the community 'value set') for settlement, social, environmental and economic outcomes is then outlined. This information was drawn from existing vision statements and development principles in various regional development strategies. The aspirations listed have been the subject of significant planning processes and associated community consultation.
- The **existing regional economic strengths and capacity** which can be built upon is then described. This section of the Working Paper was derived from an analysis of relevant industry strengths and then by looking particularly at the strength and depth of the value chain associated with key industry sectors (using a 'cluster' based typology).
- **Key Sectors** and **specific actions** to grow them were then identified by assessing their 'fit' with:
  - regional attributes;
  - external (global) development trends;
  - regional aspirations; and
  - existing regional economic strengths and capacity.
- The report concludes with the documentation of a way forward. Key elements included boosting the region's global competitiveness, reinforcing shared values and building capacity in the economy and amongst the key activity and sector areas by strengthening the quality of the value chain. Development and planning principles are also addressed in the report.

The 2003 RIEP Working Paper has provided a key resource in preparing this Plan.

Copies of the Working Paper can be obtained from the offices of the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board – Ph: Katrina Luckie, Executive Director on (02) 6622 4011 or [info@nrrdb.com.au](mailto:info@nrrdb.com.au).



## 1.3 Summary of Consultation Findings

### 1.3.1 Round 1 Consultation

An initial round of consultation with Local Government representatives (both elected and at officer level) and other key stakeholder agencies was undertaken by both the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board and members of a consultancy project team<sup>3</sup> in late 2004 and early 2005.

The aim of this initial round of consultation was to outline the aims of the RIEP process as well as provide an overview and receive any feedback of the broad content of the November 2003 RIEP Working Paper.

The views and opinions collectively expressed during this initial round of consultation provided the project team with useful insights regarding directions sought and expectations of the RIEP.

The following observations are considered to generally reflect consensus views on the Regional Industry and Economic Plan process. The observations are not presented in any particular order and should be viewed as comments which the project team has had regard to during the development phase of the project.

- There appears to be general support for the preparation of the RIEP for the Northern Rivers region. However, many stakeholders believe that such a plan will be difficult to prepare given the dynamics and diversity within the region.
- There was general consensus that a Draft Plan should be prepared in the short-term for discussion with the region's Local Government officers and other stakeholders in the region (Note: This document was prepared and distributed in May 2005 in response to this identified need).
- All those consulted stressed the need for the RIEP to be concise and focus on possible future actions, rather than provide lengthy profiling information.
- Initial consultation with the aboriginal community undertaken as part of the preliminary engagement with stakeholders in the region has highlighted that a concerted and focussed engagement process is warranted to effectively involve the aboriginal community in the RIEP process. It is considered that tangible and sustainable economic outcomes can be realised for the region (and for the aboriginal community) if a pro-active and sincere engagement process is developed and implemented.
- It was observed that Councils in the region are still fairly competitive in trying to attract industry to their own particular municipality and that at times this may be counter productive to the 'regional' economic development effort.
- There was consensus that infrastructure development and prioritisation was an overarching issue that needed to be addressed. A key desired outcome from the RIEP process sought by most stakeholders was the documentation of a consolidated list and prioritisation of key physical infrastructure needs throughout the region (road upgrade priorities, augmentation of ports / airport facilities, rail links throughout the Northern Rivers region and to SEQ (passenger and freight) water, additional industrial land provision, telecommunications upgrades and the like). Prioritisation of infrastructure needs across the whole Northern Rivers region was seen as being desirable.
- There was a lot of debate during the initial consultation phase regarding the strategic basis for the nomination of key industry sectors within the region. While many agreed with the value

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<sup>3</sup> This team was comprised of SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd and O'Neil Pollock & Associates Pty Ltd.

chain / cluster methodology utilised, and supported the identification of new and emerging industries, many people were concerned that the Working Paper did not give enough regard to the continuing economic and employment contributions provided by the region's long established sectors.

- In relation to the structure and style of the plan, there was general agreement that the plan should not be overly prescriptive but rather focus on highlighting issues and opportunities with associated actions (e.g. the RIEP should not be detailed / prescriptive regarding Local Government economic development action plans).
- It was considered that the plan ideally would provide a vehicle to bring Councils and other stakeholders together so that they are working in the same direction in order to reduce competition as well as provide a catalyst to foster increased funding commitments from the private sector and State and Commonwealth Government Agencies.
- There was consensus amongst those consulted that the RIEP must acknowledge sub-regional issues (e.g. the three Valleys).
- It was observed that the northern Councils had particularly strong links with SEQ and similarly that the Clarence has strong links with the Mid North Coast of NSW.
- It was also highlighted that prior to sign-off on the Plan, by Local Government in particular, Local Councils would need to be provided the opportunity to critically review it to ensure that it did not contain strategies and actions that were at odds with their LEPs and other strategic and statutory planning functions.
- It was generally observed that involvement of industry participants will be difficult due to the fact that there are very few effective peak industry bodies within the region that can effectively purport to represent all industry players. For example, many observed that there is no / little unity within the tourism industry.
- It was generally observed that once general consensus amongst Local Government has been achieved via continued consultation / briefings, a more informal consultation process / exhibition of the draft RIEP would be worthwhile to gather industry and resident input.

In preparing the first Draft of the Regional Industry and Economic Plan, the project team had regard to the above observations.

The initial Draft was considered and discussed with the NRRDB project Steering Committee in early May 2005. Following this meeting the initial draft was modified and then distributed to both Government and Industry Stakeholders for review prior to the convening of round table discussions in mid May 2005. A third Draft of the RIEP was circulated for comment and review during August to September 2005. Additional feedback was received by the NRRDB until November 2005.

### 1.3.2 Consultation Round 2 – Local Government and Industry Round Tables

The purpose of the second round of consultation was to seek the views of key stakeholders in the region regarding the structure and content of the Draft document and to identify issues and actions requiring augmentation.

Two separate round table discussions were held, one generally with Local Government representatives and the other attended predominantly by industry stakeholders.

Both meetings were very well attended with in excess of 60 business / government / non-government organisations from throughout the region represented and a broad cross section of expertise and interests.

Discussion focussed on the aims and structure of the RIEP and more particularly on the strategic activities and actions identified.

There was broad consensus that the preparation of the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan was timely and that its implementation would require a collaborative effort on behalf of the three tiers of Government, non-government organisations and the private sector.

There was broad endorsement regarding the scope of the 'employment challenge' facing the region, although some participants were of the view that the population projections utilised in the report (DOP's<sup>4</sup> official forecasts) may underestimate likely growth in the Northern Rivers over the next 25 years. Accordingly this version of the RIEP has incorporated an additional employment challenge utilising a higher 2031 population forecast. Liaison will continue with Department of Planning (DOP) in association with the development of the Far North Coast Strategy and further modeling of the employment challenge may be associated with this process.

Importantly no party to the roundtable meetings challenged the broad strategic activity areas identified in the May 2005 draft RIEP. The five Strategic Activity Areas were embraced by the participants as representing the broad priority actions for the region to address.

Many participants provided comment on the Draft (V2 and V3) documents (30 written submissions were received). Submissions primarily focused on provision of additional information regarding capacity building infrastructure upgrades that are required throughout the region (Section 4.1) and the identification of additional actions for consideration in Strategic Activity Areas 2, 3, 4, and 5.

The NRRDB is particularly pleased with the extent of feedback received on the drafts that emerged following the second round of consultation and has spent considerable time, in incorporating written comments received.

### 1.3.3 Consultation Round 3 – Feedback on Draft RIEP (V3)

During August to September 2005, stakeholders and participants were requested to comment on the Draft Plan (Version 3). Written responses were received through to November 2005. Those comments have been incorporated into this Final Plan.

The comments varied and included:

- concerns regarding the accuracy of the population projections;
- incorporation of existing initiatives and plans which support and complement the RIEP locally and regionally and their positive inclusion in the report;
- public transport policy, issues and priorities and transportation as a major element in developing and maintaining communities and economic development;
- acknowledgement of the continued importance of infrastructure development to economic growth and sustainability;
- concern that there is more comprehensive coverage of the community services, health and aged care sector and the acknowledgement of its vital and growing importance in the region;
- identification of transport sector strategies and actions;
- recognition of a consolidated approach to the marketing and promotion of tourism through Northern Rivers Tourism;
- issues regarding the nature and structure of government funding;
- recommendation to include best practice planning guidelines based on the planning implications in the 2003 RIEP Working Paper;
- the need to identify how the plan and its elements are to be implemented and driven, including the need for a staged approach with realistic outcomes and timeframes for implementation; and
- the need to balance land use, the environment and the community's needs in the development of all industry.

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<sup>4</sup> The projections were originally provided by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR), which is now the Department of Planning (DOP).

## 2 The Employment Challenge Facing the Northern Rivers Region

### 2.1 Context

As a means of assisting the RIEP, an analysis of the likely 'employment challenge' facing the Northern Rivers region in the next 25 years has been prepared. 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;
- the region's labour force participation rate and how it will change as the economy of the Northern Rivers region matures;
- the unemployment rate – what is a reasonable target given the likely make-up of the region's population and the economy in the future?
- the level of self-containment of employment (i.e. jobs located in the Northern Rivers region as a proportion of residents employed); and
- the split between jobs driven by population growth and jobs in the 'driver' sectors of the Northern Rivers regional economy.

The rationale for selecting the parameters used in the estimate of the 'employment challenge' is set out below.

#### 2.1.1 Serving the Northern Rivers Region's Growing Population

It is well known that the Northern Rivers is one of Australia's fastest growing regions, and by all accounts, the high rates of population growth are set to continue. A concentrated effort to support the region's villages to take advantage of market forces is required to achieve sustainable social and economic outcomes. Population growth in the Northern Rivers region will be influenced by:

1. Current population growth rates. With a current population of 265,000, the Northern Rivers region has been growing at a rate of over 4,000 people (1.6%) per year, one of the highest rates of growth in an Australian region outside the capital cities. Current figures based on an interpolation of DIPNR's population forecasts suggests that the region's 2005 population is around 278,000, an increase of 13,500 people since 2001. Forecasts suggest that this growth is likely to continue though at a slightly slower rate than in the last few years. Much of the region's anticipated population growth will be in the older age brackets. Recent work commissioned by the NRRDB suggests that 23% of the region's population is over 60 years of age compared to a State average of 17%.<sup>5</sup> New residents, both old and young, are attracted to an array of lifestyle opportunities and an increasingly sophisticated and well connected regional economy. The majority of settlement and existing population is based along the coast.
2. Land available for development, that is, the extent of the region's land resource and any additional re-zonings that are underway. Population forecasts suggest that the region's population will reach 348,880 by the year 2031. It is assumed that enough land will be released to accommodate this anticipated population growth within the next 25 years.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Northern Rivers Regional Development Board (November 2004), *Population Ageing Impact on the Northern Rivers of NSW*

3. Net migration. The region's natural amenity is a key attribute which serves to attract people from elsewhere over and above those that leave the region. The region's attractiveness is primarily related to climate/lifestyle (youth and retirees and semi-retirees, etc.), job opportunities (young singles, young couples and families) and market potential (businesses and industries). Entrepreneurs will come because of market potential, which will create job opportunities. This potential is firstly a function of population growth (within the region) then wider economic opportunities. Professional workers, who are also dubbed 'knowledge workers' and the 'creative class' have a preference for 'lifestyle' regions/locations and will also be attracted to the Northern Rivers. Thus there will be a propensity for entrepreneurs and knowledge workers to move to the region to seek a better lifestyle, employment and/or start-up their own businesses.<sup>6</sup> However, as the number of people of working age retiring increase, there is a corresponding decline in the proportion of the region's working age population. This has the potential to impact negatively on regional productivity and unemployment
4. Insofar as out migration is concerned, the biggest drain on the region's population is likely to be from young singles leaving for higher education and for life broadening experiences. The establishment and growth of institutions such as the Southern Cross University will help retain some of the higher education seekers, especially as it grows and consolidates over time. Given that a large component of the region's attractiveness is intrinsic, the desire of people to move to the Northern Rivers region in the future will remain strong. As this movement continues the entrepreneurs, especially those pursuing population related opportunities, will follow. Thus there is strong potential for continued net migration.

## 2.1.2 Population Forecasts

Population projections were provided by the Transport and Population Data Centre (TPDC) in the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR). The latest projections are the 2004 release, which are shown in the table below.

These forecasts are based on historical trends. It is noted from consultation feedback that a number of Councils have documented positive population growth where negative growth rates were predicted. Whilst property prices on the coast and in capital cities increase inland Councils predict increasing and sustained growth. This positive growth is noted and should be reflected in the coming census figures. The above historical forecasts are based on the potential for natural increase, assumptions about the development capacity of each local government area and assumptions about and analysis of migration patterns.

The projections have robustness and are more than simple trend based projections<sup>7</sup>. They provide a sound base on which to work in planning for the future. Thus, the Northern Rivers region is expected to have approximately 348,880 people by the year 2031. **If the Northern Rivers experiences a higher than projected level of population growth, the strategic directions in the RIEP will still be relevant, but a higher growth rate may alter the priorities of the RIEP and the region's stakeholders.**

<sup>6</sup> As well known authors such as Florida (2000, 2002) and Reich (1992) both point out that 'knowledge workers' place a premium on an area's lifestyle attributes including its recreation, leisure and entertainment, community and cultural infrastructure. Due to growth in worldwide demand for their services, knowledge workers enjoy an unprecedented level of control and choice in where they work and live.

<sup>7</sup> The accuracy of these projections, particularly at the local government area level has been questioned during the consultations associated with the RIEP. To minimise the effects of local variation, this report uses these projections on an aggregated regional scale only.

**Population Forecasts – Source: DIPNR (2004 release)**

LGA	2001	2031
Tweed	74,580	121,410
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		1.64%
Lismore	43,060	36,750
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		-0.53%
Ballina	38,160	54,190
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		1.18%
Byron	29,690	46,490
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		1.51%
Kyogle	9,820	8,940
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		-0.31%
Richmond	21,030	21,480
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		0.07%
Clarence Valley	50,090	59,620
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		0.58%
<b>Nth Rivers Region</b>	<b>266,430</b>	<b>348,880</b>
<i>Growth rate pa</i>		0.90%

### 2.1.3 Labour Force Participation

Currently, the Northern Rivers region has a relatively low labour force participation rate at only 50%. Comparisons with other similar 'lifestyle' regions show the Gold Coast's participation rate at 63%, the Sunshine Coast's at 54% and Gosford-Wyong's at 57%. Insofar as capital cities (more mature and broader based economies) are concerned, labour force participation rates are between 65% and 66%.

Despite an ageing population, the Northern Rivers region is likely to continue to mature and broaden its economic base in the future and thus the labour force participation rate is likely to firm as 'working age' people continue to migrate to the area and as the region (consistent with national trends) witnesses a greater retention of older people in the workforce. For the purpose of this analysis, a labour force participation rate of 60% has been adopted as the basis of the preferred 2031 scenario.

### 2.1.4 Unemployment

Currently, the Northern Rivers region has a relatively high unemployment rate of 8.3% (source: Dept. Employment & Workplace Relations, December 2004). Comparisons with other similar 'lifestyle' regions show:

- Gold Coast 5.6%
- Sunshine Coast 6.7%
- Gosford-Wyong 7.6%
- North and West Moreton 6.2%

Insofar as capital cities (more mature and broader based regions) are concerned, unemployment rates are:

▪ Brisbane	4.5%
▪ Sydney	4.2%
▪ Melbourne	5.0%
▪ Adelaide	5.7%
▪ Perth	4.5%

It is the consultant project team's belief that the Northern Rivers region should aspire to achieving a lower rate of unemployment than what is current and something more akin to a region with a more mature and robust economy. Hence, this analysis has adopted 6.5% as reasonable target.

### 2.1.5 Self-containment in Jobs

Currently, the Northern Rivers region has a reasonably high self-containment rate of 88%. Comparisons with other similar 'lifestyle' regions within commuting distance of capital cities show:

▪ Gold Coast	80%
▪ Gosford-Wyong	70%
▪ Sunshine Coast	82%

Comparison with regions which have a much stronger manufacturing base, again within commuting distance of capital cities shows:

▪ Wollongong	91%
▪ Geelong	87%

It is the consultant project team's belief that the Northern Rivers region should aspire to at least holding its current rate of self-containment to reflect a diverse and robust economy. Hence 88% has been adopted as the employment self-containment target.

### 2.1.6 Population Driven v. 'Driver' Sector Jobs

In any given area the 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%. The current situation in the Northern Rivers region, refer below, highlights the region's relative maturity.

Given the aim to develop / maintain a diverse and robust economy for the region over the next two decades the figures for the South East Queensland region (Brisbane SD and Moreton SD) have been adopted as being of most relevance. 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 the Northern Rivers region.

## Population Driven v. Export Sector Jobs (%), Northern Rivers Region

Area	Population Driven Jobs	Construction Driven Jobs	Population + Construction	Basic (Export) Sector Jobs
Tweed	69.7%	6.1%	75.8%	24.2%
Clarence Valley	66.9%	4.7%	71.6%	28.4%
Ballina	67.1%	5.6%	72.7%	27.3%
Byron	63.8%	6.1%	69.9%	30.1%
Kyogle	57.5%	3.5%	61.0%	39.0%
Lismore	74.5%	3.7%	78.2%	21.8%
Richmond Valley	59.0%	4.4%	63.4%	36.6%
<b>Nth Rivers</b>	<b>67.8%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>72.8%</b>	<b>27.2%</b>
Brisbane SD	68.0%	5.2%	73.2%	26.9%
Moreton SD	66.9%	6.5%	73.4%	26.6%
Queensland	63.5%	7.1%	70.6%	29.4%
New South Wales	63.9%	6.9%	70.8%	29.2%

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

## 2.2 The Jobs Challenge

### 2.2.1 Applying Regional Population Growth Forecasts

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 growth.

Based on the assumptions / parameters that have been applied (refer Section 2.1), the jobs challenge for the Northern Rivers region over the next 25 years is significant. The RIEP has been prepared in liaison with the Department of Planning and recognises that the regional planning framework will also provide guidance for future growth in the region.

Based on the region's projected population levels in 2031, as per DOP's official forecasts, it is estimated that the region will require approximately 147,300 jobs to be provided by this time. To achieve an employment participation rate of 60% and limit the unemployment rate to 6.5%, whilst maintaining the current self containment rate and maximising the ratio of population versus export driven employment, a total of **68,000 new equivalent full time (EFT) jobs** will need to be provided.

Of these 68,000 new EFT jobs, it is anticipated that approximately 49,500 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 **18,500 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.

In essence the facilitation of these 18,500 EFT jobs represents the Northern Rivers employment challenge.



### 2.2.2 Implications of a Higher / Ambitious Population Growth Rate

Should population growth rates exceed the DOP's 2004 forecasts, and occur at say at 1.25% pa (as opposed to the forecast 0.90% as shown above), then the jobs challenge for the Northern Rivers region increases to **22,825 full time positions** by 2031 (Total Jobs required = 163,270; New Jobs = 84,030; New Pop Driven Jobs = 61,205; New Export Driven Jobs Required = 22,825).

### 3 Economic Development Objectives, Supporting Principles and Targets for the Northern Rivers Region

As highlighted in the previous section of this Regional Industry and Economic Plan, the employment challenge facing the Northern Rivers region is significant. Above job creation which is anticipated as a direct result of population growth (some 49,500 effective full time positions), a need to create approximately 18,500 additional jobs over the next 25 years has been identified for the region to maintain a healthy level of employment participation and a relatively high level of job self-containment. Should population growth exceed projections, and occur at say 1.25% per annum the jobs challenge increases to approximately 22,800 full time positions.

While the jobs challenge is significant, the region has previously identified that it does not want to facilitate economic growth and employment creation at any cost. The region has previously endorsed that it wants to:

*Achieve Economic Development and Employment Growth in a Sustainable Way for Our Region's Population.* In this regard, sustainable economic development can be defined as an activity that improves the prosperity of our region, or at least maintains it, without prejudicing the capacity for future generations to enjoy the environment.

*(Framework for a Sustainable Future for the Northern Rivers Region, 1999)*

#### 3.1 Economic Development Objectives and Supporting Principles

The region's economic development objectives and supporting guiding principles seek to embrace Sustainability as a key platform. They include:

**Objective 1: To encourage economic diversity and the creation of long term employment opportunities throughout the region while protecting the region's environment and liveability**

- Business development which facilitates the creation of diverse and resilient regional, sub-regional and local economies via efficient and safe active and public transport and communications links is encouraged.
- Economic activities which create long term, secure jobs for people in the region (youth and mature persons) are encouraged.
- New and existing economic development activities should be managed to ensure that their impact on the region's natural and built environment is minimised.

**Objective 2: To encourage economic development activities that will assist in the creation of a viable and sustainable network of towns and villages**

- The fostering of key employment centres in major towns which are linked to supporting nodes of economic activity throughout the region's smaller centres and villages via efficient and safe transport and communication links is encouraged.
- Facilitating the increased self-reliance of villages in terms of employment and economic development is encouraged. The creation of local economic activities including cottage industries within villages to enhance employment

opportunities, attract visitors and reflect the character of the region's individual villages is also therefore encouraged.

- Maintenance of viable community retail nodes is encouraged.

**Objective 3: To increase exports and import replacement**

- The reduction of imports is encouraged as is the development of exports for the region's produce, information and expertise.

**Objective 4: To increase efficiency and ensure that business and industry is afforded access to well maintained and world class hard and soft infrastructure**

- Continued investment in economic enabling infrastructure such as roads, water and sewerage, energy, transport, information and communications technologies (ICTs), and education, health, community services, environment and leisure facilities and services is encouraged and should not be unnecessarily impeded.
- Infrastructure investment is supported by the coordinated activities of local, regional, state and Commonwealth agencies in participation with the private sector.
- The fostering of a business culture throughout the Northern Rivers region that supports investment, innovation and continuous improvement is encouraged.
- Efficiency in economic development should be assisted by efficiency in governance.
- An increase in the level of value-adding, recycling and use of waste products is encouraged.

**Objective 5: To foster both large and small business creation**

- The fostering of both large and small business is encouraged throughout the region.

**Objective 6: To increase reinvestment of regional wealth**

- The creation, pooling and access to regional financial resources together with promotion of the investment potential within the region is encouraged (i.e., pooling of development funds, regional funding for regional projects, provision of integrated financial services in the region, utilising the power of superannuation choice as a means to drive investment in the region, and a regional development bank/superannuation fund).
- The reinvestment of intellectual and educational capital in the region is encouraged.

**Objective 7: To encourage education and training**

- The expansion of educational opportunities with links to industry throughout the region is encouraged.
- The fostering of the region's human resource base through the provision of on and off site training throughout the region is encouraged.
- The continued development and provision of support to a wide range of creative vocations within our region's communities is encouraged.
- Access to training opportunities that are compatible with the employment and development opportunities within the region's communities is encouraged in order to minimise travel to other regional centres

**Objective 8: To utilise renewable resources and maximise land and infrastructure in a sustainable manner**

- The production and supply of food and goods that are derived from renewable resources and production techniques (agriculture, forestry and agro-forestry) is strongly encouraged.
- The use of locally-sourced renewable materials is encouraged to reduce travel and freight requirements.
- Development activities which have a lower throughput of resources, produce less waste and which provide benefits to the whole community is encouraged.
- The sharing and use of regional resources is encouraged and should be facilitated.

- Power generation for domestic, commercial and industrial use based on renewable energy sources is encouraged.

**Objective 9: To increase access to Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) that are equivalent to those delivered in metropolitan areas**

- Development of appropriate infrastructure to support the delivery of affordable and widespread access to ICTs is advocated.

## 3.2 Economic Development Targets for 2031

The RIEP has set the following targets for 2031 for monitoring and evaluation purposes:

- Northern Rivers unemployment rate equal to NSW average.
- Northern Rivers labour force participation rate equal to NSW rate.
- Employment self containment rate maintained at 88% for the Northern Rivers.
- 60% increase in the 15-24 year old cohort from 2005 for the Northern Rivers.
- Northern Rivers average (individual and household) income rates the same as NSW average income rates.

## 4 Strategic Activity Areas and Accompanying Actions to Foster Economic and Employment Growth of the Northern Rivers Region

The recommended strategic activity areas and actions to foster economic prosperity in the Northern Rivers region and its constituent localities are documented in this section of the Plan.

The Strategic Activity Areas are:

- Strategic Activity Area 1: Facilitation of Continued Investment in Economic Capacity Building Infrastructure*
- Strategic Activity Area 2: Facilitation of Business Growth and Investment in Sustainable Industry Sectors*
- Strategic Activity Area 3: Identification and Realisation of Local Economic and Employment Opportunities*
- Strategic Activity Area 4: Continue to Foster Regional Leadership and Governance Agendas*
- Strategic Activity Area 5: Maximise Economic and Employment Outcomes Arising from the Region's Proximity to South East Queensland and the Mid-North Coast Region of NSW*

Within each Strategic Activity Area a number of broad strategies are identified, with each of these being supported by a series of applicable Actions. These Actions provide a flexible framework to guide sustainable business and employment growth in the region.

A prioritisation of Strategies and Actions will occur with regional stakeholders early in 2006 to identify action plans for high priority Strategies that are self-selected by industry and/or government stakeholders. The priorities and focus will need to be reviewed regularly and an annual industry roundtable will be convened to review progress and outcomes.

## 4.1 Strategic Activity Area 1: Facilitation of Continued Investment in Economic Capacity Building Infrastructure

### Overview

Throughout Australia, production and the 'means of doing business' have altered with the continuing rise of economic globalisation. To maintain competitiveness, businesses now must:

- reach new markets for goods and services (thereby expanding net income flows);
- facilitate the development of new products; and/or
- increase their productivity (producing the same or more at lower cost).

Recent trends impacting on business competitiveness include:

- more rapid and efficient movement of goods, services and information;
- supply chain fragmentation and the need for innovation;
- digital trade;
- the rise of advanced business services in value creation and competitiveness; and
- the rise of 'knowledge' and 'creativity' as drivers of growth.

One of the key implications of these trends on the Northern Rivers is that for the region to remain competitive it must ensure that business and industry is afforded access to world class hard and soft infrastructure.

In this context, the continued investment in strategic infrastructure, that is, economic 'enabling infrastructure' is considered to be a priority for the Northern Rivers region. Such investment is considered a prerequisite for the region's continued economic growth. Priority action in this area should focus on investment in infrastructure that will facilitate development of the region's export orientated sectors / jobs.

'Hard' infrastructure is broadly defined to include roads, water and sewerage, energy, transport, and ICTs and 'soft' infrastructure is broadly defined to include education, health, community services, environment and leisure facilities and services. It is important to also recognise that investment in 'smart' infrastructure is vital to facilitate the continued attraction of knowledge and creative industry workers to the region.

Responsibility for achieving continued infrastructure investment rests with the three spheres of government, non-government institutions, the private sector, development and business organisations and the community.

Local and regional policy makers and implementation agents need to:

- ensure that investment in strategic infrastructure is not unnecessarily impeded;
- ensure that infrastructure investment is supported by the coordinated activities of local, regional, state and Commonwealth agencies; and
- foster a business culture throughout the Northern Rivers region that supports investment and innovation.

## Strategies / Actions

### Develop and Improve Intra and Inter-Regional Road Networks

- Facilitate new investment in road infrastructure upgrades to improve road safety and travel times to key national and international passenger and freight gateways that serve the region including:
  - Gold Coast Airport (upgrade required – current development proposals supported)
  - The Australia Trade Coast (Brisbane Airport and the Port of Brisbane)
  - Ballina Airport
  - Port of Yamba
  - The proposed Beaudesert Container Depot and Link to Yatala
- Facilitate new investment in road infrastructure upgrades to improve access to key national and international passenger and freight gateways and to improve road safety and travel times to key employment nodes throughout the region. Key upgrades required in this regard include:
  - Pacific Highway
  - Summerland Way upgrade linkages to Beaudesert and Brisbane
  - Tugan bypass
  - MR 622 – Warrick/Killarney/Legume/Woodenbong Road
  - Mount Lindesay Highway
  - Grafton bypass and Grafton Bridge duplication
  - Bruxner Highway – Ballina - Tenterfield (included here Ballina to Casino)
  - Ballina / Lennox Head
  - Gwydir Highway realignment and overtaking lanes
  - Grafton to Armidale Road (replace timber bridges and Nymboida realignment)
  - Lismore / Kyogle Road
  - Lismore / Woodburn (Wyrallah Road)
  - Lismore / Bangalow (including bypasses of Bexhill and Clunes Villages)
  - Sexton Hill upgrade
  - Murwillumbah / Kyogle Road
  - Alstonville bypass
  - Ballina bypass
  - Tintenbar road
  - Linkages with potential rail transport hub at Beaudesert (SE Queensland)
- Ensure that arterial road corridors are protected and that capacity is maintained / not further degraded.
- Continue to monitor local and regional road upgrade requirements via the conduct of appropriately detailed audits of journey to work patterns and road usage figures.
- Advocate and plan for supportive infrastructure; such as bus lanes, accessible and safe bus stops and signage to ensure the utilisation of existing corridors as major intra-regional travel/commuter networks that facilitate the access to key employment nodes.
- NRRDB and Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils (NOROC) together with other regional stakeholders to coordinate efforts to provide effective and strong support to Local Councils in their quest for increased financial contributions from State and Commonwealth Governments to implement identified road infrastructure upgrades in the Northern Rivers region.
- Through NOROC and the NRRDB, and in consultation with representatives from Tweed Shire, Queensland Government representatives (Office of Urban Management) and Queensland Councils (SouthROC member Councils), facilitate the development and implementation of an integrated transport plan across the NSW-Queensland border to address cross-border settlement and journey to work impacts on regionally significant road and rail infrastructure.

- Ensure that the road upgrades identified above be highlighted as regionally significant economic capacity building initiatives in current and future regional planning studies.

### **Develop and Improve Intra and Inter-Regional Rail Infrastructure**

- As an immediate priority, the long-term protection of existing rail corridors needs to be achieved in order to ensure that future development and redevelopment options are not foreclosed.
- Facilitate new, and support existing initiatives geared to expanding rail freight options to serve for the region's industrial, agricultural and commercial producers. Key initiatives include:
  - the interchange and proposed inter-modal and warehousing hub facility at Casino;
  - upgrade of bulk handling facilities at Grafton; and
  - Yamba Port link to the Northern rail line.
- Facilitate new investment in rail projects geared to providing more direct and rapid passenger rail services to the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Sydney. In this regard it is considered important to develop a strong case and successfully lobby State Govt (both NSW and QLD) about the importance of continued investment in rail infrastructure to serve the ongoing passenger needs of the region. Identified initiatives include:
  - restoration of a local passenger rail service on the Murwillumbah – Casino rail line and connection to the Gold Coast Airport;
  - investment in the Beaudesert terminal; and
  - upgrade of passenger facilities at Grafton / South Grafton.
- Continue to monitor intra and inter regional rail upgrade requirements via the conduct of appropriately detailed audits. Explore light rail options as a sustainable alternative.
- NRRDB and NOROC to coordinate efforts to provide effective and strong lobbying in the region's quest for increased financial contributions from State and Commonwealth Governments to implement identified rail infrastructure upgrades. Implementation of the recommendations of Price Waterhouse investigation on Northern Rivers Passenger Rail Service should be pursued in this regard.
- Ensure that the rail upgrades identified above be highlighted as regionally significant economic capacity building initiatives in current and future regional planning studies.

### **Information, Communication & Telecommunications Technologies**

- Support the partner Councils in the Northern Rivers and SE Queensland in the Broadening Broadband Aggregation Project by assisting lobbying efforts and preparing a detailed audit of broadband demand and mobile phone 'hot spots' throughout the entire region. A primary aim of this initiative is to ensure equity of access to broadband and mobile phone services across the region, particularly in the hinterland areas.
- Investigate models for Councils and explore other options with service providers in the Northern Rivers region (in conjunction with other stakeholders) to prepare a business case for broadband telecommunications infrastructure rollout to communities throughout the region.
- Embrace and promote 'on line' trading and digital trade capacity across the region.
- Continue efforts to improve mobile phone coverage and expanding access to high speed internet connections.

### **Industrial Land**

- Ensure that the existing major employment nodes throughout the region have sufficient industrial land to accommodate growth and expansion of its basic industry sectors. Based on the findings of the Employment Challenge facing the region to the year 2031 (refer Section 2.2



of this Plan), it is projected that **a total of approximately 720 ha of serviced industrial land will be required in the region** by this time<sup>8</sup>. Should population growth exceed DOP's forecasts, and occur at a higher rate of growth – say 1.25%, some 800 ha of industrial land will be required to be on line by 2031 in order to meet the projected supply driven forecasts / targets for export oriented employment in the region. In this regard, each municipality in the region needs to ensure that comprehensive strategic planning is undertaken in order to facilitate the timely release of appropriately zoned industrial land in a co-ordinated manner.

- The RIEP presents a demand-side analysis only. Supply-side factors, in particular information about the availability and condition of existing commercial and industrially zoned land, of industrial investigation areas or of planned land release, is not considered. It is recognised, though, that some Local Councils have commenced planning for clustering of industry types within specific locations and an expansion of industrial site opportunities within immediate motorway access.
- The NRRDB has an established Industrial Lands Register for the region. Continued investment in the development and maintenance of the register is required to assist long term strategic planning and provision of assistance to interested business persons and developers. Local Government support via the provision of standardised information is required in this regard.
- Promote land use and development at Casino able to capitalise on the dual rail carriage-way between Brisbane and Sydney with access to land for warehousing, inter-modal interchange, cross decking hub, rail turnstile / roundtable.
- It is recognised that there is limited industrial land capacity within the southern Gold Coast/Tweed Heads areas so that efforts which facilitate opportunities for Northern Rivers local government to promote identified industrial land for local and cross border usage and its capacity to house employment generation lands is a high priority.
- The NRRDB, DSRD, DOP and NOROC to establish and continue dialogue with the Queensland Office of Urban Management (OUM), Gold Coast City Council and Beaudesert Shire Council on the status of the Mt. Lindesay/North Beaudesert Investigation Area and existing industrial estates at Bromelton and Yatala regarding their capacity and linkages to the Northern Rivers Region. It is acknowledged that cross border issues of land use will have significant impact on bordering Council areas such as Tweed Heads and that all consultations would include SouthROC, Tweed Heads Shire Council and other stakeholders (eg Tweed Economic Development Corporation).

### Lifestyle Infrastructure

- It is considered vitally important that affordable housing options are pursued throughout the region's villages and major employment centres. An associated need is the provision of reliable and regular public transport services between villages and major employment nodes to enable access to work places for low income wage earners.
- Encourage continued investment in the arts, cultural institutions, public sphere and living environments in order to maximise the attractiveness of the region as a living and working destination for the knowledge and creative industry sector workers. Additional sports and recreation infrastructure needs identified by the Clarence Valley Council include the

<sup>8</sup> This figure has been determined by the consultancy project team by applying standard floorspace ratios (based on averages of industry accepted benchmarks) to forecast employment growth across the region and does not seek to aggregate Local Council planning forecasts for industrial land. It is assumed that 90 sqm is required to accommodate every 'industrial' job (in heavy industry sectors like manufacturing/processing, transport/freight-oriented industry, construction and commercial services and repairs and utilities) and a floorspace to site area ratio of 50% applies. It is assumed that 32 sqm is required to accommodate every 'commercial' job (in sectors like retailing, business services like property, finance & insurance, government services and other commercial and personal services) and that a floorspace to site area ratio of 60% applies. The floorspace and land requirements represent broad orders of magnitude only.

establishment of a dormitory / residential accommodation facility for visiting sporting teams, a sports stadium to cater for athletics and team sports and a new regional aquatic centre to replace existing aged facilities.

- Ensure that integrated land use and transport planning principles are implemented to provide adequate transport options for employment and leisure and consult with local Transport Working Groups to ensure access to transport planning information .

### Energy

- Encourage continued investment in the co-generation facilities throughout the region.
- Engage with Government and private sector to explore realistic financial incentives to business and households for investing in renewable energy technologies including natural gas and incentives to R&D providers to advance such technology to commercial adoption.
- Support the exploitation of the region's coal seam methane gas resources as an alternative energy source, a source of power to deal with the region's unmet peak demand and securing supply for future energy demands. The use of coal seam methane gas in the region will contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, in comparison to traditional electricity power stations. The use of the region's gas resources will provide additional benefits including a cheaper and reliable source of energy for industry needs.

### Water and Sewerage

- Investment in additional water infrastructure include:
  - Lismore Source;
  - Dunoon Dam (and possible secondary dam in Tweed);
  - Upgrade of Clarrie Hall Dam;
  - Construction of Byrill Ck Dam;
  - Urbenville, Muli Muli, Woodenbong, Bonalbo Potable water systems;
  - Upgrade of Kyogle water supply – off stream storage;
  - Regional water supply dam to service both the Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour;
  - Perradenya Reclamation Plant;
  - Duel Reticulation – Ballina Heights;
  - Rocky Creek and Emmigrant Creek Dam Safety;
  - Nightcap WTP Waste Management.
- Provision of additional waste water facilities including:
  - Woodenbong and Kyogle STP upgrades;
  - Package STPs for unsewered villages of Tabulam, Wangaree, Mallanganee and Old Bonalbo;
  - Junction Hill to North Grafton Transfer;
  - Grafton Sewer Augmentation;
  - Iluka Sewerage Scheme;
  - Maclean, Lawrence, Townsend and Ilarwill Sewerage Scheme;
  - Yamba Sewerage Augmentation.

### Explore *Disadvantaged Region* Status (Under the Disadvantaged States Act)

- It is considered important to acknowledge that while securing funding for infrastructure development throughout the region is a priority, it will be a difficult task due to the limited pool of funds available from the three spheres of Government and the private sector. In regard to accessing funds from both Federal and State Governments, compelling business development cases will need to be mounted in order to advance project funding due to the competitive nature of access to the limited funding pool. In this regard the region should explore its potential to be classified as a *Disadvantaged Region*, under the Disadvantaged States Act to assist its claims for additional financial assistance. Its links to SEQ (which already has been classified as a disadvantaged region) could be utilised in the development of this proposition.

## 4.2 Strategic Activity Area 2: Facilitation of Business Growth and Investment in Sustainable Industry Sectors

### Overview

The 2003 RIEP Working Paper identified a number of specific sectoral growth opportunities for the Northern Rivers region. The Working Paper advocated that in order to maximise sustainable economic and employment outcomes, regional and local effort should be channelled into the facilitation of industry sectors which have long-term growth prospects, are export orientated (e.g. derive significant levels of income from provision of goods and services to customers outside the region) and have the capacity to develop and maintain extensive value chains.

**The development of strong export orientated sectors and value chains will provide a balance to the regional economy, in effect complementing the business and employment growth that will occur as a direct consequence of population growth. As highlighted in Section 2.2.1 of this report, of the 68,000 new jobs required in the region by 2031, some 49,500 are projected to occur naturally as a direct result of population growth (in sectors such as retail, personal services, health and the like). The key challenge for the Northern Rivers region therefore, which should guide its facilitation efforts, is to create and maintain the investment environment and workforce capability to stimulate growth of the 18,500 export orientated jobs.**

Focused efforts on industry sectors which exhibit long term export focused growth opportunities and strong value chains is considered an economically sound approach to maximise sustainable economic output, and long term employment creation for residents of the Northern Rivers region.

Therefore, based on the extensive research and findings of November 2003 Working Paper, and its subsequent review, it is recommended that industry sector development efforts should continue to focus in the first instance in the following export focused sectors where work is already underway:

- Tourism;
- Education;
- Creative Industries;
- Horticulture;
- Complementary Medicine Products and Services;
- Aquaculture;
- Timber Industry (Forestry and Plantations); and
- Meat & Dairy.

In addition to the above it is also considered prudent to foster the economic growth of other dominant industry sectors in the region. While these sectors may not exhibit all of the characteristics of those identified above, they nonetheless provide significant economic returns and employment opportunities for the region's residents. They include:

- Residential Development and Construction;
- Health, Aged Care and Community Services;
- Sugar;
- Marine Fishing; and
- Transport.

Section 4.2.2 – 4.2.14 outlines specific strategies and actions that are geared to foster sustainable economic output and long term employment outcomes from each of these sectors. Some sectors, such as Health, Aged Care and Community Services and Marine Fishing require further development of strategies and actions – this will occur through industry workshops early in 2006.

Prior to the presentation of this information, Section 4.2.1 outlines actions that are considered applicable to each of the industry sectors identified.

## 4.2.1 Strategies / Actions to Foster Industry Sector Development

**Foster industry sector leadership and continue implementation of industry sector action plans in collaboration with industry sector participants from throughout the region where required**

- For each sector identified in the following sub-sections of this report, development and maintenance of strong industry based leadership groups are required. In this regard a key role for the NRRDB is to work with industry stakeholders to facilitate the development of strong leadership, and the implementation of strategic industry based action plans.
- Securing the support and motivation of a peak industry body in each sector represents a priority action for the NRRDB. It is noted that such collaborative planning has already commenced in some sectors, and notably the Creative Industry Sector.
- In some sectors action planning for the development of the sector has already progressed. In some sectors however development of action plans is still required. Such action planning should be driven by industry sector participants. It is considered important that each plan be encouraged to identify: actions required to address infrastructure deficiencies, spatial land needs, regulatory reviews (as required); and linkages with other sectors to maximise synergies and outputs (e.g. Cross Sector Co-operative Education & Training, R&D, Governance and Infrastructure Development Opportunities). In essence the outcome of this planning should be the implementation of actions to maximise the creation of a progressive and sustainable business investment environment.
- For some sectors that do not have advanced plans in place, ideally funds would be secured to engage a facilitator to work with the peak body (e.g. a qualified and skilled facilitator with expertise particular to the specific sector and who is widely respected by industry sector participants).
- Utilise the *Strategies / Actions* provided for each sector (refer following) as a starting point for discussion with industry participants.

### **Encourage the fostering of cluster based value chain networks**

- Through the engagement of industry sector participants highlight the regional economic and employment based outcomes that can be derived from the development of Cluster based Value Chain Networks.
- Through the development and implementation of new and / or existing Action Plans for each sector (refer to suite of actions listed above) encourage linked businesses and institutions, which directly or indirectly share a common purpose in gaining, holding and expanding the region's export income (e.g. income derived from outside the region).
- It is noted that the RIEP Working Paper has already undertaken a Cluster-based Value Chain analysis of the region's key export orientated sectors. The information in the working paper should be communicated to each industry group through the suite of actions listed in above.

#### **DSRD business facilitation services**

- It is noted that DSRD plays the pivotal role in working with individual businesses in their business development / investment implementation efforts. This key function of the Department is vital to the region's continuing business and economic growth. The NRRDB should ensure that its efforts continue to be focussed on creating a supportive business investment framework and complement (rather than duplicate) the Department's individual business growth facilitation efforts. Therefore individual / business specific issues identified by the NRRDB should continue to be referred to the Department's Officers in the region.

### **4.2.2 Strategies / Actions for the Tourism Sector**

#### **Continue to develop the region's tourism product offerings**

- Encourage investment in and growth of formal products and services such as interpretive centres, galleries and museums in order to attract a more diverse and mature market, as well as provide business and employment opportunities for local curators, designers and other 'creatives'.
- Facilitate growth in 'clean & green' tourism to capitalise on the region's competitive advantages and established image as a clean and green destination.
- Encourage high yield/low impact developments.
- Actively engage with the region's indigenous leaders to assist the development of indigenous tourism ventures throughout the region including in hinterland areas.
- Explore opportunities for the development of 'niche tourism' opportunities, building on the region's cultural and creative industries profile, regional cuisine and its agricultural and horticultural sectors.
- Explore opportunities for regional conference and accommodation facilities.
- Support the ongoing development of the Rainforest Way project.

#### **Increase tourism industry participation in education and training**

- Continue to explore flexible education and training service delivery options to accommodate the working hours and lifestyle of the region's tourism workforce in order that they can continually upgrade / update their customer service and other skills to meet customer expectations.
- Through education and training, encourage operators to highlight the benefits of environmentally sustainable principles.
- Explore links with education tourism such as research based tourism.
- Explore links with Southern Cross University's tourism research and training facilities.

#### **Enhance the central tourism marketing effort**

- Review the existing central tourism marketing efforts and structures within the region to ensure that they maximise return for investment and increase awareness of products and investment opportunities.
- Market the region utilising memorable regional images and associations including the region's distinctive topography and its World Heritage Areas.

- Explore options to revitalise the network of tourism operators in the region provided by Northern Rivers Tourism.
- Reinforce the co-ordination across the region, focusing on opportunities for disbursement of visitors throughout the region with resultant positive economic impacts.
- Support the development of representative leadership for the tourism industry.

### 4.2.3 Strategies / Actions for the Education Sector

#### **Foster increased participation in education and training throughout all industry sectors in the region**

- Facilitation of increased participation in education and training throughout all industry sectors in the region is strongly advocated. Development of cross sectoral education networks should continue to be explored.

#### **Develop and integrate non-mainstream education sector**

- Encourage the expansion of non-mainstream educational opportunities and education providers.
- Ensure that regular audits of existing education delivery systems are undertaken in order to identify whether better links to business and industry can be established.
- Continue to promote the region's strengths and competencies in education provision.

#### **Further engage with, and explore additional education and training initiatives targeted to the needs of, aboriginal communities throughout the region**

- Through engagement with the Aboriginal Community and Aboriginal training bodies, explore the development and implementation of tailored education and training programs including those specifically related to agricultural business management, retail sector training, small business management, management of arts businesses and galleries.

#### **Continue and expand international engagement**

- Continue to build upon Southern Cross University's already high level of distance education and experience with e-learning programs. Develop techniques and programs to assist other providers to make global connections.

#### **Expand and improve engagement between key education providers and the region**

- Continue to build upon recent positive initiatives such as SCU's Office of Regional Engagement (which provides a one stop shop access point for the regional community making contact with the University). This will expand the University's role in the development of the region's key sectors and in the community as a whole.
- Explore the potential and if viable, develop an internet portal out of SCU as a Gateway Site for the community.
- Explore additional initiatives to increase the visibility of SCU in the region (including at other locations in the region) and engage the community in any physical or virtual expansion plans. Continued investment in infrastructure outside of the existing university campus locations, an improved telecommunication network servicing the entire region and the development of partnerships within and between mainstream higher education providers is required.

- Explore video conferencing links with Southern Cross University, TAFE, Community Technology Centres (CTCs) and Local Councils.
- Encourage the continued development of NCI TAFE and Grafton Agricultural Research Advisory Station and support their efforts to provide an increased range of industry training throughout the region.

#### **Improve industry representation at the regional level**

- Develop an organisational or network structure to represent the Northern Rivers' education providers across the education hierarchy, including the non-mainstream providers.
- Establish a role for this organisation to manage links throughout the region, promote the region as an educational centre and represent the industry in developing policy with government.

### 4.2.4 Strategies / Actions for the Creative Industries Sector

The Creative Industries Sector in the Northern Rivers region embraces a wide cross section of business endeavour inclusive of the sectors highlighted in the following graphic.



Key strategies and actions to facilitate the growth of the Creative Industry sector in the region as identified through recent key stakeholder and industry forums are now listed.

#### **Focus industry development efforts on the region's existing strengths and competitive advantages**

- Promote the production of innovative, high quality content which has universal appeal or which targets niche markets.
- Promote the unique culture, regional locations and regional stories in the choice of topics for creative industry content and product.

- Particular on-going support should be given to the region's established strengths (e.g. in documentary film making, visual arts, music, performing arts and writing).
- Work with local and national newspapers, other media outlets, tourism authorities, local journals, etc. to feature stories and work by local writers and artists.

#### **Develop representative and peak bodies for the creative sector and secure the long term future of existing peak bodies**

- Through the development of secure and long term collaborative funding models, secure the ongoing future for *Arts Northern Rivers*, *Northern Rivers Screenworks*, *North Coast Entertainment Industry Association*, and the *Northern Rivers Writers Centre*. While ongoing government support for these organisations is critical, as well as access to specific grant monies, to match industry contributions, it is important to develop sustainable businesses models.
- Facilitate the continued development of regional creative industry clusters, networks and representative bodies in creative industries which have been identified as significant clusters.

#### **Facilitate growth and development of regional screen industries**

- Systematically foster the implementation of the strategies to be documented in the "Imagining the Future Part 2: 2005 – 2015" paper which include actions for:
  - Industry Development: lobby and network with government agencies, business and industry bodies, locally, nationally and internationally and develop a creative industries marketing campaign and brand in the region;
  - Business and Skill Development: support individual companies and practitioners to develop their skills and businesses through training, professional development and screen culture development;
  - Investment Opportunity Development: increase opportunities for investment from early stage development to large-scale investment;
  - Networking and Communication Strategies: provide a bridge between local practitioners and experienced professionals and improve connections to local, state and federal agencies and businesses to develop collaboration, marketing and finance options;
  - Project and Producer Support: develop incentives and schemes to encourage producers to bring projects into the region and support for projects and producers in the region through locations services, mentor schemes, screenings, networking and market information;
  - Education and Training Strategies: building links with education and training providers in the region to maintain and retain the flow of talent and creativity into the region, encourage collaboration and raise standards;
  - Facilities and Enabling Infrastructure: support the establishment of the hard and soft infrastructure, facilities and services for screen industry practitioners and support service providers.

#### **Facilitate development of and market access for local music industry**

- Facilitate the continued development of the regional music industry cluster by building better linkages with national and international music distribution and promotion agencies and markets.
- Develop the North Coast Entertainment Industry's Dolphin Awards through industry prizes to foster better industry and market outcomes for local musicians.

#### **Facilitate development and market access for visual arts and crafts sector**

- Facilitate access to national and international markets for visual arts and crafts producers.
- Support the development of quality and marketable art work.



- Facilitate the sale of local artists' work in local, national and international markets by improving business skills and market knowledge.

**Continue to support the development of a diverse range of education and training programs targeted to the creative industries sector**

- A wide range of education and training programs are currently delivered throughout the region by a diverse range of providers including SCU, NRCAC, NCI of TAFE, Screenworks, Northern Rivers Writers Centre, North Coast Entertainment Industry Association, North Coast Community College, NORPA and others, including private sector organisations. The continued delivery and expansion of such education within the region is critical to the growth of the industry. Opportunities to expand delivery should be explored together with alternative funding models to achieve same. Creative Industry training pathways through the different providers should be mapped and promoted to potential students, to facilitate access to appropriate skills development.
- Provide training opportunities for business skills development.

**Work with State and Federal Government to support local creative industry strengths**

- Strongly advocate for a review of the existing incentives and taxation regimes in NSW and how they compare to other regions competing for film-making and other creative productions such as those in Queensland (Gold Coast, Far North Queensland).
- Prepare a regional case for presentation to the State Government to offer taxation and other incentives to film makers and other creative industry producers from around Australia and overseas to provide a competitive business advantage for locating their productions and businesses in the Northern Rivers.
- Review the current set of small business assistance programs available from the NSW and Federal governments that can apply to film makers and other creative industry producers. Consider ways to improve access to these and other similar resources.
- Prepare a literature review of government funding and support programs that are available to the creative industries in other Australian States (e.g. Queensland and Victoria) that would benefit the local industry if they were available in NSW. Use this information to lobby the State Government for more targeted creative industries funding and in-kind support.
- Identify sources of early stage risk capital / venture capital that understand creative industries DSRD, the NSW Film & Television Office or the Australian Film Finance Corporation, and then promote these opportunities to the region's creative industries via organisations like Screenworks for example.

**Support the development of Indigenous creative industries**

- Support existing clusters of Indigenous artists and support the development of quality local Indigenous arts and crafts product.
- Assist Indigenous artists and artisans to access local, tourism and national markets for their work.
- Support the development of an Indigenous arts centre to provide a space for arts production and retail, as well as a cultural tourism destination.

**Utilise creative talent to encourage Indigenous community development outcomes**

- Engage local creative industries to sponsor community engagement and support programs for Indigenous groups. Encourage engagement with these groups to develop a shared vision and passion and a stronger sense of community for their local areas and the region as a whole.

- Indigenous art and craft display and interpretation – explore opportunities to communicate the significance of Indigenous history, its culture and continuing association with the region and its localities through indigenous visual art and display. The greatest benefits will be gained from focusing on authenticity and locally responsive display and interpretation. A key need is the development of business and co-operative marketing and continued skill development.

#### **Other strategies**

- Develop and maintain useful databases on skills, opportunities and resources as well as a whole of industry register of equipment and service provision.
- Encourage opportunities for employment and training of locals in national and international productions, festivals and projects being staged or produced in the region.
- Encourage access to training and information about appropriate financing and business models.
- Undertake market research for different creative industry sectors to provide market information to improve access to national and international markets.
- Provide support and assistance with product development to access export markets and tourism markets.
- Develop central hubs for business centres to support creative industry sectors.
- Develop a cohesive marketing strategy for the region's creative industries, promoting the Northern Rivers as a unique centre for creative industries
- Support the development of high quality work, and promote achievement of excellence and quality in arts and creative industry works through mentorships, professional development opportunities and awards.
- Engage State and Federal government partners in the development and implementation of a Northern Rivers arts and creative industries strategy which includes both community cultural development and economic development objectives.

### **4.2.5 Strategies / Actions for the Horticulture Sector**

#### **Prioritise implementation of the 'value chain' aspects of the 'Baker' report**

- Review progress in the implementation of the Baker report and if necessary develop an action plan to progress its implementation.<sup>9</sup> The targeting of agribusiness sectors via utilisation of objective assessment criteria (aka the Hunter Agribusiness Market Demand Study) should be considered as a first step in this process.
- Attention on the strategies in the Baker report related to networking and industry representation, production infrastructure (e.g. pack houses), research and development and managing land use conflicts (principally from encroaching urban activities) represent priorities.

#### **Improve representation for sunrise and smaller industry players**

- Establish a 'sunrise horticultural industry' Chapter (or equivalent) of the established peak body, with a discounted membership levy. Such sunrise industries include emerging producers of high value niche crops such as coffee.

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<sup>9</sup> Baker, J. et al (1999) *'Making a Difference...NATURALLY', Strategies and Recommendations for a sustainable horticulture industry in the Northern Rivers Region of NSW*, September 1999

#### **Engage the Aboriginal community in order to create partnerships**

- Engage with the Aboriginal communities throughout the region in order to explore business partnership opportunities broadly in the agricultural sector, and specifically in niche and emerging growth horticultural sectors.

#### **Ensure provision of appropriate business assistance**

- Seek funding for sunrise industry development and assistance via the various relevant institutions and agencies mentioned above.
- Encourage Southern Cross University to expand its research and development into prospects and opportunities for the local sunrise industries.

#### **Pursue produce specific growth strategies and value adding opportunities (e.g. macadamia, soy bean and regional cuisine)**

- Numerous produce specific growth opportunities and value adding opportunities exist for Horticultural produce in the Region. Specific opportunities should be formally explored, particularly where competitive strengths are significant and strong interest has been shown by industry participants. In this regard both the Macadamia and Soy Bean product sectors (in which Northern Rivers represent the largest contributors to National Output) should be embraced and cluster development opportunities pursued. A wider audit of all agricultural / food / beverages (processed or value added) in the region could also be undertaken in order to identify latent value adding and branding opportunities.
- Continued support should be provided to the valuable research being undertaken at the Grafton Agriculture Research Station (Soy Bean) and other national research stations such as Southern Cross University (genetic and agricultural fields) and Armidale / New England (Macadamia) in this regard.
- Promote the development of regional food products and cuisine based on the region's horticultural products.

### **4.2.6 Strategies / Actions for the Complementary Medicine Products and Services Sector**

#### **Develop industry representation**

- Work with existing peak and representative bodies to improve the representation for all participants in the industry – including herbal medicine and research and education providers (noting the expertise available at Southern Cross University); this might involve the establishment of a new peak body.

#### **Develop scale economies**

- Identify barriers to industry development related to the absence of sufficient scale economies (such as accessing capital intensive machinery).
- Work with peak bodies and financiers to identify opportunities to address these barriers.

#### **Promote premium produce**

- Develop strategies to market Northern Rivers herbal products as premium products both locally and overseas in order to compete with cheaper overseas products by targeting the higher end of the market.

- Support small, independent growers through efforts to promote the 'premium' quality of Northern Rivers produce to niche ex-regional markets in Australia and overseas. (This is consistent with maintaining and promoting the clean & green and organic image of the region).

#### 4.2.7 Strategies / Actions for the Aquaculture Sector

##### **Expand training options**

- Investigate and develop Group Training Models (the scale for these could only come from partnering with, for example, local TAFEs and the Fisherman's Co-operatives).
- Develop and deliver certificate level 'hands-on-training' options (through TAFE).
- Develop and deliver short courses in environmental monitoring and reporting (also through, for example, TAFE).
- Establish an ongoing training program at the DPI Grafton Aquaculture Centre to provide a sustainable income source to maintain this research and development facility.

##### **Develop the local representational base**

- Explore models to increase the local peak body representation for the aquaculture industry

##### **Ensure provision of appropriate business assistance**

- Seek funding for sunrise industry development and assistance via relevant institutions and agencies.

#### 4.2.8 Strategies / Actions for the Timber Industry (Forestry and Plantation) Sectors

##### **Identify and realise opportunities for sustainable industry expansion**

- Document a business and environmental case for increasing access to timber waste and development of product from this source (e.g. plantation thinnings and residues of native forest waste).
- Encourage further value adding processes by enhancing existing business and attracting new 'gap business' to the region.
- Enhance support infrastructure such as the Yamba Port, State Rail, bulk handling facilities and connecting road links to maximise export potential.

##### **Promote and publicise the Northern Rivers region's best practice efforts**

- Intensify international exchange in forestry related education and practice.
- Work with the established industry to develop the Northern Rivers 'brand' of forestry by highlighting unique and special features and the means of practice (note: the forestry programs at SCU are a good example of best practice).

- Establish 'centre of excellence' facilities in the region (possibly involving a collaboration of Southern Cross University, North Coast Institute of TAFE and Department of Primary Industries (Forestry) at Trenayr to service the industry.

#### 4.2.9 Strategies / Actions for the Meat Sector and Dairy Sector<sup>10</sup>

##### **Engage stakeholders**

- Further engage stakeholders to develop industry action plans for both the meat and dairy sectors in the region. (It is noted that the region is one of the largest beef producing area in NSW with a heard size totalling some 420,000 (based on RLBP records for 2004) with a farm gate value estimated as some \$13 Million).

##### **Develop local capacity in warehousing and refrigeration**

- Support the efforts of NORCO in renovating and extending their freezer facilities.
- Seek links with and support from other primary industry activities which may utilise such facilities.
- Work with relevant Council(s) in ensuring planning processes assist and facilitate the development of these facilities.

##### **Develop the range of local finance products available to producers**

- Audit the financial needs of local producers.
- Work with the local co-operatives to develop longer range financing and investment opportunities for the industry.
- Work with local banks and their 'head office' partners to identify options and solutions for enhanced financing.

##### **Enhancing communications with regulators**

- Support delegations from co-operatives and other industry representatives to regulators (e.g. EPA) to ensure new requirements are practically configured and applied fairly.

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<sup>10</sup> It is acknowledged that the Meat and Dairy Sectors are different sectors, although involving the same species of animal.

#### 4.2.10 Strategies / Actions for the Residential Development and Construction Sector

##### **Boosting the local depth in building and development services**

- Conduct a survey of local builders, developers, regulators and private certifiers in order to identify the services and skills they import from outside the region.
- Work with existing local technical firms to see if they can expand their services into the areas where there are gaps.
- Work with SEQ and Sydney firms offering these 'imported' services to encourage them to locate operations in the Northern Rivers.

##### **Develop a local design and development vernacular**

- Document sustainability and best practice aspects of the building sector from design through to construction.
- Document the most successful examples of local architecture and development and sustainable best practice that address the coastal and sub-tropical rainforest conditions of the region.
- Identify common features of these examples, focussing on the key technical features and sustainable best practice of the local professional contributors.
- Publish a book on the 'Northern Rivers Style'.
- Continue to develop the regional awards program for urban design including awards for architecture and buildings including sustainability and industry best practice award for the domestic, commercial and industrial sectors.

#### 4.2.11 Strategies / Actions for the Health, Aged Care and Community Services Sector

*Further examination/development of actions and strategies for this sector will be undertaken through direct engagement with industry sector participants in February – March 2006. Having noted this, the following strategies have emerged from the initial consultation phases.*

##### **Innovative, accessible housing arrangements and community infrastructure**

- Ensure that a significant percentage of new housing is built to meet the Australian standard for adaptable housing by 2020. This will allow older people to remain living in their home longer, as they age.
- Encourage joint projects to develop a new range of housing models for frail older people that could involve philanthropic organisations, government, the building industry and the non-profit sector. This could be supported housing options such as retirement village style development that are more affordable to older people with limited resources, but have easy access to care they need through the development having established links with residential and community care providers.
- Extend local planning concessions for Residential Aged Care to newer supported housing options for older people

- Promote effective urban design to create more aged and disability friendly built environments allowing frail older people better physical access to community infrastructure.

#### **Affordability of aged care**

- Encourage the development of a form of pre-funding, such as an individual-based compulsory saving schemes or an aged care insurance scheme for aged care (extension to private health insurance products). This could be an extension to current private health insurance products that could provide additional funds to assist with the “care component of services” whether this is community based or residential care.
- Establish mechanisms to enable people to access resources within their own home, such as reverse mortgage products to assist in funding aged care.
- Target strategies to ensure that an appropriate share of government funded aged care services are allocated to the region. Three main funding bodies include Department of Health & Ageing, Home & Community Care (DADHC) and Department of Veteran Affairs).

#### **Indigenous aged care**

- Research by the NRRDB shows that the indigenous population of the Northern Rivers region is poorly catered for in terms of aged care services and facilities. The study identified that indigenous culture makes it particularly difficult for indigenous people to be isolated from their families. Further investigations should be undertaken to determine the extent of aged care gaps for the region’s indigenous population and the need for indigenous-specific facilities.

#### **Future planning for population growth**

- Promote a regional approach to aged care planning through the establishment of a committee to develop a “Future Ageing Strategy” for the Northern Rivers region. This could involve:
  - Participation of three levels of government, aged care providers, hospitals, and other interface services such as health, housing and disability and community consultation within the region.
  - Build on existing research via a gap analysis to identify future aged care infrastructure demands (where does the region need to plan for additional aged care facilities, retirement villages, senior housing options) in order to assist in the development of a business case to encourage investment.<sup>11</sup>
  - Build a better understanding of aged care issues and future trends within key regional decision makers, through guest speakers from regional service providers and industry peak bodies.
  - Audit existing traditional community centres/senior citizens centres within region, with the intention of repositioning these key community assets into health ageing /wellness centres and respite services (similar to 60+ better programs in QLD).

#### **Availability of aged care workforce**

- Encourage the creation of Centres of Excellence at Universities and TAFE colleges in aged care. This would involve key employment streams in aged care; personal care workers, nurses, allied health staff, support services (catering, cleaning, maintenance, administration), marketing, health promotion and management.
- Promote the establishment of research grants into ageing, housing, new technologies (e.g. mobility aides, security devices, home modifications) to encourage innovation within aged care and expand the creation of new products within the aged care market.

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<sup>11</sup> The issues identified in the November 2004 report by the NRRDB titled *Population Ageing Impact on the Northern Rivers of NSW* should provide a starting point for more detailed investigations of current and anticipated aged care infrastructure gaps.

- Promote the range of careers available in Aged Care at a secondary level. This would include TAFE level courses and onsite work experience/training within aged care services, building future aged care workforces

#### 4.2.12 Strategies / Actions for the Sugar Industry Sector

*Further examination/development of actions and strategies for this sector will be undertaken through direct engagement with industry sector participants in February – March 2006. Having noted this, the following strategies have emerged from the initial consultation phases.*

- Encourage the protection of existing cane land to maintain the critical threshold to keep mills operational and tangible support mechanisms developed to facilitate co-generation developments (sugar mill / green power generation).
- Undertake investigations to foster other high value adding income streams that provide greater return to existing cane farmers looking for long term transition.

#### 4.2.13 Strategies / Actions for the Marine Fishing Industry Sector

*Further examination/development of actions and strategies for this sector will be undertaken through direct engagement with industry sector participants in February – March 2006. Having noted this, the following strategies have emerged from the initial consultation phases.*

- Support the Marine Industry Supply Chain Capability Analysis and Action Plan project for the Northern Rivers and South East Queensland.

#### 4.2.14 Strategies / Actions for the Transport Sector

*Further examination/development of actions and strategies for this sector will be undertaken through direct engagement with industry sector participants in February – March 2006. Having noted this, the following strategies have emerged from the initial consultation phases.*

The primary aim in this sector is to advocate through NOROC and the NRRDB for the development of an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable regional transport strategy for the Northern Rivers.

**Establish an efficient, integrated and balanced regional transport system that will meet the present and future needs of a dynamic regional economy**

- Establish a regional transport research and strategic planning capability based in an appropriate regional institution such as Southern Cross University.
- Enhance the use of up-to-date technology to improve traffic and freight management; avoid network congestion and usage conflicts; and to assist with coordination and planning of passenger transport services and mobility management.
- Encourage technical innovation in transportation to improve economic and energy efficiency.
- Promote the reduction of bottlenecks and usage conflicts and improving the efficiency and convenience of modal interfaces, for example by up-grading the road/rail interchanges at Casino and Grafton and investigating the introduction of road-rail vehicles.



- Promote planning for the future needs and strategic directions of key and emerging industries, particularly in the agriculture, tourism and creative industries, while preserving the economic, cultural and landscape values on which these industries depend.
- Undertake actions to make the cost efficient and sustainable movement of people and goods an integral part of planning for new urban and rural residential developments, for example by locating mixed use areas and trip generators close to user populations to enhance the viability of public transport.
- Identify and protect future transport growth corridors and sites and focusing employment opportunities for transport access.
- Encourage consideration of the impacts of major highway development on the region's secondary roads network.
- Promote implementation of more transparent user-pays mechanisms such as toll roads to achieve better leverage of public investment in transport infrastructure and facilitate the functional separation of long distance freight traffic from local freight and passenger traffic.
- Improve **intra-regional** transport links to:
  - support local consumption of local produce;
  - upgrade coast-hinterland links to encourage hinterland development;
  - support a village settlement pattern and more compact urban centres;
  - to facilitate public transport based travel and commuting patterns.
- Improve **inter-region** transport links to:
  - provide cost effective freight access to the SEQ Trade Coast (Port of Brisbane and Brisbane International Airport) through Beaudesert;
  - provide direct rail passenger connection to the Gold Coast and Brisbane.
- Improve key links to the **national** transport system by:
  - up-grading the Summerland Way-Beaudesert route as a major road freight corridor;
  - up-grading the Pacific Highway as the main road corridor for interstate passenger and intra-region freight traffic;
  - up-grading the Kyogle-Murwillumbah road;
  - maintaining cost competitive regular regional air services, improving functional definition of the main airports at Ballina, Coolangatta and Coffs Harbour and facilitating better freight access to Coolangatta airport;
  - making greater use of existing and potential rail and sea freight corridors;
  - facilitating passenger transport infrastructure (bus priority lanes) on key road networks and to provide linkages to Ballina and Coolangatta airports.
- Enhance the utilisation of modern technical innovations to improve system management, energy efficiency, environmental impacts and operational flexibility.
- Increase integration between local, regional, state and national economic objectives and the needs of all categories of users including: local residents/workers, inter-urban travellers, inter-regional travellers, tourists, local and regional businesses, national freight forwarders.
- Support the use of multi-user consultation panels to develop implementation strategies for specific transport issues.

**Establish a regional transport system that provides safe, reliable, affordable and equitable access to work, education, shopping, community services, and cultural and recreational amenities and facilitates the region's village focused settlement pattern**

- Enhance the elimination of known safety black spots and areas of conflict between different categories of users and the utilisation of divided carriageways to separate traffic flow on main high volume routes.

- Promote the reduction of noise, visual, air and light pollution in urban and rural settlement areas.
- Improve the processes of community engagement in transport planning, decision-making and management to ensure that the transport system reflects the social and cultural values of the community. These processes should be linked with work undertaken by Transport Working Groups, Department of Planning and Ministry of Transport.
- Reduce congestion in urban centres by an integrated system of vehicle exclusion zones, park and ride facilities, improved public transport, expanded walk/cycle options.
- Manage the impact of freight movements to preserve residential amenity by, for example, the use of limited access zones and heavy vehicle curfews.
- Wherever possible substitute enhanced communications for travel to provide access to services such as banking, medical advice, information services, education etc.
- Undertake planning to alleviate the impact of rising fuel costs on access to educational, medical and other essential services in both regional and metropolitan centres.
- Involve local communities in the development of economically viable and environmentally sustainable transport options for their locality, consistent with local community values and aspirations.
- Encourage the development of a transport system that offers access to a greater choice of education and jobs closer to home and facilitates more time for family and recreation.

**Ensure that the regional transport system supports the transition to environmental sustainability through holistic planning, design excellence, technical and social innovation, local production and consumption and improved standards of energy and resource efficiency**

- Support sustainability outcomes through encouraging expanded transport choices and implementing measures to make sustainable transport modes more attractive to users.
- Reduce reliance on private vehicles by improving the range of public transport alternatives.
- Implement higher standards of energy efficiency and sustainable fuel consumption in the transport sector.
- Prepare for post peak-oil market conditions by planning for non-fossil fuel transport options.
- Enhance the use of technical innovation to mitigate transport related noise, visual and air pollution.
- Introduce strategies to alleviate the environmental impacts of high traffic volumes and congestion.

## 4.3 Strategic Activity Area 3: Identification and Realisation of Local Economic Development and Employment Opportunities

### Overview

Previous regional planning initiatives in the Northern Rivers region highlighted the community's desire for a 'network of viable and sustainable towns and villages'. This 'networked' vision for the future urban form of the Northern Rivers is equally applicable to the region's economic structure.

In order to maximise regional economic output and job creation consistent with the region's economic development objectives and principles (refer Section 3), it is imperative that local as well as regional opportunities are identified and realised. For this to occur significant effort should be channelled into the implementation of existing Local Government economic development strategies as well as individual community based (i.e. village scale) economic development plans within each of the region's seven Local Government Areas. In this regard it is important to continue to build upon existing strengths and current developments.

The implementation of locally based plans is considered particularly important in the Northern Rivers given the large geographic scale of the region and the diversity of issues and opportunities that exist (and in some instances the very localised nature of particular opportunities).

It is noted that some Councils in the region do have current local economic development strategies in place<sup>12</sup> and that many individual communities have prepared their own local community economic development plans, or are in the process of doing so.<sup>13</sup> It is considered important that the results / outcomes of such planning processes should be implemented with such implementation being consistent with / cognisant of the broader regional framework provided by this Plan. Where local strategies / plans have not been developed, they should be undertaken.

Widespread adoption of the local and community economic strategy planning processes already in place in much of the region should result in the documentation and implementation of individual action plans for specific communities and initiatives and be accompanied by schedules which allocate responsibilities for implementation, timelines to be met, resource requirements, sources of income/funding, and monitoring mechanisms. The RIEP provides the broader context in terms of opportunities for economic development and enabling infrastructure and should be used to support local initiatives to maximise local opportunities and provide an ongoing mechanism for local plans to identify infrastructure priorities.

Implicit in all of the above, is the need to foster effective local economic and community development functions and Local Leadership, through the allocation of activity based budgets to implement priorities once identified, within and by each of the region's Local Government Areas.

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the Tweed Draft Strategic Plan 2004-2024 contains a section on 'strengthening the economy'. Kyogle Shire Council is currently facilitating the 'Sense of Place Project' that aims to identify opportunities for existing business as well as seeking new opportunities for economic growth in the Shire. Lismore City Council's recently re-structured economic development unit and provides an incentives program for new business investment in the City. It is also noted that a whole of Council Economic Development Strategy is currently being prepared for the Clarence and is expected to be completed by the middle of 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Many Community Focused Development Plans have been prepared throughout the region, such made possible via funding from DSRD.

## Strategies / Actions

### **Facilitate the ongoing implementation and review of local community and or village economic development strategies and action plans**

- Encourage and facilitate the implementation and review of existing local '*community*' and/or *village economic development plans*' throughout the Northern Rivers region.
- The implementation and review of local community economic development plans should have both a physical and human dimension. Implementation of '*community*' economic development plans therefore also specifically consider the skills, needs and opportunities arising from the demographic composition of individual localities. In this regard, local planning processes should include, for instance, specific engagement with aboriginal communities, youth, aged persons and the like.
- The local community economic development chamber/committee/board or organisation would be expected to drive the implementation and review of local strategies where such organisations already exist. Where they don't there may be opportunity to establish local overseeing committees to implement and monitor local strategies over the longer term. Such plans should examine specific and localised economic opportunities and constraints and actions required to stimulate local employment and business growth. Ideally the output of such plans should be fed into *Local Economic Development Strategies* and *Land Use Plans* prepared for and by individual Council's in the Region.
- Ensure that local community economic development initiatives can inform (and benefit from) the opportunities and directions of municipality-wide economic development strategies and activities. They should also be informed by wider regional planning principles and directions where appropriate, notably the RIEP. Local economic development leaders can engage with DSRD Community Economic Development Manager or Business Development Managers as appropriate.
- In instances where Local Councils in the region do have an active *Local Economic Development Strategy* in place for their municipality, encourage such Councils to regularly review and update their strategy and associated action plans to capitalise on new information as it comes to hand.
- In instances where Local Councils in the region do not have a current / active *Local Economic Development Strategy* in place for their municipality, encourage and support efforts to secure the necessary financial and human resources for the preparation of same. The NRRDB could assist in the process by highlighting the need and benefit arising from the preparation of such plans.
- As a matter of priority each current Local Economic Development Strategy should be reviewed in order to identify additional sector specific opportunities and actions for their municipality arising from the Sector Specific Strategies and Actions listed in this RIEP.
- Explore innovative funding options to assist Local Councils in their implementation of Local Economic Development Strategies.

### **Foster effective local economic and community development functions, through the employment of staff and allocation of activity based budgets, within each of the region's Local Government Areas**

- Encourage the maintenance and where possible enhancement of existing Economic Development Structures within the Northern Rivers region's seven Local Government Areas.
- Where budget capacity exists, in addition to maintaining Local Economic Development Officer / Manager positions, encourage the expansion of the Local Economic Development resource base of Councils through the employment of full-time Community Economic Development Facilitators. These facilitators would work exclusively in the preparation of Community

Economic Development Strategies for individual towns, villages and settlements. Ongoing funding for such positions will need to be accommodated with Local Council's funding.

- Ensure that locally employed economic development managers have discreet activity based budgets to enable them to plan and implement a co-ordinated work plan.

**Enhance the utilisation of the skills base and local knowledge of locally based economic development practitioners**

- Identify options to expand existing networks within the region so that they include whole of region representation. Also explore additional resource sharing and collaboration between all Economic Development Officers / Managers throughout the region as well as their involvement with the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board. This should involve a review regarding the frequency of network meetings as well as a review of their resource sharing capacity.
- Explore the benefits of establishing a formal heads of agreement regarding the operation of the existing network of economic development practitioners in the region in order to increase regional economic development outcomes and co-ordination.

## 4.4 Strategic Activity Area 4: Continue to Foster Regional Leadership and Governance Agendas

### Overview

In recent years, economic 'globalisation', structural reform and a more competitive economic environment has intensified the need for localities to band together in an effort to respond to changing circumstances, and to compete more effectively to pursue opportunities for growth.

The achievement of sustainable business and industry development (and jobs) in the Northern Rivers region depends heavily on the capacity of the regional economy to tap in to broader regional, State and national chains of economic activity. Whereas in years gone by parochialism between suburbs and towns would have more often than not provided strong resistance to local and regional development efforts, today it is widely accepted by policy makers and the communities they serve that a 'regional' approach to economic development is necessary for survival and prosperity.

Central to this 'regional' approach is the commitment by all stakeholders to work together. Maintenance of effective communication channels and leadership which reflects a commitment to systematically addressing regional needs is a priority. The individual and *collective* actions and performance of the region's local government leaders (elected and employed) will resonate throughout the region in this regard. Also important, as highlighted by McKinsey & Company (Lead Local Complete Global, 1994) is the development of *Leadership Teams* which aim to spread the leadership load throughout the entire community. As such, the continued development and harnessing of a group or groups of leaders (those people who can make change happen, can make investments, and can help change attitudes) in the region is also considered a priority.

Clearly a concerted *collective* effort from Local, Regional, State and Federal government agencies, together with the private sector is required to ensure that key issues and constraints on prosperity are effectively dealt with and that the potential for complementary opportunities and activities are developed to the benefit of all who make up the community of interest.

### Strategies / Actions

#### **Foster Local Government and non-government organisation (NGO) commitment to the activities of the NRRDB**

- NRRDB to continue dialogue with Local Councils and NGOs in order to confirm and formalise their commitment to the activities of the NRRDB and seek to strengthen their active involvement.
- NRRDB to facilitate a round table business planning meeting with representatives of each Council in the region to explore options to improve communication channels and outcomes from their involvement with the Regional Development Board and NOROC, with the aim of increasing their ownership of the Board, NOROC and their work programs and vice versa (i.e. local economic development programs). Also aim to increase synergies and collaborative initiatives.

### **Actively engage the Aboriginal community in this RIEP process and its implementation**

- Due to a number of historical practices, the Aboriginal community tends to be rather cautious and cynical when connecting itself to a project, program or business activity initiated by Government or a perceived bureaucratic body such as the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board. If the Aboriginal community of the Northern Rivers region is going to embrace the RIEP then the RIEP must clearly demonstrate a commitment to the Aboriginal community. This will allow the concerns or issues being raised by the community to be contained within the document, otherwise the Aboriginal community will view it as purely tokenistic and the community will question its validity and relevance unto itself. With this in mind continued open dialogue and face to face consultation with the Aboriginal communities within the region is required. Unless this occurs, gaining the confidence and participation of the Aboriginal community will not be achieved.

### **Harness government and business industry links**

- Develop better cross and between government co-ordination and harmonised approaches to business and industry facilitation.
- Establish mechanisms to identify and provide a platform for a network of 'Northern Rivers Leaders / Business Ambassadors'.
- Development of local think tanks and continue regional conversations.

### **Strengthen governance relationship between RIEP and ACC Regional Strategy**

- The Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee's Regional Strategy is recognised. The ACC is the region's representative in a national network of Commonwealth agencies. It provides a complementary framework in the assessment of applications for financial assistance in respect of the Commonwealth's Regional Partnerships Program and a range of other Federal assistance programs. The NRRDB will encourage endorsement of the Final RIEP by the Northern Rivers ACC in line with its Strategic Regional Plan, and ultimate endorsement by DoTaRS.

### **Monitor progress**

- To help develop better measures / indicators of sustainable economic development, and to understand industry and development outcomes from the RIEP (locally and regionally), look into methods to track progress of the RIEP's implementation and outcomes.

## 4.5 Strategic Activity Area 5: Maximise Economic and Employment Outcomes Arising from the Region's Proximity to South East Queensland and the Mid-North Coast Region of NSW

### Overview

Many of the issues affecting the economic development of the Northern Rivers are driven by trends and influences that emanate from beyond the region's borders. Societal change, widespread population shifts (the 'sea change' phenomenon), global competition and industry restructuring are all having a profound impact on the socio-economic fortunes of, not only the Northern Rivers region, but on all regions and locales throughout Australia.

Equally influential are the policy responses of Federal, State and local governments to the pressures that these broader trends place on housing, on the location of business & industry and on employment.

The consolidation of economic activity in the nation's capital cities and the larger regional centres means that their economic 'sphere of influence' is greater than at any time before. This means that economically and socially, no region sits in isolation. In the Northern Rivers, the economic fortunes of the Tweed and other settlements in the north are in large part determined by developments over the border in South East Queensland<sup>14</sup>. Economically and socially, the Tweed's relationship with Brisbane and South East Queensland is much stronger than it is with that of Sydney. Similarly, in the region's south, the Clarence Valley has strong social and economic ties with the Mid North Coast of New South Wales.

These broader social and economic trends and influences, various policy responses, and the fact that no region sits in isolation from its neighbours means that developments in South East Queensland and in the Mid North Coast region of NSW will have a significant bearing on the economic prospects of the Northern Rivers region.

### 4.5.1 Strategies / Actions Relating to Linkages with South East Queensland

#### **Develop and improve cross-border transportation and ICT infrastructure**

- Through NOROC and the NRRDB, and in consultation with DSRD Tweed Office, Tweed Shire representatives and the Queensland Government representatives (Office of Urban Management) and Queensland Councils (SouthROC member Councils), explore the concept of an integrated transport plan across the Queensland-NSW border to address cross-border settlement and journey to work impacts on regionally significant road and rail infrastructure.
- Facilitate new investment in road infrastructure upgrades to improve road safety and travel times to key national and international passenger and freight gateways that serve the region including:
  - Gold Coast Airport (upgrade required – current development proposals supported);

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<sup>14</sup> Refer to the *Overview of Economic Implications of South East Queensland on the Northern Rivers Region*, 2005



- The Australia Trade Coast (Brisbane Airport and the Port of Brisbane);
  - Ballina Airport;
  - Port of Yamba; and
  - the proposed Beaudesert Container Depot and Link to Yatala.
- Facilitate new, and support existing initiatives geared to expanding rail freight options for the region's producers, particularly the proposed interchange and bulk handling facility at Casino.
  - Facilitate new investment in rail projects geared to providing more direct and rapid passenger rail services to the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Sydney. For example, investigate the proposed extension of the passenger rail line south of Robina on the Gold Coast to Coolangatta (this line connects with Brisbane).
  - Continue to monitor intra and inter regional rail upgrade requirements via the conduct of appropriately detailed audits. Explore light rail options as a sustainable alternative.
  - Ensure consultation and collaboration with relevant public transport planning groups and departments in NSW and Qld to promote the inclusion of main travel options to increase utilisation of locally based transport businesses.
  - Support the partner Councils in the Northern Rivers and SE Queensland in the Broadening Broadband Aggregation Project by assisting lobbying efforts and preparing a detailed audit of broadband demand and mobile phone 'hot spots' throughout the entire region.

(See also Strategic Activity Area 1).

#### **Capitalise on the potential growth of key economic sectors with strong links to SEQ**

Cooperate and facilitate the development of collaboration on relevant cross-border projects between the NRRDB, Southern Regional Organisation of Councils (SouthROC), Gold Coast and Region Area Consultative Committee and the Qld Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation. These organisations are all signatories to the *Statement of Intent on cooperation on Economic Development: SE Queensland – SouthROC* that provides a framework for the development of a Regional Economic Development Blueprint for the SouthROC region.

- **Tourism** – Further evolve the regional brand to further distinguish the Northern Rivers from the Gold Coast and encourage its widespread and consistent use. Employ a tourism marketing strategy that taps in to and leverages off the profile of the Gold Coast (as well as Byron Bay) and which highlights the diversity and points of difference that the Far North Coast has to offer.
- **Tourism** – Support the ongoing development of the Rainforest Way as a priority cross-border tourism development project.
- **Tourism** - According to the Tweed Plan 2004-2024, there is scope to generate more local employment in the Tweed by attracting suitable 'spillover' development, especially tourism. Increased capacity at Gold Coast Airport will accommodate greater passenger numbers, including tourists to Queensland and northern New South Wales. Explore strategies to encourage more passenger arrivals at Coolangatta to head south into the Northern Rivers rather than north to Brisbane and the Gold Coast.
- **Tourism** - Investigate funding options for promoting tourism on the Far North Coast to national and international markets.
- **Creative Industries** – Examine the development of the creative industries in Queensland and the spin-offs this can have for the Northern Rivers through skills transfer and input supply (e.g. spin-offs in film making associated with the critical mass of industry talent and experience at Warner Roadshow on the Gold Coast. Continue to promote the Northern Rivers region as a location for documentary and other film making.
- **Manufacturing** - The Northern Rivers could potentially benefit from spin-offs from the growth in food and beverage manufacturing in SEQ, particularly on the Gold Coast. There are also

likely to be potential spin-offs from marine industry growth, particularly on the Gold Coast (boat building).

- **Manufacturing** – Support the Marine Industry Supply Chain Capability Analysis and Action Plan project for the Northern Rivers and South East Queensland.
- **Residential Development & Construction** – Explore scope to build and promote a local design and construction ‘cluster’, with key specialisations in environmentally sensitive or sub-tropical design, one which ultimately could ‘export’ construction expertise to other regions. (See also Strategic Activity Area 2).
- **The ‘Knowledge Economy’** – Explore strategies to attract and retain ‘knowledge workers’ in the Northern Rivers region, including:
  - businesses in all industries that can locate in northern NSW and access advanced business services in SEQ; and
  - those providers of advanced business services, or the skilled knowledge workers in software design, science, media, research, education, etc. who may choose to live in the region and commute for some or all of the week to their place of employment over the border.
- **Forestry** – The forestry sector in Northern Rivers already has a close working relationship with SEQ research institutions and the SEQ region is a prominent marketplace for forestry products. There is scope to enhance and expand the challenges and economic advantages.

#### Industrial Land

- In light of industrial land pressures in South East Queensland and growing investor interest in the Northern Rivers region, undertake necessary investigations into the region’s industrial land capacity. Specifically, updating of the Northern Rivers Industrial Lands Register is required to maintain up-to-date details of vacant industrial land; identify (and document the capacity of) parcels of regionally significant land that are currently zoned for industry; identify current or potential industrial investigation areas; determine likely demand for industrial land and other employment generating lands in the Northern Rivers region over the next twenty years.
- The NRRDB, DSRD, DOP and NOROC to establish and continue dialogue with the Queensland Office of Urban Management (OUM) on the status of the Mt. Lindesay/North Beaudesert Investigation Area.
- Facilitate opportunities for Northern Rivers local government to promote identified industrial land for local and cross-border usage and its capacity to house employment generation lands.

(See also Strategic Activity Area 1).

### 4.5.2 Strategies / Actions Relating to Linkages with Mid-North Coast

Clearly the growing regional centre of Coffs Harbour (population approximately 64,000) and its international airport represent significant opportunities for the Clarence Valley. Further research is required to be undertaken by the NRRDB to determine appropriate strategies and actions to include in this section of the RIEP. The Clarence Valley Council is preparing an Economic Development Strategic Plan which will be completed by the middle of 2006. The Mid North Coast Regional Development Board is initiating action on a Regional Industry and Economic Plan for the Mid-North Coast. These plans need to be completed to determine specific opportunities, strategies and actions to maximise the benefit of the relationship with the Mid-North Coast for the Northern Rivers Region.

## 5 Next Steps

### 5.1 Distribute Final Plan (December 2005)

Distribute the Final Plan to those invited to the second round of consultation which was held in May 2005, as well as more broadly to other stakeholders such as Chambers of Commerce and community groups.

### 5.2 Seek Organisational Responses on Industry Priorities and Stakeholder Roles (December 2005 – January 2006)

Stakeholders will be requested to identify strategies and actions of interest and priority to their organisation, as well as their potential role within all industry sectors so that industry specific workshops can commence in February to March 2006.

Similarly, input is also required with stakeholders to enable the inclusion of key strategic actions relating to the Mid North Coast (Refer Section 4.5.2). This will involve collaboration with Clarence Valley Council and the Mid North Coast Regional Development Board via the development of economic strategy and plans for these areas.

A summary of the identified industry priorities and stakeholder roles will be distributed in January 2006.

### 5.3 Industry Sector Workshops to Determine Implementation Priorities (February – March 2006)

A series of industry sector stakeholder workshops will be facilitated to identify the priorities for each industry sector and develop strategies and actions which will progress the plan and any additional elements required. The key question at this stage of the project relates to prioritisation of actions and identification of implementation agents and budgets. It is expected that the industry workshops will report with the aim of:

- identifying targets for the objectives specified in Section 3;
- prioritising Infrastructure Projects listed in Strategic Activity Area Section 4.1;
- developing an implementation program, inclusive of resourcing considerations to prioritise action areas 1, 3, 4, and 5, noting that action in the progressing of sector strategies will largely be determined by the motivation of peak bodies and the industries they represent; and
- development of industry leadership groups in the region's key sectors.

It must be stressed that the above processes will take time so it is important to further progress action and implementation concurrently.

## 5.4 Facilitate Annual Roundtable Discussions (October 2006)

Conduct a further round of roundtable discussions with the aim of:

- an overall review of progress and outcomes to date;
- Industry Sector Stakeholder groups informing the roundtable of progress towards implementation of elements of the RIEP and further priorities to be addressed; and
- identification of additional or emerging trends and priorities.

An annual roundtable discussion will be convened to undertake an annual review of progress, outcomes and new or emerging trends and priorities.

## 5.5 Seek Sign-Off (March - October 2006)

Continue to formally seek endorsement of the RIEP from key stakeholders (ideally the three tiers of Government and peak industry bodies). A particular emphasis is on the integration of the RIEP in the Far North Coast Regional Strategy being developed by DOP.

## 5.6 Initiate Implementation and Action (February 2006 – ongoing)

Ongoing liaison with key stakeholders to continue the implementation of projects endorsed by the Plan and support industry based initiatives to secure implementation funding.

## Appendix 1

# Record of Consultation with Industry and Government

Consultation during development of the Final RIEP involved:

- Meetings with Executive Management Staff of Local Councils with the project consultants (February 2005);
- Workshops with Local Councils with the NRRDB Executive Director and a NRRDB Board member (February – March 2005);
- Presentations and discussions with industry bodies and groups(2004 and ongoing);
- Local government roundtable on 17 May 2005;
- Industry roundtable on 17 May 2005;
- Submissions and comments on Draft RIEP V2 forwarded to the project team during January to May 2005;
- Submissions and comments on Draft RIEP V3 forwarded to the NRRBD during August to November 2005.

Sector	Organisations and Representatives Consulted	Written Comments/ Submissions
<b>Local Government</b>	<p>Workshops were held with all Councils (but Clarence Valley) during February – March 2005)</p> <p>Individual Council meetings and a local government roundtable on 17 May 2005 involved the following Council staff:</p> <p>Tweed Shire Council – Mark Tickle (Planner)</p> <p>Byron Shire Council – Steve Smith (Team Leader – Community Planning), Lisa Wheeler (Senior Planner), Mike Svikis (Manager, Environment &amp; Community Planning)</p> <p>Ballina Shire Council – Paul Hickey (Group Mgr. Corporate Services), Jane Laverty (Economic Development Officer), Steve Barnier (Executive Strategic Planner)</p> <p>Kyogle Shire Council – Scott Turner (Director of Planning &amp; Environmental Community Services), Samantha Muller (Economic Development Officer)</p> <p>Lismore City Council – Isabelle Perdriau (Economic Development Officer), Helen Manning (Manager, Planning Services)</p> <p>Richmond Valley Council – Louise Ford (Community Development Co-ordinator), Ken Exley (Director, Environmental Development Services), Wayne Halcrowe (Director Corporate Services)</p> <p>Clarence Valley Council – George Cowan (Exec. Mgr. Economic Development), Kerren Law (Mgr. Industry Development)</p>	<p>Tweed Shire Council</p> <p>Kyogle Shire Council</p> <p>Richmond Valley Council</p> <p>Clarence Valley Council</p> <p>Lismore City Council</p> <p>Ballina Shire Council</p>

Sector	Organisations and Representatives Consulted	Written Comments/ Submissions
<b>State Government</b>	<p>Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) – Trevor Wilson (Business Development Manager), Sue Ryan (Business Development Manager), Craig Jenkins (Aboriginal Business Development Manager)</p> <p>Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR/DOP) – Tim Rabbidge (Team Leader, Regional Planning (North). Workshop with Far North Coast Strategy staff on 16 May 2005.</p> <p>Department of Primary Industries (DPI) – Bill Hoffman (Beef Advisory Office)</p> <p>Department of Education and Training (DET) – Colleen Da Rosa (Manager), Neil Davies (DETNAC, State-wide Aboriginal Training Co-ordinator)</p> <p>Presentation and discussion with Regional Manager's Coordination Group mid-2004</p>	<p>DSRD</p> <p>DIPNR/DOP</p>
<b>Federal Government</b>	<p>Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee (NRACC) – Ann Carkery (Executive Officer), Ellen Jurd (Project Officer)</p> <p>Presentation and discussion with NRACC 3 March 2005</p>	NRACC
<b>Regional organisations</b>	<p>NOROC – Isabelle Perdriau (Executive Officer)</p> <p>Presentation and discussion with General Manager's Group December 2004</p> <p>Northern Rivers Social Development Council</p> <p>Presentation and discussion with NRRDB 24 June 2005</p> <p>Presentation and discussion with SouthROC Economic Development Forum 21 April 2005</p>	<p>NRRDB</p> <p>NOROC</p> <p>NRSDC</p> <p>SouthROC Economic Development Forum, incl Beaudesert Shire Council</p>
<b>Economic development</b>	<p>Tweed Economic Development Corporation – Tom Senti</p>	TEDC
<b>Tourism</b>	<p>Northern Rivers Tourism (NRT) – Stephen Fletcher (NRT Board)</p> <p>Tweed and Coolangatta Tourism Inc. (TACTIC) – Terry Watson (General Manager)</p>	NRT
<b>Education</b>	<p>Southern Cross University – Steve Williams (Business Manager, Graduate Research College), Ros Derrett (Head, Office of Regional Engagement), Lawson Savery (Executive Dean of Business, Office of Executive Dean-Business), Chris McDowell (Lecturer, Commerce &amp; Management (Coffs Harbour), TAFE NSW - North Coast Institute – Geoff Baldry (Director, Educational Programs and Services)</p> <p>DET – Colleen Da Rosa (Manager)</p>	<p>TAFE NSW – North Coast Institute</p> <p>CEDAR, SCU (Chris McDowell)</p>

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Organisations and Representatives Consulted</b>	<b>Written Comments/ Submissions</b>
<b>Creative industries</b>	<p>Presentation and discussion with Screenworks Board 10 March 2005</p> <p>Screenworks and Hatchling Productions – Cathy Henkel (Board Member and Producer)</p> <p>Arts Northern Rivers – Lois Randall (Regional Arts Development Officer)</p> <p>North Coast Entertainment Industry Association – Sally McPherson (Northern Rivers Music Industry Development Project Co-ordinator)</p> <p>Northern Star – Russell Eldridge (Editor)</p> <p>North Coast Ad Agency – David Kavanagh (CEO)</p> <p>CLIC Network Inc – Ken McLeod (Executive Officer)</p>	<p>Arts Northern Rivers</p> <p>Screenworks</p>
<b>Horticulture</b>	<p>Australian Macadamia Society – Andrew Heap (General Manager)</p> <p>Peasley Horticultural Services – David Peasley (Horticultural Consultant)</p> <p>Mountain Top Coffee – Andrew Ford (General Manager)</p>	<p>Aust. Macadamia Society</p> <p>Peasley Horticultural Services</p> <p>NSW Farmers – Jan Shorrocks</p>
<b>Timber (forestry and plantation)</b>	<p>Presentation and discussion with Northern Rivers Private Forestry (NRPF) 2 March 2005</p> <p>Hurfords Building Supplies – Lexie and Andrew Hurford</p> <p>Northern NSW Forestry Services – Mick and Rhonda O'Neill (Principal Consultants)</p> <p>SCU – Jerry Vanclay (Chair of Forestry, School of Environmental Science &amp; Management)</p>	<p>NRPF</p> <p>Southern Cross University – Jerry Vanclay</p>
<b>Meat and dairy</b>	<p>Northern Rivers Cooperative Meat Company Peter Carlill (Chair)</p> <p>NORCO – Greg McNamara (Chair)</p> <p>Presentation and discussion with Organic Beef Farming participants 8 April 2005</p>	
<b>Residential development &amp; construction</b>	<p>Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) North Coast Chapter – Chris Pratt (President)</p>	
<b>Health, aged care &amp; community services</b>	<p>North Coast Radiography – Jim Pryce (CEO)</p> <p>Feros Care – Jennene Buckley (CEO)</p>	<p>Feros Care</p>
<b>Sugar</b>	<p>Broadwater Sugar Mill – Greg Messiter (General Manager)</p>	

Sector	Organisations and Representatives Consulted	Written Comments/ Submissions
<b>Transport</b>	Gold Coast Airport – Bob Bidwell (General Manager Development)	Gold Coast Airport – Bob Bidwell, Carly Sommer Public Transport Development Project – Linda Lomman Mills Transport – Reg Mills
<b>Indigenous</b>	Presentation and discussion with Northern Rivers Indigenous Reference Group 27 April 2005 DSRD – Craig Jenkins (Aboriginal Business Development Manager) DETNAC – Neil Davies (State-wide Aboriginal Training Co-ordinator) Nungera Cooperative – Trevor Kappeen Presentation and discussion with Indigenous Coordination Centre 21 June 2005	Indigenous Reference Group



## Appendix 2

### Best Practice Planning Principles and Guidelines

The 2003 RIEP Working Paper recommended a series of planning principles and guidelines to support economic development for the region and in each of the industry sectors. Whilst these principles and guidelines are not specific strategies and actions, they have been included below to provide guidance during plan and/or strategy making to facilitate local and regional economic and industry development.

The aim is to ensure that regional and local planning controls balance the needs of industry with responsibilities for protecting the environment and community.

Some of the guidelines identified may reflect current practice and many are consistent with recommendations in other planning frameworks such as regional and local land use plans and the Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan.

### Positioning for Global Competitiveness

- Ensure strategic planning and local planning directions allow for future transport corridors which will facilitate efficient connections and access to key capital city and gateway infrastructure.
- Encourage all new residential developments to incorporate culverts for broadband servicing (or ensuring alternative technologies are able to be delivered).
- Promote continuous upgrading of design and development standards (while ensuring development control systems work efficiently) to preserve the quality of the built environment.
- Make provision for flexible living and working environments, including home based business, to preserve options for alternative and evolving work arrangements.

### Building the Region's Value Set

- Incorporate more sophisticated performance criteria in statutory planning documents, which require developers to consider and address how their proposed development might better reflect or contribute to the region's value set and other aspirations (some of the questions asked earlier, as criteria for assessing the value of different industry sectors are relevant, such as, does the development enhance the identity the region wants to build and portray, does it encourage diversity and extend the potential for 'difference', is it consistent with environmental protection and restoration, does it contribute to innovation in the community and economy, etc).
- Prepare plans for infrastructure and services provision that are integrated with desired land use planning outcomes and meet objectives in relation to the reasonable and equitable access expectations of communities.
- Develop strategy and land use planning frameworks which address 'edge' and transition issues in villages and townships recognising that identity and impressions can be formed at these places.

- Protect opportunities associated with regionally and locally significant extractive resources, and associated operating practices, where this is consistent with the identified community value set and economic realities.
- Develop controls for protecting agricultural land, and associated operating requirements, with appropriate acknowledgement of or partnerships to manage owner's existing use rights.
- Develop planning policies for river frontage and riparian corridors, covering access and use issues.
- Develop a Northern Rivers specific approach to coastal management and planning that sets a benchmark for the rest of Australia.
- Review planning controls for their impact on housing supply with a view to minimising their impact on the cost of development, to encourage more affordable housing outcomes.
- Preserve and extend the reserve or open space system through planning and land management controls (incorporating remnant vegetation protection as a priority) – again recognising and addressing implications from any curtailment of existing legitimate uses.
- Harmonise development frameworks and codes across the region, particularly in environmentally sensitive or coastal regions - guidelines should be prepared and adopted across the region.

## Developing the Region's Key Sectors

### Tourism

- Marry the scale and impact of proposed facilities to the scale of settlements or capability of environment – small scale low key tourism preferred in villages, rural or environmental protection zones, whereas large-scale developments are preferred in cities or prime tourism development areas (exceptions should meet performance criteria relating to protecting the identity, scale and capability of the host settlement or environment).
- Protect opportunities for lower income visitors by ensuring planning frameworks or development approvals do not unduly restrict or reduce caravan park and camping type operations.

### Education

- Ensure the siting of major facilities enhances accessibility and infrastructure capacity – early planning and consultation with education providers is required.
- Site schools and facilities safely (where traffic speeds can be controlled and by avoiding environmental hazards).

## Creative Industries

- Provide a consistent approach to siting and identifying film locations.

## Horticulture, Complementary Medicine

- Manage residential or urban encroachment in areas of good agricultural land<sup>15</sup> (areas where these conflicts and tensions are occurring is on the Alstonville Plateau and Cudgen-Duranbah area), particularly in the form of rural living and rural residential subdivisions, by;
  - designating sufficient land for rural living and rural residential subdivisions (say a 10 years supply) in areas where this is most appropriate (e.g. adjacent to existing urban areas, where services can be readily extended or in degraded rural areas);
  - identifying those designated future living areas which can expect to receive new infrastructure and services (thereby reducing expectations and prospects for ad hoc subdivisions outside these areas); and
  - utilising the Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan for issues relating to land use and conflicts between rural land uses.
- Manage the off-site impacts of intensive agricultural activity by establishing buffers to neighbouring activities, systems of education and advice for incoming adjacent residents, and where relevant systems of off-site reparation or mitigation payments, addressing, for example;
  - noise;
  - impact of odours;
  - soil degradation;
  - minimisation of waste;
  - water (ground and surface) quality and quantity; and
  - impacts on flora and fauna.

(These are more relevant to land uses such as cattle feedlots and piggeries than horticulture).
- Incorporate elements dealing with acid sulphate soils (ASS) (particularly relevant to the cane industry) from the industry's best practice guidelines (Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan models have been prepared and these should be the guides for implementation by all the region's Councils).

## Aquaculture

- Adopt the recommendations from the North Coast Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy (2000) with regard to preferred locations, and any implications from this for local development control and regulatory frameworks.
- Ensure that provision for aquaculture operations does not compromise public access to or otherwise alienate foreshore areas.

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<sup>15</sup> Protection of regionally and state significant agricultural land has been provided through the Farmland protection project, as this land is recognised as key regional resource.

## Residential Development and Construction

- Adopt best practice standards for residential and other development given the unique and particular characteristics of the region's coastal, rural, river valley, sub-tropical, rangeland and hinterland environments.

## Forestry, Meat and Dairy

- Establish appropriate management of buffer and 'neighbour' issues where these might otherwise limit efficient established operations (noting that in the forestry and timber sector, all operations including forestry, milling and downstream require attention).
- Review controls on consolidating properties where this might facilitate more efficient forestry operations and practices; and, or the achievement of greater economies of scale in the industry.

## Transport

- Encourage the integration of transport planning with regional economic and land use planning to minimise the negative impacts of transport development on land values and commercial investment planning in the broader regional economy.
- Encourage protection of all existing transport corridors (including both rail and road) and the investigation of more innovative use of these corridors to enhance flexibility and meet settlement needs.
- Encourage the separation of local and interstate traffic to the greatest extent possible.
- Encourage the alignment of transport planning and development with the protection of high value agricultural lands and environmental conservation values.
- Promote the preservation of natural and cultural landscape values as a necessary condition for transport infrastructure development.
- In considering employment, workforce capability and maintenance, it is critical to incorporate planning which addresses the public transport needs of the workforce and the wider community.
- Plan transport networks to reduce development pressure on the coastal zone and other environmentally sensitive areas and refocus residential and commercial development in the hinterland.
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- Ensure a 'best practice' approach to development planning includes a staged public transport infrastructure implementation plan.
- Encourage the favouring of pedestrian, cycle and flexible public transport options in new urban planning and to enhance the viability of village development.

## ACRONYMS

**CTC** – Community Technology Centres  
**DOP** – NSW Department of Planning  
**DSRD** – NSW Department of State and Regional Development  
**ICTS** - Information and communications technologies  
**NCI of TAFE** – North Coast Institute of Technical and Further Education  
**NGOs** – Non Government Organisations  
**NOROC** – Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils Inc  
**NRACC** – Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee  
**NRADB** – Northern Rivers Regional Development Board  
**OUM** – Office of Urban Management  
**RIEP** – Regional Industry and Economic Plan  
**SCU** – Southern Cross University  
**SEQ** – South East Queensland  
**SouthROC** - Southern Region Organisation of Councils  
**TEDC** – Tweed Economic Development Corporation Ltd  
**TPDC** - Transport and Population Data Centres