

Clarence Valley Council

RURAL LANDS STRATEGY

June 2022

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl nations, and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CVLEP 2011	Clarence Valley Local Environmental Plan 2011
DCP	Development control plan
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
DPE	Department of Planning & Environment
DPE - BCD	DPE - Biodiversity Conservation Division
DPE - Planning	DPE - Planning & Assessment
DPE - Water	DPE - Water Group
FCNSW	Forestry Corporation of NSW
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LEP	Local environmental plan
LGA	Local government area
LLS	Local Land Services
LSPS	Local strategic planning statement
NCRP 2036	North Coast Regional Plan 2036
NPWS	National Parks & Wildlife Service
NRAR	Natural Resources Access Regulator
NSW	New South Wales
PNF	Private native forestry
RFS	NSW Rural Fire Service
TFNSW	Transport for NSW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Rural Lands Strategy provides a framework for managing growth, change and development of rural land in the Clarence Valley to the year 2041 (a 20 year timeframe). It seeks to address and pre-empt a range of issues including land-use conflict and sustainability while incorporating social, cultural, economic and environmental values.

The study area of this Strategy encompasses Clarence Valley's "rural lands", meaning all land that is currently zoned under the *Clarence Valley Local Environmental Plan 2011* as follows:

- RU1 Primary Production
- RU2 Rural Landscape
- RU3 Forestry
- C2 Environmental Conservation
- C3 Environmental Management

These areas comprise 75% of all land in the Clarence Valley, shown in green in the adjoining map, and being approximately 69% are rural zones and a further 6% conservation (previously known as "environmental") zones. This extent of rural lands within a single local government area is relatively unique on the east coast of NSW.



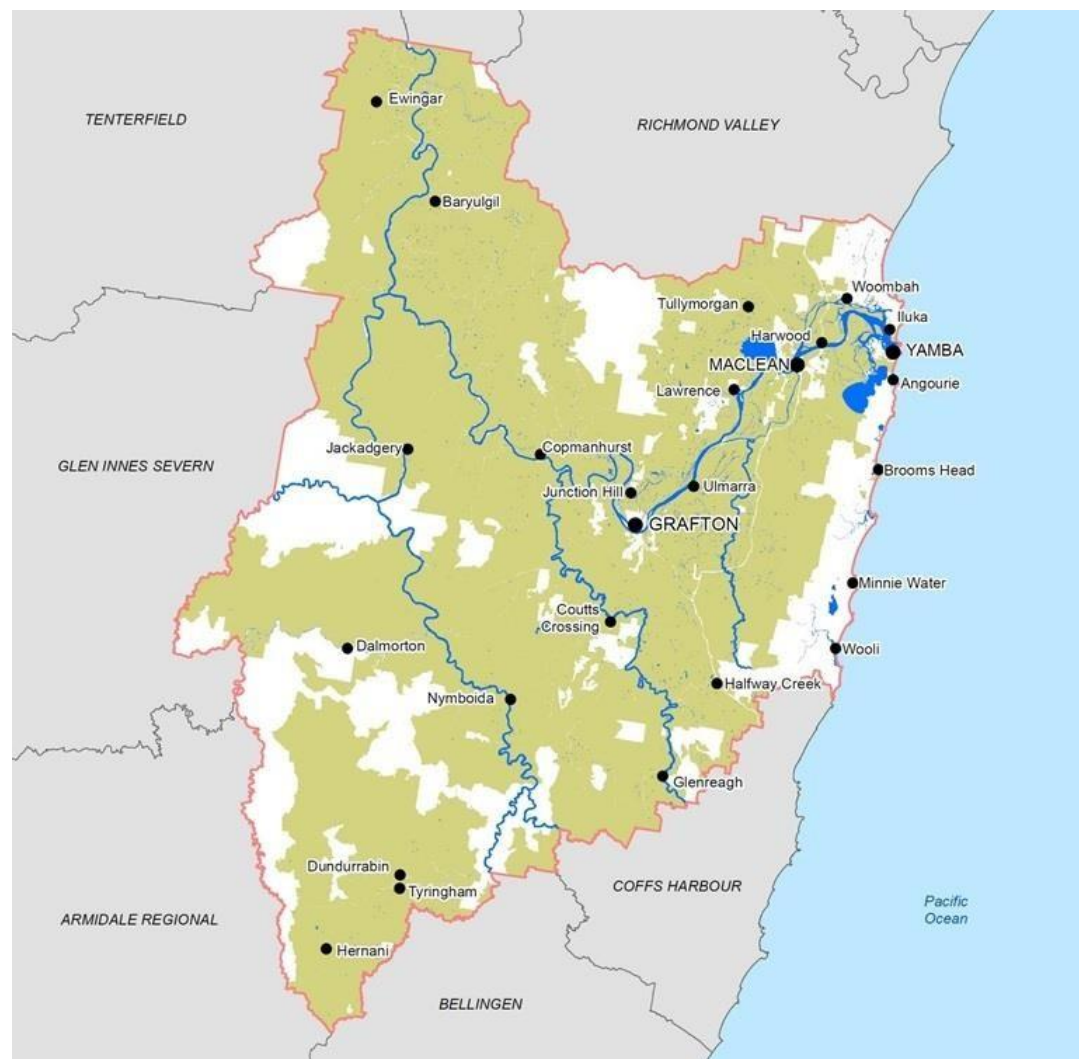
69%

of Clarence Valley land is within a Rural "RU" zone



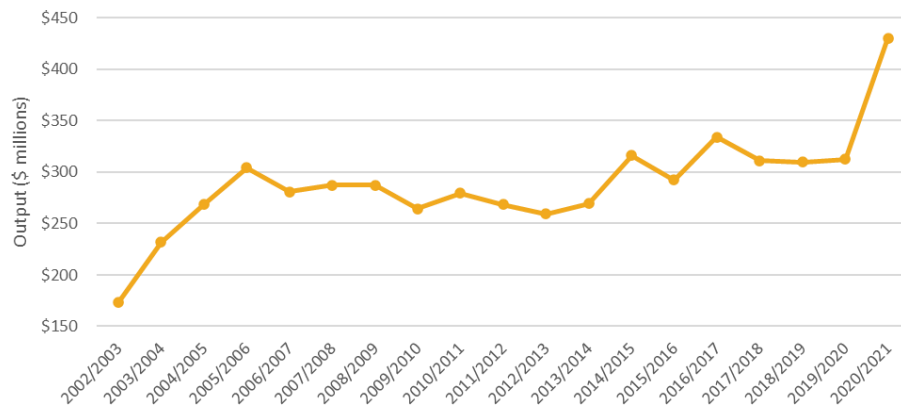
6%

of Clarence Valley land is within a Conservation "C" zone



LAND SUBJECT TO THIS RURAL LANDS STRATEGY

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors have been a foundation of growth of the Clarence Valley ever since the area was first settled in the late 1800's. The combined agriculture, forestry and fishing sector had an output value of \$430 million in 2020/2021, growing substantially over an extended period as shown below.



Agriculture, forestry and fishing output over the last 20 years

Agriculture itself accounts for \$247 million in output in 2020/2021, and according to the most recent published agricultural census figures¹, beef was the largest agricultural industry in the LGA (43% of gross value), followed by sugar cane (31%) and dairy production (10%). Output produced in this sector of the Clarence Valley economy is in excess of any other council areas in the northern rivers' agricultural subregion and growing at a faster rate than any other LGA when compared to the 2014/2015 period². Forestry contributed around \$113 million in output in

¹ See Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 7503.0 - Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2015-16

² All output figures based on 2020/2021 ID Economy - Economic Value - Output - accessed 27/05/2022 for each Council area

In jobs terms, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector employs more than 1,200 people⁴ and more than 3,800 people are believed to be employed in the agri-food economy⁵.

While forestry, sugarcane, beef, dairy and aquaculture have long been established in the area, industries such as berries and macadamia nuts, as well as specialist food and vegetable production are also important and often expanding sectors. Added value is also being garnered through a trend of consumers wanting to know where and how food has been produced, with premiums placed on sustainability, social benefits, local connection and history.



Traditional industries, including sugarcane, beef and forestry remain strong



Emerging / growth industries include berry and nut production

Equally important is the protection of key biodiversity assets and landscapes of Clarence Valley's rural lands. Striking a balance between agriculture and other rural land uses is a key theme within this Strategy. Emerging opportunities in tourism and recreation, as well as the management of conservation lands within the rural landscape, are also key considerations of the Strategy.

³ All output figures based on 2020/2021 ID Economy - Economic Value - Output - accessed 27/05/2022

⁴ 2020/2021 ID Economy Full-time equivalent employment by industry sector - accessed 27.05.22

⁵ Clarence Valley Local Strategic Planning Statement (2020)

In seeking to address the key issues for rural land, notable actions of the Strategy include:

- Reviewing and refining the application and objectives of rural and conservation zones
- Planning for climate change induced risks, including bushfires, floods and sea level rise that impact rural lands
- Better managing rural land use conflicts, including with urban areas but also between different rural activities
- Appointing a 'Sustainable Agriculture Officer' within Council to improve collaboration and leverage with State Government agencies, industry and rural land holders
- Collaboratively develop 'Emerging Industry Strategies' that can help to facilitate and control growth industries
- Improving First Nations involvement in, and opportunities on, rural lands
- Focusing on education around the management of rural land to achieve a balance between biodiversity outcomes, increased production and sustainable land use
- Supporting rural tourism and recreational opportunities that complement agriculture, conservation and other rural activities
- Facilitating opportunities for agriculture, food promotion and resilience through a dedicated 'Agri-Hub'
- Continuing to engage with other levels of government to ensure effective protection and management of rural lands.

The directions proposed by this Strategy have been informed by targeted consultation, research and review, including a comprehensive Background Paper that was publicly exhibited with the draft Strategy.

The Strategy is based around four identified "focus areas", providing background information, strategic directions and recommendations for implementation. An overview of these four focus areas is provided overleaf. Together, these provide a comprehensive policy framework to lead Council's future management direction for rural lands.

Each focus area provides recommendations, 24 in total, that are outlined in the following pages. These recommendations are further expanded upon in an "Implementation Action Plan" (see Appendix A) that provides additional details to facilitate their delivery over the 20 year life of this Strategy.

Ultimately, this Rural Lands Strategy seeks to provide a balanced approach to achieving the principles of:

- Protecting important agricultural land as an important resource
- Growing the rural economy
- Reinforcing networks and support structures
- Taking a future-focused, sustainable and long-term approach
- Providing a consistent and adaptable planning framework

By establishing a consistent and methodical approach to the future management of rural lands in the Clarence Valley, a number of outcomes will be achieved within the context of a changing and complex government planning framework. These will include long-term benefits to the economic, social and environmental fabric of the region as well as ensuring that the local planning framework balances both biodiversity outcomes and agricultural benefits.

Focus Area 1: Facilitate effective rural land use planning



Strengthen the use of existing rural and conservation zones whilst identifying opportunities to direct LEP & DCP controls to minimise land use conflicts, optimise primary production and ensure biodiversity conservation

Focus Area 2: Elevate the importance of rural lands within Council and the community



Provide a greater emphasis on rural land production and conservation outcomes, through promotion and engagement that recognises its valuable contribution to the Clarence Valley

Focus Area 3: Engage with government and industry to leverage support



As many issues / groups / industries are not LGA bound, develop and foster effective and lasting relationships to support a range of rural land uses and outcomes

Focus Area 4: Develop supporting infrastructure that enables opportunities and builds resilience



Identify and deliver key infrastructure that can assist in maximising the potential of industries using rural lands within the broader context of sustainability



Focus Area 1

Facilitate effective rural land use planning

Recommendations for Focus Area 1

- 1 Review the applicability of rural land zones
- 2 Review land use permissibility in, and objectives of, rural land zones
- 3 Review planning controls applying to rural lands that have high environmental values, form part of strategically important biodiversity corridors and/or which have significant scenic values
- 4 Collaborate with State agencies and industry on opportunities to best protect agricultural activities adjacent to existing and proposed urban areas
- 5 Review subdivision controls to facilitate agricultural production whilst minimising the establishment of new dwelling entitlements in the RU1 zone
- 6 Review LEP and/or DCP controls to include greater certainty and direction around expectations for buffers to and between agricultural activities
- 7 Reinforce existing DCP controls for protection of biodiversity and environmental outcomes through review of buffers and related provisions



Focus Area 2

Elevate the importance of rural lands within Council and the community

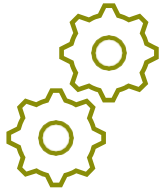
Recommendations for Focus Area 2	
8	Establish a 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' within Council
9	Update, maintain and promote Council's website and associated data as a key resource for rural lands
10	Collaborate with First Nations communities in caring for country and planning for, and use of, rural lands
11	Undertake forward planning for impacts of climate change on rural lands, including emergency response to natural disasters
12	Collaboratively identify conflict inducing practices and opportunities to work with industry and agencies to reduce these
13	In conjunction with LLS and DPE - BCD, continue to work with land holders to facilitate education and understanding of vegetation clearing requirements
14	Develop 'Emerging Industry Strategies' to further develop and lead Council's proactive involvement in key growth sectors



Focus Area 3

Engage with government and industry to leverage support

Recommendations for Focus Area 3	
15	Continue to review, collaborate and, where required, maintain consistency with evolving State legislation and policies
16	Engage with government to seek options to reduce delays and costs associated with drainage, floodplain maintenance and approval requirements
17	Facilitate access to a range of programs, training and education opportunities for rural landowners and the broader public
18	Strengthen opportunities for rural tourism and recreation compatible with the primary production potential, rural character and environmental capabilities of the land
19	Collaboratively work to ensure appropriate bushfire land management across the Clarence Valley
20	Facilitate ongoing equitable access and use of water resources
21	Engage with government to remove existing, and prohibit new, mining leases or exploration licences



Focus Area 4

Develop supporting infrastructure that enables opportunities and builds resilience

Recommendations for Focus Area 4

- 22** Consider opportunities for, and where viable develop an 'Agri-Hub' to benefit a wide spectrum of rural activities
- 23** Establish a basis for industry specific and shared infrastructure opportunities
- 24** Collaboratively undertake a supply chain analysis to identify and establish direction for improving transportation and logistics in the short and long-term



PART 1 – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



1. Introduction

The Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy (the Strategy) outlines the strategic direction for rural lands in the Clarence Valley local government area (LGA). This 20 year Strategy was developed across a series of stages from mid-2021 and incorporating significant consultation feedback from a wide range of industry and community participants. The Strategy provides an assessment of rural lands and establishes the current issues and opportunities that are experienced and available. This Strategy was informed by, and publicly exhibited with, a detailed Background Paper. The Strategy will be used by Clarence Valley Council to inform and direct the future use and management of rural lands, explaining what Council will do and how it will seek to achieve these outcomes.

1.1 The need for a Rural Lands Strategy

Rural land subject to this Strategy accounts for 75% of the total land or just over 780,000 hectares of the Clarence Valley LGA. According to Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS), the Clarence Valley has approximately 2,230 registered farms providing \$493 million in annual gross regional product. Rural areas also enable an enviable Clarence Valley lifestyle through recreation, rural housing, tourism, open space, natural resources, biodiversity, heritage and landscape conservation, all whilst accommodating supporting infrastructure.

The Clarence Valley population is expected to grow from 52,000 to 60,000 over the next 20 years. With this change in population (as well as a range of other factors), there is also expected to be change in how and what agricultural products are produced and how rural land is used. Ensuring adequate agricultural infrastructure and that land use policy supports existing and future rural industries is a key objective of this Strategy. The need for the Strategy is also highlighted by the age of Council's existing Clarence Valley Settlement Strategy – which was completed in 1999 as a 20 year strategy and is now in need of renewal.

The new Rural Lands Strategy will build on previous strategic planning, but seek to be a more responsive document, including connection to a broader and more current range of rural issues, such as emerging industries and environmental protection - both in the coastal and hinterland rural lands of the Clarence Valley. The new Strategy will also allow Council to be proactive in communicating their strategic intent for rural lands.

A further driver is outlined through the *Clarence Valley Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020* (LSPS) which highlights the value of rural land as well as recognising the strategic importance of it to the Northern Rivers sub-region. Action 1.1 identifies “*Prepare a Local Growth Management Strategy for the Clarence Valley*”, of which an aspect or accompaniment is identifying future planning for rural areas. This is further informed by Planning Priority 13 to “*Protect agricultural land and increase opportunities for access to locally produced fresh food and economic growth*”. This also supports the *North Coast Regional Plan 2036* (NCRP 2036) Direction 11 that looks to “*Protect and enhance productive agricultural lands*”.

1.2 What land does the Strategy consider?

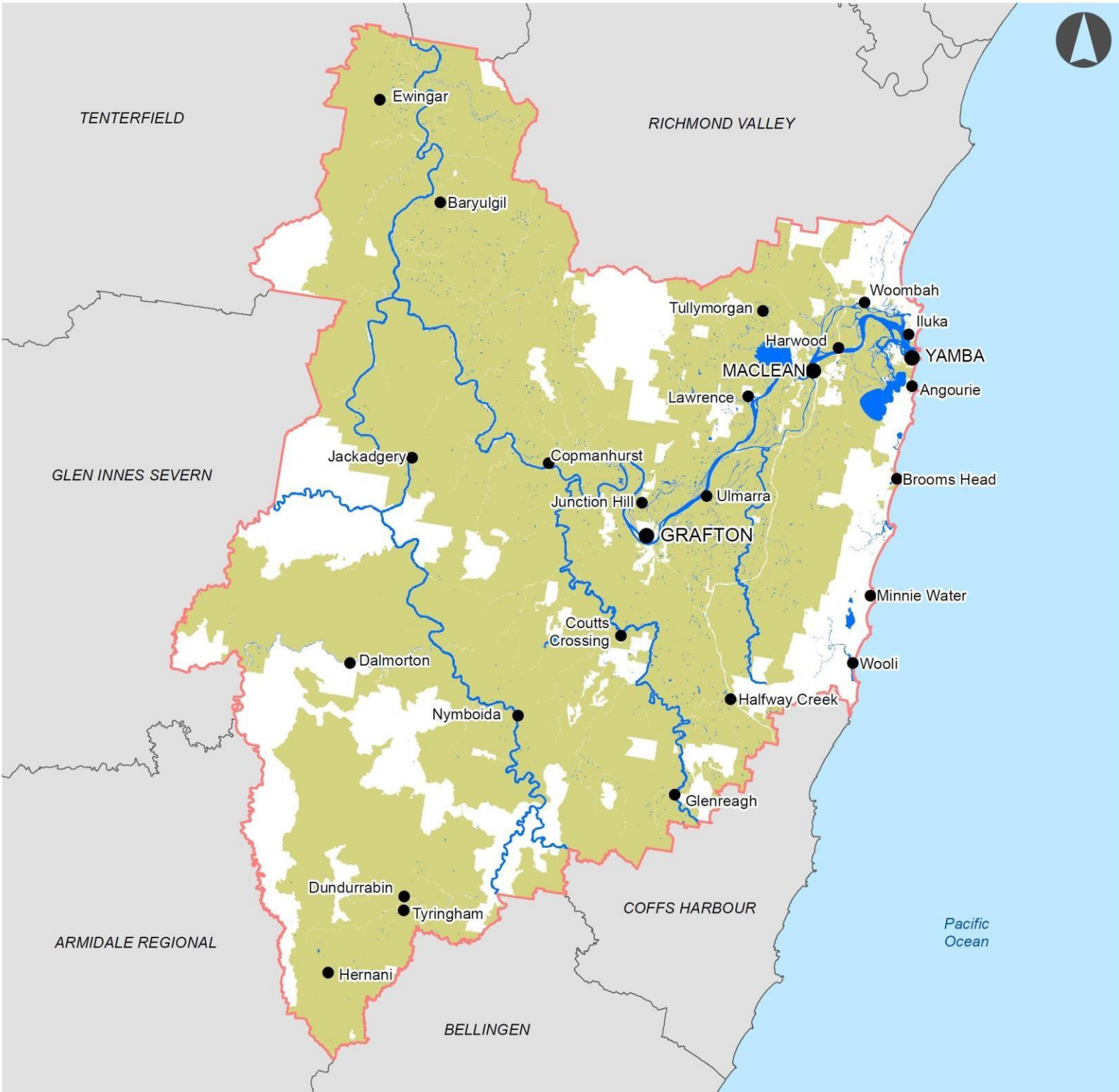
The term “rural lands” in this Strategy means all land under the following zones of the *Clarence Valley Local Environmental Plan 2011* (CVLEP 2011):

- RU1 Primary Production
- RU2 Rural Landscape
- RU3 Forestry
- C2 Environmental Conservation
- C3 Environmental Management

Rural lands in this strategy, in does not include urban land, land zoned C1 National Park & Nature Reserves or the suite of waterways zones. Figure 1, shown overleaf, indicates land to which this Strategy applies.

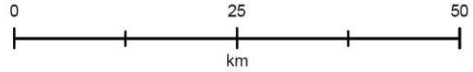


Figure 1 : Rural land subject to this Strategy



Legend

- Localities
- Rivers
- Rural Land
- Clarence Valley Local Government Area
- Adjoining Local Government Areas



Map produced by EMAP Consulting
Date: 20/08/2021
Coordinate System: GDA 2020 MGA Zone 56
Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy

ClarenceRUS_Figure1_v4

1.3 Overview of Clarence Valley’s rural lands

Out of the 75% of land in the Clarence Valley that is subject to this Strategy, approximately 69% is part of an “RU” or rural zone and a further 6% is part of “C” or conservation (previously known as “environmental”) zone. This extent of rural lands within a single LGA is relatively unique on the east coast of NSW.


Grafton was the first city on the North Coast and remains a significant regional centre. Other important town centres include Maclean and Yamba, as well as smaller townships along Clarence River, along the coast and throughout the hinterland.

The upgraded Pacific Highway links the towns and industries of the Clarence Valley with the Far North Coast and the substantial population base of Southeast Queensland. The standard gauge rail link between Brisbane and Sydney passes through Grafton and the Clarence Valley Regional Airport provides direct flights to Sydney and beyond.

Agriculture has been a foundation of growth of the Clarence Valley ever since the area was first settled in the late 1800’s. It produced around \$247 million in output in 2020/2021. Within agriculture, and according to the most recent published agricultural census figures⁶, beef was the largest agricultural industry in the LGA (43% of gross value), followed by sugar cane (31%) and dairy production (10%). Forestry is also a major agricultural industry for the region, contributing around \$113 million in output in 2020/2021, and aquaculture, which contributes a further \$30 million.


As a major contributor to Clarence Valley’s rural lands, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector employs more than 1,200 people⁸ and more than 3,800 people are believed to be employed in the agri-food economy⁹. This sector is also the largest export sector in the LGA, close to double the next sector (manufacturing) and having almost doubled in value since 2014/15 – including an almost tripling of agricultural exports¹⁰.

While forestry, sugarcane, beef, dairy and aquaculture have long been established in the area, emerging and growth industries for the LGA include berries (diversifying from blueberries), macadamia nuts, as well as developing sectors in specialist food and vegetables. Value adding to locally sourced produce is also garnering support through the trend of consumers wanting to know where and how food has been produced, with premiums placed on sustainability, social benefits, local connection and history.

 **69%**
of Clarence Valley land is within a Rural “RU” zone



Traditional industries, including sugarcane, beef and forestry remain strong

 **6%**
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⁶ See Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 7503.0 - Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2015-16

⁷ All output figures based on 2020/2021 ID Economy - Economic Value - Output - accessed 27/05/2022

⁸ 2020/2021 ID Economy Full-time equivalent employment by industry sector - accessed 27/05/22

⁹ Clarence Valley Local Strategic Planning Statement (2020)

¹⁰ 2019/2020 ID Economy Total exports by industry sector - accessed 10 November 2021

The extent of use of rural lands, as shown in Figure 3 overleaf, provides an indication of historical uses based on NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation mapping undertaken in the late 1990's. This map highlights the extensive areas of grazing, forestry and conservation / native vegetation uses within the areas subject to the Rural Lands Strategy area, as also shown in the graph in Figure 2 below.

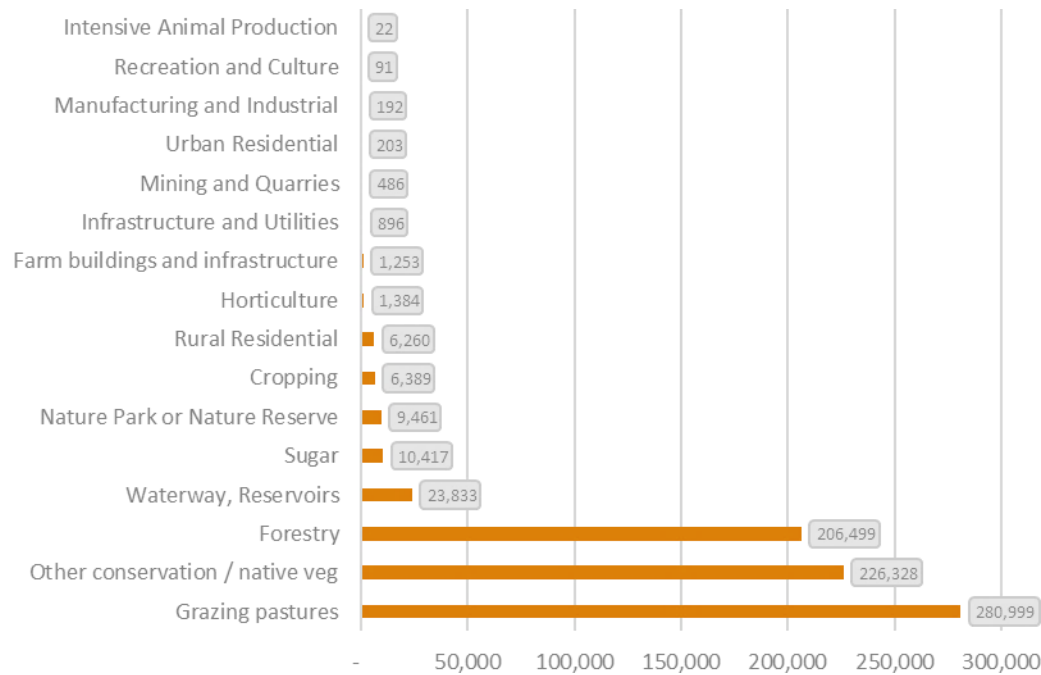


Figure 2: Extent (hectares) of rural land by use (based on DLWC 1997 mapping)

Combined with the use and activities occurring on rural lands, there is also recognition that the population of the broader LGA continues to grow. Forecasts (May 2021) indicate the Clarence Valley LGA is set to grow to more than 60,000 residents by 2041, which equates to more than 17.5% growth over the next 20 years (up from 53,110 in 2021).

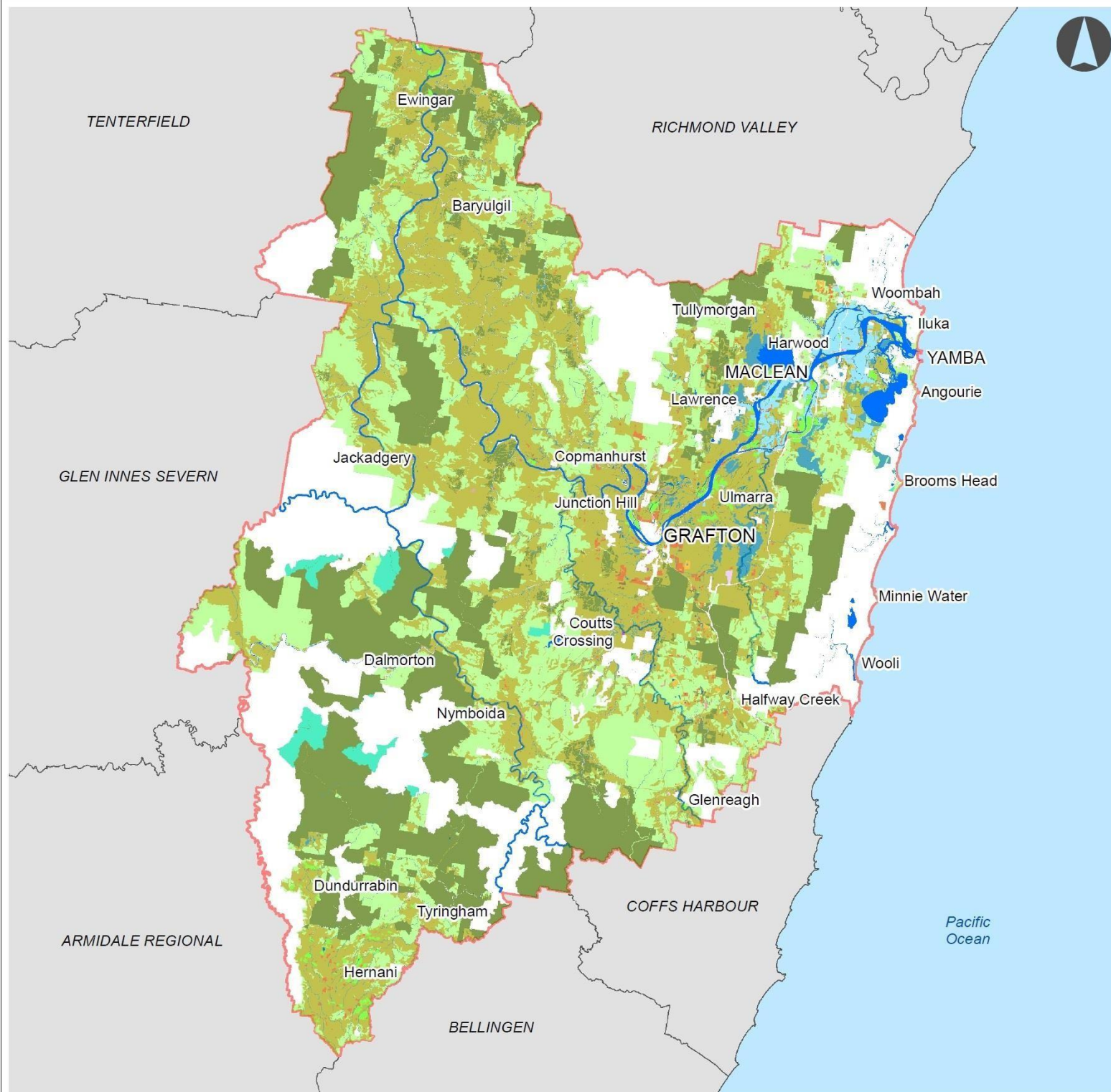
Growth is particularly expected in the Angourie-Yamba, Woolli-Tucabia-Ulmarra & District and Gulmarrad-Townsend areas, though all planning areas are expected to experience growth over this time, including Grafton, South Grafton, Clarenza and Junction Hill¹¹. The LGA also has an aging population, with the largest age brackets of growth anticipated in the 70+ aged age groups¹².



¹¹ ID Population Forecast - accessed 28/08/2021

¹² ID Population Forecast - Population age structure - accessed 28/08/2021

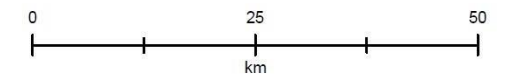
Figure 3 : Rurals lands area by use type



Legend

- Towns/ Villages
- Rivers
- Cropping
- Grazing pastures
- Horticulture
- Sugar
- Intensive Animal Production
- Forestry
- Farm buildings and infrastructure
- Infrastructure and Utilities
- Manufacturing and Industrial
- Mining and Quarries
- Nature Park or Nature Reserve
- Other conservation and residual native
- Rural Residential
- Recreation and Culture
- Urban Residential
- Waterway, Reservoirs
- Clarence Valley Local Government Area
- Local Government Areas

Data source:
DLWC Land Use Mapping 1997



Map produced by EMAP Consulting
Date: 10/11/2021
Coordinate System: GDA 2020 MGA Zone 56
Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy

1.4 Regional agricultural context

The Clarence Valley is one of seven LGAs within the Northern Rivers agricultural sub-region, with all six other LGAs being located to the north. Of these, the Clarence Valley has the greatest value in agricultural production¹³ (see Figure 4), primarily due to the extent of rural lands within the Clarence Valley LGA and the existence of long-established industries on these rural lands.

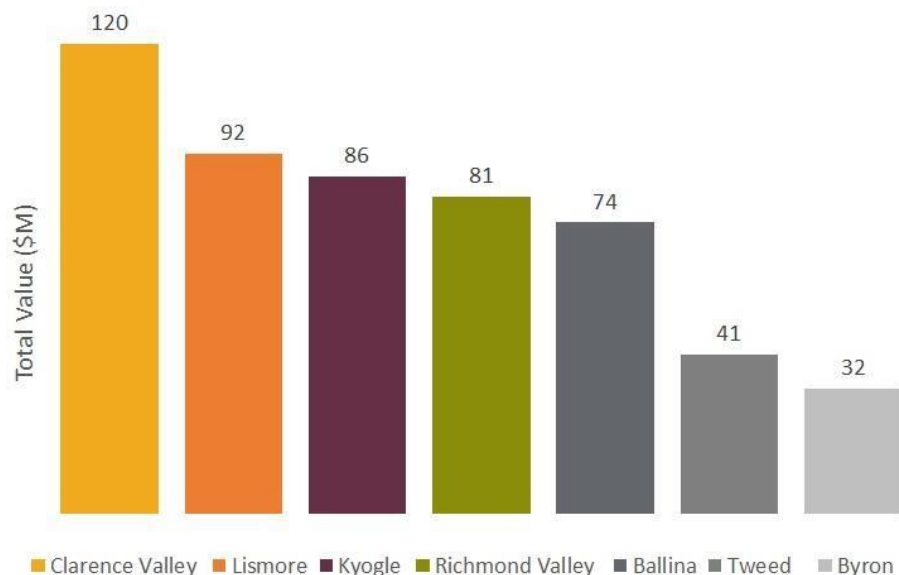


Figure 4: Agricultural value by LGA (Northern Rivers sub-region)

By commodity type, key industries from a regional perspective are beef, timber, sugarcane and dairy. Sugarcane is also a significant contributor in NSW, with the Clarence, Richmond and Tweed areas being the only

¹³ DPI Agriculture Industry Snapshot for Planning - Northern Rivers Sub Region - August 2020 with figures based on ABS Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia-2015-16

sugarcane production areas within NSW. The value of Clarence Valley's agricultural production in relation to the Northern Rivers sub region and NSW in 2015/16 is outlined in Table 1.¹⁴

Table 1: Comparative value of agricultural commodities

Commodity Group	Clarence Valley		Northern Rivers		Clarence Valley proportion of NSW production
	Value \$M	% of NR	Value \$M	% of NSW	
Beef	\$52	37%	\$142	6%	2%
Sugarcane	\$37	52%	\$72	95.4%	50%
Dairy	\$12	19%	\$62	10%	2%
Fruit and nuts	\$6	6%	\$95	17%	1%
Nursery, cut flower and turf	\$4	8%	\$47	16%	1%

It is noted that different industries have more recent valuations and production levels / values can also vary from year to year.

The forestry and logging industry is also noted as being a key contributor to the Clarence Valley economy, though comparable statistics to other agricultural commodities as outlined in Table 1 are not available. Timber NSW identify some 900 properties with a registered Private Native Forestry (PNF) Plan in the Clarence Valley covering around 160,000 hectares. Plantation forestry occupies a further 18,000 hectares and in a State context, forestry and logging in the Clarence Valley is known to account for approximately 10% of NSW production.¹⁵

¹⁴ DPI Agriculture Industry Snapshot for Planning - Northern Rivers Sub Region - August 2020 with figures based on ABS Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia-2015-16

¹⁵ 2020/2021 ID Economy Industry Sector Analysis - Forestry and Logging - Accessed 25 May 2022

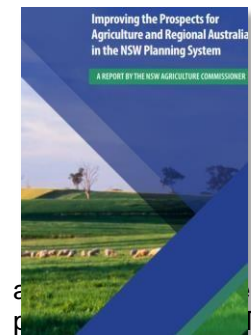
1.5 Strategic context

This section provides an overview of State and local strategies, plans, policies and other legislation that is relevant to rural land in the Clarence Valley. It should be recognised that there is a significant number of documents that are relevant across a wide range of industries, activities and uses. Those captured in this section have been summarised and identified as prominent to the overall Strategy process.

1.5.1 State Planning

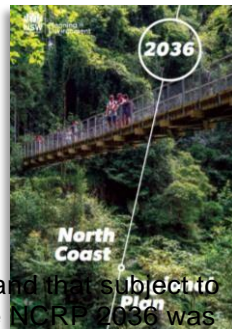
In recent years, agriculture has been under the State planning spotlight, including new Ministerial Directions commencing in March 2022 with *Focus Area 9: Primary Production* being of particular relevance to the Strategy. Other key State documents are outline below.

The **North Coast Regional Plan 2036** (NCRP) directs councils to protect and enhance productive agricultural lands, grow agribusiness across the region and sustainably manage natural resources.

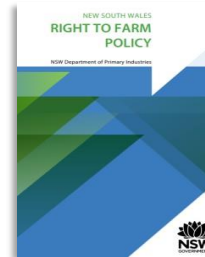


It also identifies some 300,000 hectares of potential high environmental value rural land that is subject to this Strategy. It is noted that the NCRP 2036 was under review during the development of this Strategy and it correspondingly responds to this current Regional Plan at the time of writing.

The **NSW Agricultural Commissioner** recently developed an Options Paper and Final Report future of agriculture within the context of the land use. The Options Paper outlines a series of principles to



guide Council's in preparing a rural lands strategy and the Final Report was recently released detailing 12 recommendations to the NSW Government for reforms in this area.



The **NSW Right to Farm Policy 2015** and *Right to Farm Act 2019* provides for matters relating to farm trespass and the right of commercial enterprises. This allows farmers to carry out their lawful business activities, shielding them from nuisance complaints, claims and legal action. It is noted that the NSW Agricultural Commissioner has undertaken a review of the Right to Farm Policy which was released in December 2020.

In response to the NSW Agricultural Commissioners Final Report, Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has recently exhibited a **Draft State Significant Agricultural Land Map**. In the Clarence Valley, the current Far North Coast Farmland Mapping was the first to be conducted based on 'catchments' and DPI have indicated that the Farmland Mapping is some of the highest quality in NSW. The draft map and how it is used in conjunction with this Strategy may need to be further considered in coming years should it differ from the mapping currently available.

Other State and Federal policies or legislation that generally applies to Clarence Valley rural lands includes *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and associated *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*, numerous State Environmental Planning Policies, *Local Land Services Act 2013*, *Rural Fires Act 1997* (and associated *NSW Strategic Guide to Planning for Natural Hazards*), *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cth) 1999*, *Heritage Act 1977*, *Water Management Act 2000*, *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, *Native Title Act (Cth)1993*.

1.5.2 Local Planning

Council, either mandated by the State Government, or through their own means, has developed a series of local planning documents. Many of these relate to rural lands and are summarised thereafter.

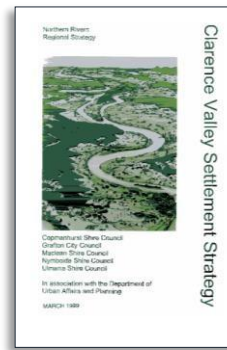
The **Clarence Valley Local Strategic Planning Statement** includes a priority direction to ‘*Support and grow the agricultural sector - Protect important agricultural land and facilitate improvements in the supply chain to support economic growth, food security, primary producers and the agri-food sector.*’ There is a clear intent from the LSPS to support the growth of rural areas and agricultural activities, and to do this in ways that are sustainable and within the context of the character of the area.



The LSPS also establishes the need for further strategic planning, with *Planning Priority 1* and *Action 1.1* being to ‘*Prepare a Local Growth Management Strategy for the Clarence Valley*’. Other Planning Priorities of relevance include *Priority 13 – Support and grow the agricultural sector* and *Priority 11 - Strengthen the local economy and provide opportunities for local employment*.



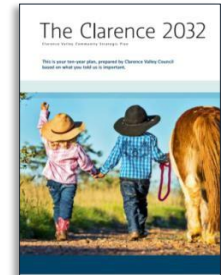
The **Clarence Valley Local Environmental Plan 2011** (CVLEP 2011) provides the statutory framework for planning decisions for the Clarence Valley LGA and includes a land use table that lists the objectives of each zone type and permitted land use. The CVLEP 2011 zones subject to this Strategy are RU1 Primary Production, RU2 Rural Landscape, RU3 Forestry, C2 Environmental Conservation and C3 Environmental Management as shown overleaf.



The **Clarence Valley Settlement Strategy 1999** is Council’s existing strategic approach to planning across the former council areas of Copmanhurst, Grafton, Maclean, Nymboida and Ulmarra. The Strategy outlines how the Clarence Valley would grow over a 20 year period, including references to the future planning of rural lands and rural issues on valley-wide basis.

The **Clarence Valley Community Strategic Plan -**

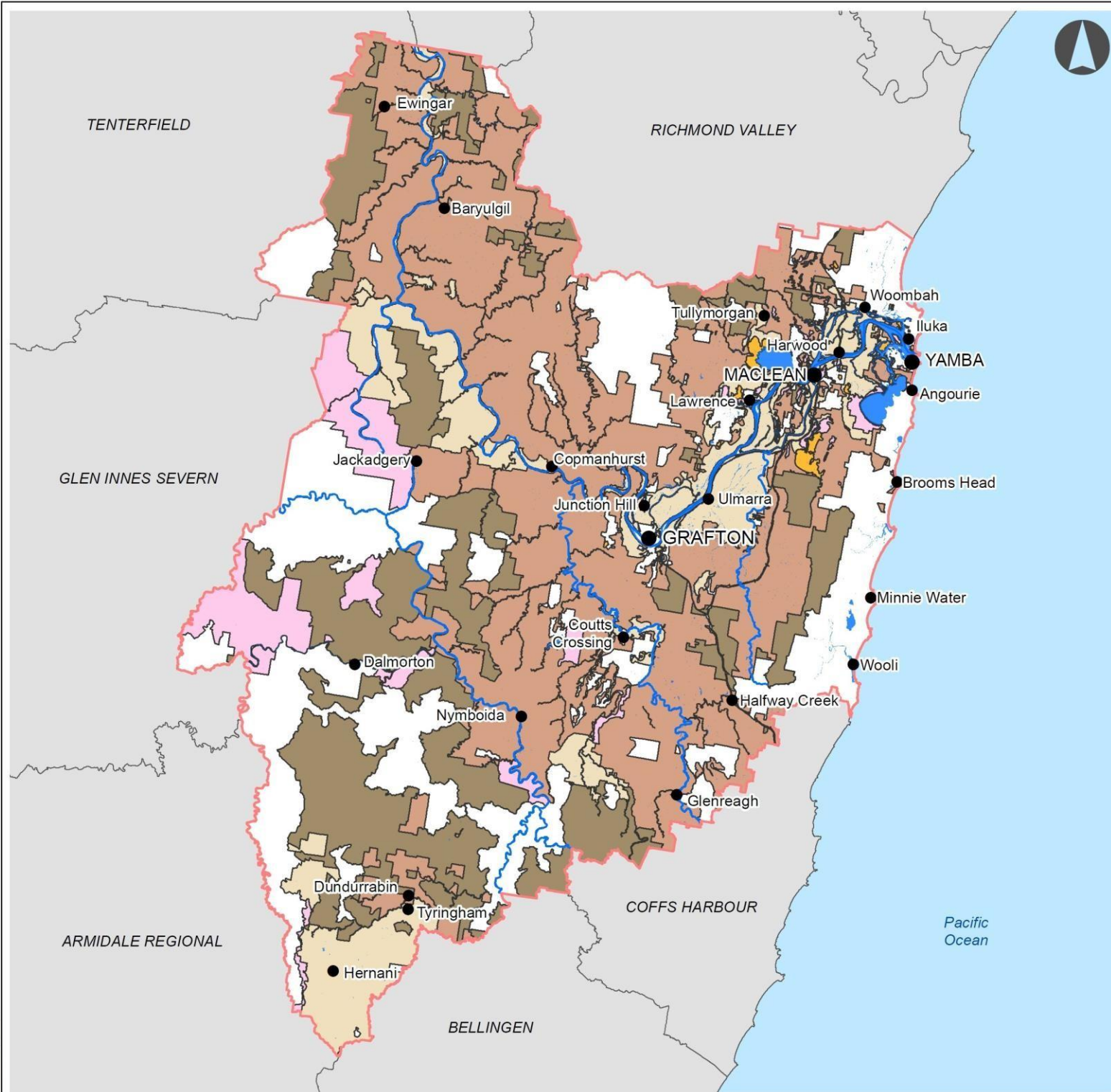
The Clarence 2032 (CSP) is a high level ten year plan that outlines the shared aspirations of the Clarence Valley community. The CSP outlines agriculture as a major sector and that the Clarence Valley has diverse agricultural land. A key feedback quote from the community identified in the CSP is “*to encourage sustainable and innovative agricultural processes that preserve what we have*”, a key element throughout this Strategy.



The **Clarence Valley Development Control Plan 2011** (DCP) complements the CVLEP 2011 and provides more detailed development controls. The DCP includes a Rural Zones component and an Environmental Protection, Recreation and Special Use Zones component each of which encourages sustainable development through the stipulation of specific development controls.

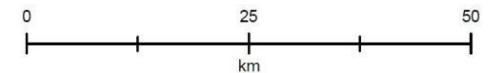
Other applicable local policies and strategies relevant to Clarence Valley rural lands include *Clarence Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2022*, *Clarence Valley Contributions Plan 2011* and the *Climate Change Policy 2019*. Further details of specific Council policies and strategies is made where relevant throughout this Strategy.

Figure 5 : Rural lands area by zone



Legend

- Localities
 - Rivers
- Clarence Valley LEP 2011**
- C2 Environmental Conservation
 - C3 Environmental Management
 - RU1 Primary Production
 - RU2 Rural Landscape
 - RU3 Forestry
 - Clarence Valley Local Government Area
 - Adjoining Local Government Areas



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 Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy

2. Understanding the opportunities and constraints

Through project consultation, research and review, a range of issues and opportunities, project drivers and key strategic principles were identified or established. This section provides a summary of these.

2.1 Project Consultation

In developing this Strategy, engagement occurred with various stakeholders including State agencies, industry bodies, co-operatives, not-for-profits, landowners, primary producers, various areas of Council and led by Council's Project Working Group. This process was undertaken between June and November 2021.

In order to capture the variety of stakeholder interests, a number of consultation processes were undertaken as outlined below.

Consultation Processes



Review and research, including a range of documents from Council, NSW State Government agencies (including the NSW Agricultural Commissioner), industry, not-for-profit and related entities.



Videoconference, teleconference and face to face meetings with State agencies, industry bodies, education institutions, not-for-profits and internal Council staff.



Public survey relating to the use and future of rural lands which was promoted through Council's news channels and via industry organisations.

Consultation was initially designed to identify issues and opportunities with secondary consultation then undertaken to 'road test' proposed directions of the Strategy. Together, the outcomes of this initial and secondary consultation activities have formed the basis of this Strategy.

Further insights are intended to be obtained through the process of reporting and exhibition of the Strategy before being finalised for adoption.

2.2 Targeted consultation outcomes

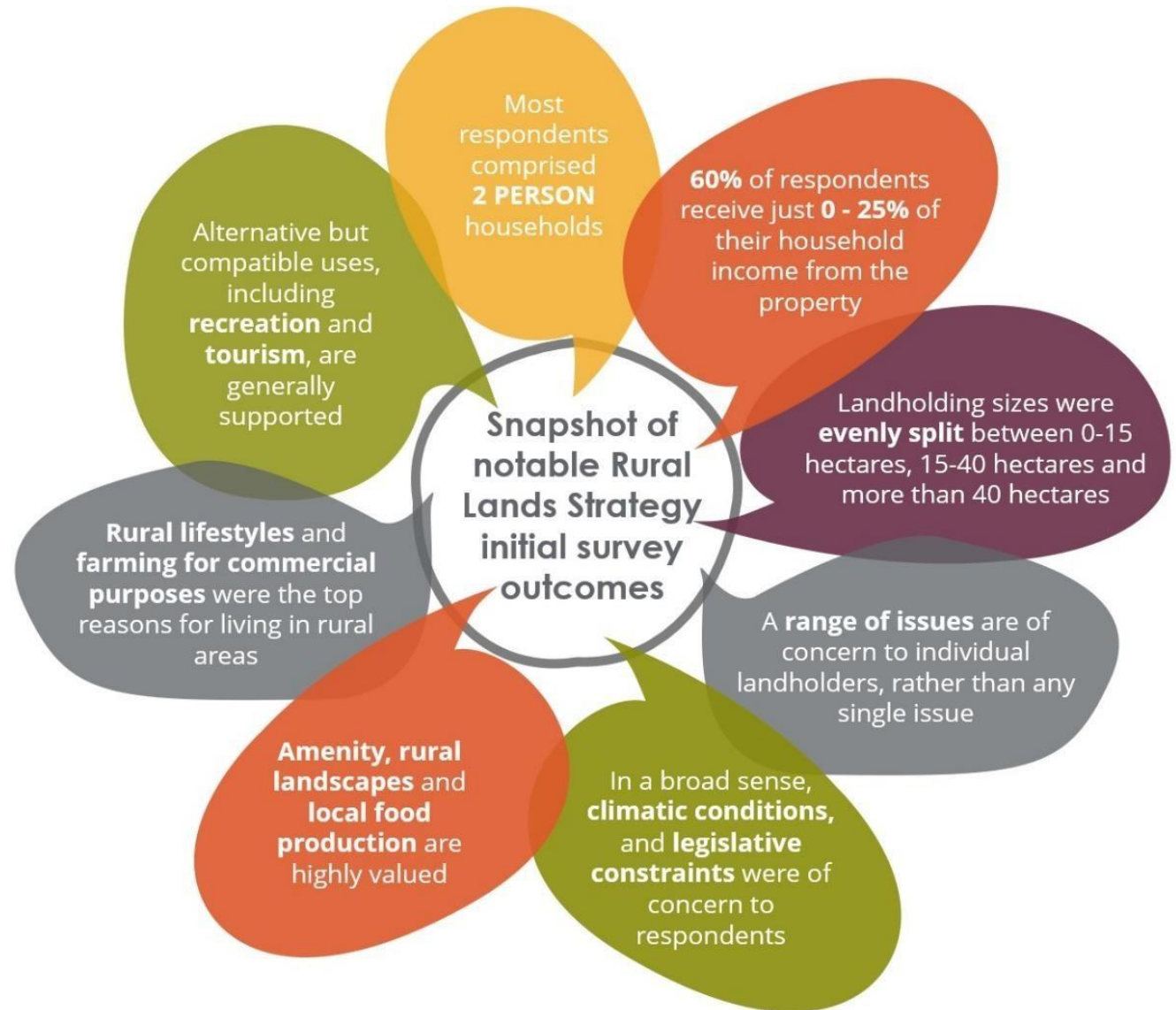
A number of key insights have been drawn from the consultation process. Key themes identified include:

- The **Clarence Valley can be a leader** in addressing and dealing with many key rural lands issues before they reach crisis point in the realm of planning solutions, providing a plan-led approach and progressing new opportunities
- **Long history and importance of agricultural** and rural pursuits in the LGA with connections to the Clarence River
- **Changing nature of rural activities**, including intensification of farming, increasing lifestyle uses, desire for diversification into areas such as farm, food and nature-based tourism
- Increasing **diversification of agricultural industries**, from traditional enterprises such as sugarcane, beef and dairy, through to more intensive and emerging industries such as berries, macadamias and small-scale or cottage farming
- **Increasing recognition of sustainability**, including soil health, productivity, water resources, biodiversity and a changing climate

- Ongoing issues associated with **land use conflicts** and how these can or should be managed
- **Increasing barriers to entry or ability to upscale** some agricultural pursuits as a consequence of land prices, planning restrictions and commodity markets
- Resulting need to **work more collaboratively and in a more connected way** to facilitate consistent, accessible and informed advice to increasingly broad audiences
- **An aging rural population / farming workforce**, meaning that there are more and varied ways that rural lands are being used and the next generations can maintain rural activities

A generally consistent message across all consultation was a strong collective appreciation and desire to enhance the LGA's rural lands and to appreciate their role in the long-term prosperity of the area from a triple bottom-line approach.

A summary of key project survey outcomes is outlined in the adjoining graphic.



2.3 Identified Issues & Opportunities

Through consultation with identified stakeholders, research into key issues and best practice responses, and review of key documents and other information provided by stakeholders, eight key rural lands issues were identified. It is recognised that some of the issues identified are inter-related and that a number of opportunities may be available to address these, as well as some being outside Council's ability to control. A

summary of these eight key issues is outlined below and within this section.



Issue 1: Loss of Farmland

The Clarence Valley is relatively unique in that 69%, or more than 720,000 hectares of all land has a rural zone. For context, the extent of land zoned as Rural Landscape (RU2) in the Clarence Valley is much larger than the entirety of many other LGAs on the east coast of NSW.

Correspondingly, agriculture is a core part of the LGA's economy and the largest of its kind across the Northern Rivers sub-region. The *Clarence Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2022* further highlights this economic importance, pointing out that arable land in the Clarence Valley realises substantial yields for its communities. Likewise, rural lands provide a 'cultural landscape' and scenic amenity that is highly valued by both residents and visitors. Ensuring the strength of the agricultural industry is continued, and that important scenic values are retained, over the next 20 years is imperative, and key to this is addressing the loss of farmland.

The loss of farmland typically occurs incrementally. This loss is difficult to quantify and the need to track this is a key recommendation of the recent *Right to Farm Policy Review, Agricultural Land Use Planning Strategy: Options Paper* and the NSW Agricultural Commissioner's *Improving the Prospects for Agriculture and Regional Australia in the NSW Planning System* report (Agricultural Commissioner's Report).

Key aspects of this issue include:

- Defining important agricultural land
- Avoiding urban encroachment
- Loss of productive land to rural lifestylers
- Farms / industries no longer being viable
- Climatic conditions resulting in land unbeing suitable for farming.
- Agricultural land being fully re-purposed for non-agricultural purposes such as renewable energy generation, carbon capture and storage or biodiversity offsets

Issue 2: Managing Rural Conflicts

When rural activities are not managed, land use conflict can easily be created, whether perceived or real. In particular, there can be incompatibility between certain agricultural practices and neighbouring land uses. The potential for conflict is exacerbated where pre-existing notions of pristine rural lifestyles are met with the reality of living in close proximity to agricultural activities.

Typical farming practices can result in land use conflict including noise, odour, dust, smoke, chemical drift, water quality issues, vehicle movements, hours of operation and poor visual amenity. The obvious solution is to provide separation or buffers between conflict points - typically residential and farming practices. However, such separation can be particularly difficult where small landholdings are prevalent or where farming activities have become more intensive (refer for example to berry and macadamia nut production area at Figure 6).

This issue is also recognised within the Agricultural Commissioner's Report which highlights that land use conflict is not currently measured effectively across the State. Despite a lack of quantifiable data on this issue, project consultation frequently observed that rural land use conflict in the Clarence Valley is comparably low compared to surrounding LGAs.

Key aspects of this issue include:

- Use of the available land use zones to minimise conflicting uses
- Right to farm and activities that sit outside planning processes
- Providing for education and awareness of rural practices
- The use of buffers in land use planning to minimise conflicts
- Better utilising Council's DCP to enforce desired separation.

Recommendations of the Agricultural Commissioner's report, including the establishment of a "NSW Farm Practices Panel" and a "Council Reference Group" may also assist in addressing this issue.

Issue 3: Barriers to entry / expansion

In conjunction with the typically than lower average and less secure income prospects in agriculture, there are a number of barriers that are limiting various industries and opportunities on the rural lands of the Clarence Valley. These are apparent in two main ways:

1. a lack of new entrants, which places increased pressure on existing and older producers to continue working
2. an inability to expand operations in some farming sectors to keep pace with ever increasing productivity needs to maintain viability.

This is exacerbated by recent trends across Australia of young people leaving rural land to find work in urban or indoor settings, or for more lucrative industries such as mining – whether by choice or through barriers to entry. Conversely however, the Covid-19 pandemic has also resulted in an uplift of people 'escaping' city life for regional and rural areas, and together these trends have resulted in increased land value and changes in the demographic of rural areas.

While the ability of rural land holders to commence or expand agricultural activities is interconnected with issues beyond the scope of Council's immediate control, the following key and inter-related aspects of this issue were raised through consultation and research:

- Land price increases and subsequent affordability
- Intergeneration progression and succession planning
- Subdivision of land whilst retaining productive capacity.

Monitoring and where possible the removal of barriers to entry and expansion can assist in maintaining viable and productive uses of rural lands to the benefit of the wider Clarence Valley community.

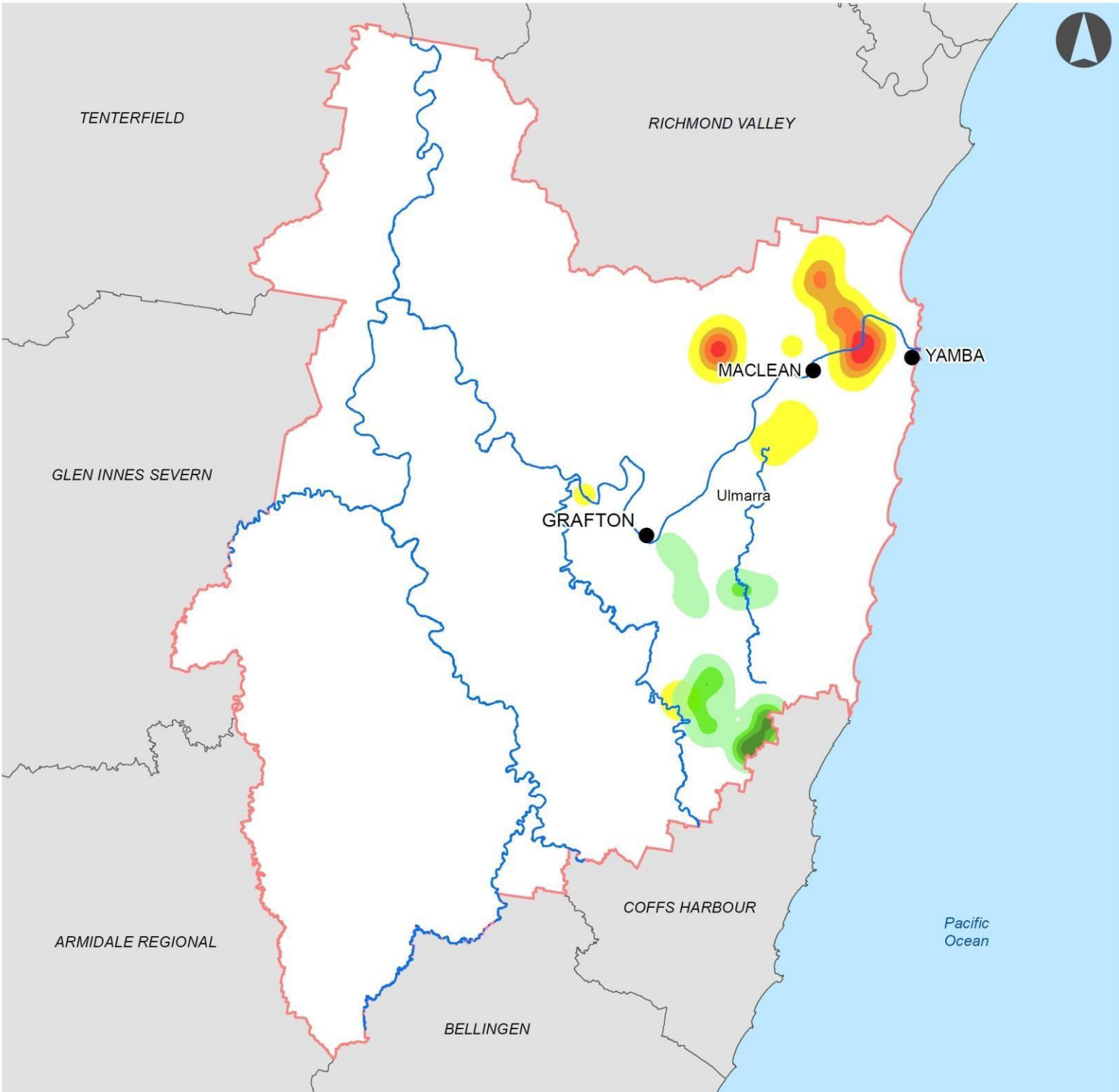
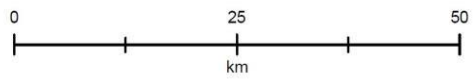


Figure 6: Intensive Plant and Macadamia farming areas

Legend

- Localities
- Rivers
- Intensive Plants Agriculture Heat Map*
- Low
- High
- Macadamia Farms Heat Map*
- Low
- High
- Clarence Valley Local Government Area
- Local Government Areas



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Issue 4: Working collaboratively and culturally connected

Once the issues of accessing rural lands and managing the land use impacts that are occurring on and between them are understood (refer to Issues 1 – 3), it is important to recognise the importance of collaboration in the context of rural lands.

Many of the activities undertaken on rural lands are part of a larger network of industry and environment. Many of the issues and opportunities are not bound by the Clarence Valley's local government boundaries, and as such there are a range of State Government, industry and research interests that need to be considered by individual landholders. Working collaboratively within these contexts will assist in achieving long-term outcomes for rural lands and landholders.

Similarly, there are strong ties between rural lands and the First Nations peoples of the area who have an innate understanding of the Clarence Valley and the importance of land management from a traditional and custodian perspective. Acknowledging and utilising this understanding will provide further long-term benefits to the land and its importance to First Nations peoples.

Working collaboratively is also important for broader rural community building in the context of resilience. This includes immediate responses to natural disasters, as well as long-term informal rural networks that may be established by a closer connection and understanding of rural issues.

Issue 5: Sustainable land management

The sustainable management of rural lands is critical for a range of reasons. Sustainable land management is a concept that should be familiar to all primary producers while more recent arrivals to rural areas may still be learning. Sustainable land management includes the achievement of biodiversity outcomes, ensure the health of soils and water resources to protect future productive capacity and address natural hazard risks (e.g. bushfire and flood) and a changing climate (e.g.

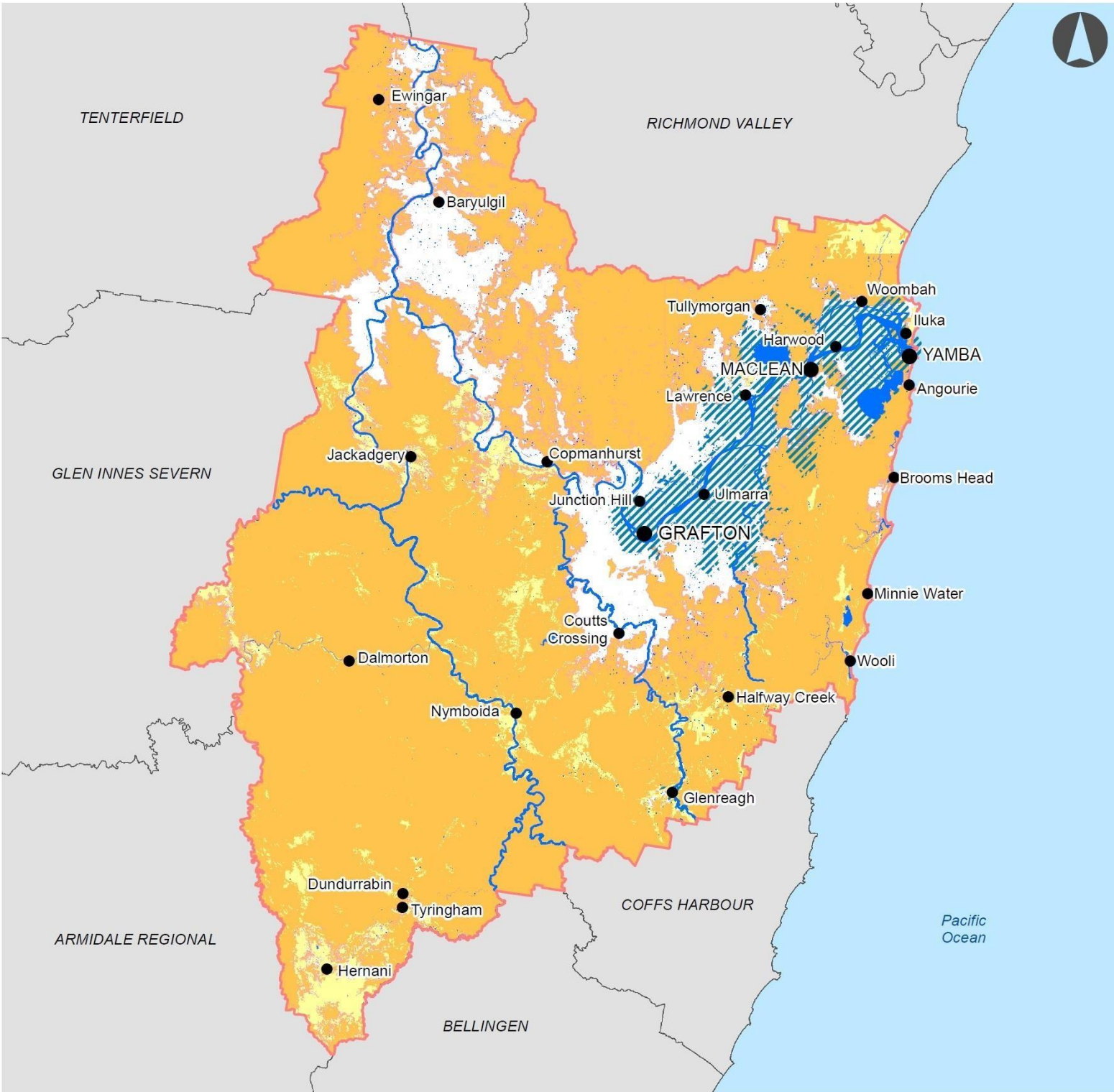
drought). In many instances, improvements to land management techniques have also been evolving for generations including measures to improve riparian management, erosion control, minimizing acid discharge etc, ensuring improved environmental outcomes and long-term returns for producers. Given the realities of climate change, continuous improvements to land management techniques and technologies will also assist future landholders to adapt to these elevated risks, requiring close partnerships between private land holders and those agencies/entities managing public lands such as State Forest or National Park

The catastrophic 2019/20 bushfires demonstrated just how vulnerable even well managed rural land is when wildfires brought on by drought conditions, emerge onto farming country. Similarly, the Northern Rivers flood emergencies that occurred in early 2022, showed that despite decades of experience and planning by rural land holders for the impacts of flooding, the scale of this disaster went beyond what some could manage.

A number of issues and opportunities were identified that if addressed, may help ensure that the Clarence Valley's rural lands are sustainably managed into the future. These include:

- Soil health and management, including opportunities for carbon farming and regenerative agriculture
- Adaptation to climate change
- Planning for and recovery from natural disasters (with both bushfire and flooding presenting key rural lands challenges as shown in Figure 7 overleaf)
- Ensuring secure water resources for agriculture, urban use and to respond to bushfire emergencies, as well as healthy waterways and consideration of runoff impacts / water quality
- Managing biosecurity such as invasive species control and preparing for future biosecurity emergencies
- Protection of biodiversity, scenic outlooks and landscape amenity
- Vegetation management in accordance with current legislation

Figure 7 : Areas subject to bushfire and flood risk



Legend

- Localities
- Rivers
- ▨ Probable Maximum Flood Extent
- Vegetation Category 1
- Vegetation Category 2
- Vegetation Buffer
- ▭ Clarence Valley Local Government Area
- ▭ Local Government Areas

*Data source:
Clarence Valley Council and
NSW Rural Fire Service, 2020*



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Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy

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Issue 6: Supporting emerging industries

Council's recently adopted *Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020* and the earlier *Clarence Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2022* set out directions to grow the agricultural sector, being identified as an “engine of growth” across the region. Key to this growth is to support not only the existing industries that are the present, but to be cognisant of emerging / evolving agricultural and non-agricultural uses to ensure that the planning framework and the provision of Council supplied infrastructure continues to meet the needs of rural areas.

As a relatively contained LGA in geographic terms, this may mean building on those agricultural industries which have already established and evolving, such as berries or nuts, whilst recognising opportunities through existing industries, such as sugarcane, apiary or forestry.

However, emerging industries within the rural lands context also extend beyond agriculture and it is important that the planning framework ensures that these non-agricultural uses are compatible with the primary production potential, rural character and environmental capabilities of the land. There are trends within tourism, recreation and environmental fields that may also warrant further consideration as emerging industries over the life of this Strategy.

Potential emerging industry areas include:

- intensive plant agriculture, including existing and emerging opportunities
- diversification of products from existing industries such as forestry and sugar cane
- diversification of the use of rural lands in areas such as recreation and tourism
- co-ordinating smaller land holders to improve production and better utilise their limited resources
- renewable electricity generation, biodiversity or carbon offset projects and initiatives

Issue 7: Infrastructure development

Several aspects of rural land, agriculture and rural lifestyles have significant private and public infrastructure needs. Servicing and providing access to and around rural areas can be extremely expensive and infrastructure provision therefore needs to be carefully considered.

Nonetheless, carefully planned and considered infrastructure can also create significant growth in the rural economy, provide greater access to important services and accelerate the advancement of emerging industries. Examples include:

- supply chain infrastructure, particularly road networks including bridges and weight limits
- drainage and flood mitigation infrastructure
- rural workers accommodation
- emergency management infrastructure including preparedness for bushfire, floods and biosecurity emergencies
- environmental management and recreational infrastructure, as well as social infrastructure that benefits rural communities.

Opportunities for infrastructure investment are also likely to be identified through the development of emerging industries and options for shared infrastructure that can meet multiple purposes - such as an “Agri- Hub” for the Clarence Valley. Some of these may be leveraged with government support, while others may require ongoing public investment, including engaging with government to increase maintenance allowances for key, but aging, floodplain infrastructure.

Private infrastructure development may also be required in the future if housing supply shortages and needs of seasonal workers persist. For example, accommodation for rural workers similar to Clauses 4.2C and 6.6 of Kyogle LEP 2012 (or modification of CVLEP 2011 7.11) may provide a suitable example should this issue continue to be experienced as per recent trends.

Issue 8: Addressing red tape

Concerns are frequently expressed regarding regulation and approvals required when undertaking various forms of land use, and rural land uses are no different.

Over recent decades, additional and more stringent approval processes have been introduced, particularly with respect to environmental issues and impacts on waterways, noting for example that agricultural diffuse source runoff is rated as a priority threat to NSW estuaries within the NSW Government Threat and Risk Assessment (2017). This can create additional burdens for those seeking to undertake activities that they may see as a 'right to farm' and which have historically not required approvals.

Conversely, when activities are undertaken without approval from Council (such as development that is exempt under State laws), the direct or cumulative impacts can be significant on the environment, waterways, neighbouring land holders or the broader community.

Key elements that have been raised with respect to 'red tape' include:

- approvals associated with flood plain and drainage management
- land clearing and complexities of regulatory responsibilities.

It should however be noted that many 'red tape' issues fall outside of Council's control and are managed by the State government. The Coastal Floodplain Management Project also includes an interagency working group with representatives from five agencies/divisions in DPE all with an approval role in coastal agricultural drainage works and activities and which also seeks to assist landholders and Council to generate improved environmental outcomes.

2.4 Key Strategic Principles

Based on these identified issues and associated research and consultation, the following five key strategic principles have been established to guide the preparation of this Strategy and provide high level outcomes across the Strategy's 20-year horizon.

Principle 1: Protecting key agricultural land resources

Agriculture is a major contributor to the Clarence Valley economy and careful planning is required to maintain the benefits that it brings. It provides not only jobs and prosperity, but also assists in providing for food security and environmental outcomes including broader environmental benefits such as regenerative agriculture, carbon capture and storage and biodiversity conservation. Encouraging ongoing investment in agriculture and protecting its supporting resource base is critical to long-term success.

The Strategy will aim to protect agricultural land resources wherever possible by:

- discouraging non-agricultural development from being located on important agricultural land identified in the Far North Coast Farmland Mapping within the NCRP 2036
- minimising subdivision of rural land, unless demonstrated to improve agricultural productivity or to retain agricultural land
- supporting the diversification of agriculture or land uses that contribute to the value of agricultural products (e.g. agri-tourism)
- recognising that the future of agriculture in Clarence Valley relies on a healthy and sustainable environment
- acknowledging climate change exacerbated bushfire risk to rural lands from adjacent land use and contribute to co-operative measures to manage these risks.

Principle 2: Growing the rural economy

As the major rural land use within the Clarence Valley, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry employs more than 1,200 people and more than 3,800 people are employed in the agri-food economy. With the population of the LGA expected to grow to more than 60,000 by 2041, encouraging employment opportunities on rural lands, including through both agricultural and complementary non-agricultural uses, is an opportunity to support and sustain this growth.

The Strategy will build on existing agricultural strengths whilst facilitating the development of complementary non agricultural uses such as tourism, recreation, environmental protection (e.g. biodiversity offsets, carbon capture and storage), and renewable energy, provided they are compatible with the primary production potential, rural character and environmental capabilities of the land

Principle 3: Reinforcing networks and support structures

Rural lands comprise the majority of the Clarence Valley LGA, requiring both effective co-ordination of information, as well as the infrastructure to enable desired outcomes. Wherever possible, future development should strengthen the efficient use of infrastructure, services, information and transport networks, or provide for new infrastructure to avoid overburdening those networks that already exist.

Creating a point of contact within Council, such as a proposed Sustainable Agricultural Officer (or similar) position, will support and facilitate rural industries and link with relevant government networks. Such a position is also important to ensuring networks and support structures are well co-ordinated. Tapping into the capabilities of key State agencies, particularly DPI and Local Land Services (LLS), NPWS and the RFS, will be key to addressing long term needs.

Principle 4: Taking a future-focused, sustainable and long-term approach

The Strategy is a long-term plan that considers rural lands over the next 20 years and beyond. The Strategy will consider how planning for the protection of important agricultural lands occurs now, to enable it to remain available in the future. With a growing population and emerging trends towards agricultural intensification, value-adding uses and diversification, there is also a need to consider what the other long-term needs will be and how these can be met - including through an adaptable land use planning framework.

This principle captures a range of issues and emerging practices, including climate change, resilience, regenerative agriculture, carbon farming, water access / security, biodiversity values and offsets and renewable energy projects. It recognises the foundations set by the previous Strategy and the longer-term needs for key issues such as important agricultural land protection from fragmentation and clustering of key industries.

Principle 5: Providing a consistent planning framework

This principle primarily seeks to recognise and harmonise the local planning framework and approach to rural land management within broader regional and State initiatives. Rural lands and the industries that are represented are generally not confined by LGA boundaries and working within the broader industry and policy context is important.

For example, there are known changes to rural land planning being considered through the NSW Agricultural Commissioner, agri-tourism and small-scale farm activities by the Department of Planning & Environment (DPE) - Planning, and an updated *North Coast Regional Plan* which is expected to be completed later in 2022. This principle may require difficult conversations within Council and between Council and agencies to recognise the limitations of Council's land-use planning powers and to utilise other tools to achieve the outcomes envisaged.

PART 2 – FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RURAL LANDS

A framework for the future

This Strategy provides the framework for managing growth, change and development of rural land in the Clarence Valley to the year 2041. While this is a 20-year plan, the Strategy also considers Clarence Valley's potential growth beyond 2041 and in particular, the need to ensure that planning decisions made today do not compromise longer term needs.

Planning for rural lands over this period is structured around **four focus areas** with a summary of each of these in the adjoining column. These focus areas have been based on the planning principles and informed by an evidence-based analysis undertaken developing the Strategy.

This part outlines each of these focus areas, providing the following under each:

- **Background** - short background to the focus area
- **Strategic direction** - identifies the policy direction
- **Recommendations** - provides recommendations for implementation

This Strategy provides a framework for government, stakeholders and the community to identify and address the multiple factors that influence land use and planning issues in the rural areas of the Clarence Valley.

It also considers the planning and policy levers to safeguard important agricultural and environmental lands, provides an equitable approach for current and future residents, and includes a program of regular monitoring and review of actions.



Focus Area 1: Facilitate effective rural land use planning

Strengthen the use of existing rural and conservation zones whilst identifying opportunities to direct LEP & DCP controls to minimise land use conflicts, optimise primary production and ensure biodiversity conservation



Focus Area 2: Elevate the importance of rural lands within Council and the community

Provide a greater emphasis on rural land production and conservation outcomes, through promotion and engagement that recognises its valuable contribution to the Clarence Valley



Focus Area 3: Engage with government and industry to leverage support

As many issues / groups / industries are not LGA bound, develop and foster effective and lasting relationships to support a range of rural land uses and outcomes



Focus Area 4: Develop supporting infrastructure that enables opportunities and builds resilience

Identify and deliver key infrastructure that can assist in maximising the potential of industries using rural lands within the broader context of sustainability



Focus Area 1

Facilitate effective rural land use planning

Background

Land use planning for Clarence Valley rural lands is undertaken by both the NSW Government and Clarence Valley Council. In its simplest terms, rural land use planning is about planning for and managing the diverse uses of rural land such as for agriculture, recreation, housing, tourism, open space, natural resource use, biodiversity conservation, heritage and landscape conservation, whilst accommodating supporting infrastructure.

Whilst current planning within the Clarence Valley is relatively effective, given some of the emerging pressures, there are opportunities to improve the planning framework in order to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose well into the future. This will help to safeguard important agricultural land and minimise land use conflict that is more evident in surrounding LGAs.

Far North Coast Farmland Mapping

Key to planning for the future of rural lands is to clearly understand and consistently apply policies to protect the most important agricultural land for productive agricultural purposes. Other rural land can then be used in a more diverse way to meet broader social, economic and environmental outcomes.

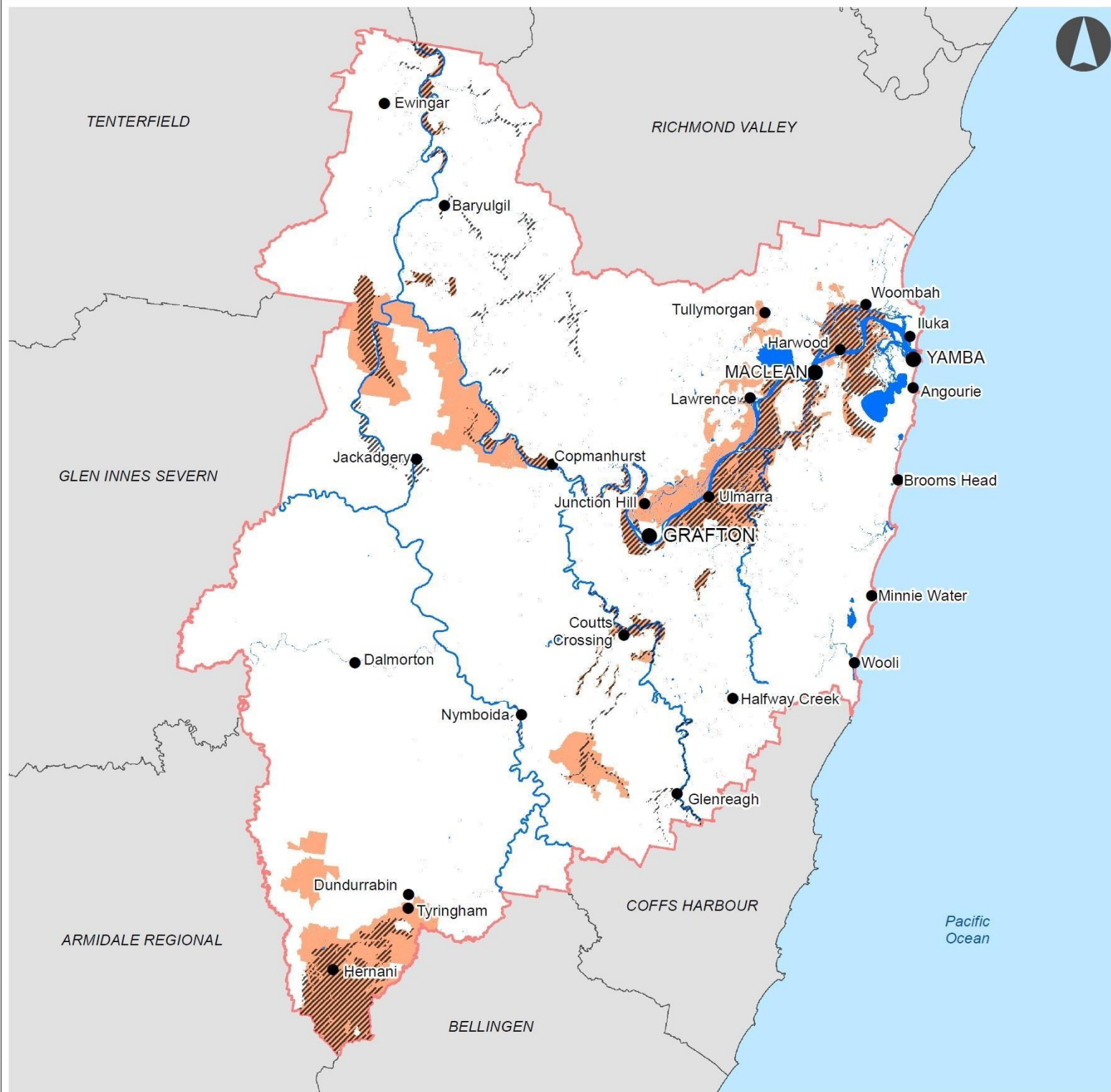
From a State perspective, DPI leads planning for agricultural development in the context of government policies and projects. One way this has been undertaken in the Clarence Valley was through the development of the Far North Coast Farmland Mapping Project and integrating this within State strategic planning processes.

This mapping project was originally completed in 2005, and more recently confirmed in 2020 without change in the Clarence Valley LGA. This mapping is integrated into the North Coast Regional Plan 2036 and has been part of strategic planning processes for many years. This has provided both the State and local government with a recognised basis to identify and value important agricultural land and to integrate it into land use planning.

The value of the mapping is further identified within the Commissioner's report, stating "*The Far North Coast and Mid-North Coast Important Farmland Map is a good example of how a regional scale map can reduce the rate of rezoning of agricultural land*". As a consequence of this mapping "*The North Coast converted less agricultural land despite having a dwelling target 25 per cent higher than the Illawarra Shoalhaven region.*"

The extent of this mapping is presented in Figure 8 overleaf. This important agricultural land mapping covers almost 65,000 hectares or 9% of all rural land in the Clarence Valley.

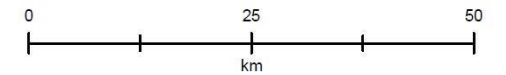
Figure 8: Far North Coast Farmland Mapping



Legend

- Localities
- Rivers
- ▨ Important Farmland
- RU1 Primary Production
- Clarence Valley Local Government Area
- Adjoining Local Government Areas

Data source:
Data supplied by Clarence Valley Council



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Clarence Valley Local Environmental Plan 2011

From Council's land use planning perspective, CVLEP 2011 is the primary instrument for regulating rural land use in the LGA. CVLEP 2011 contains three rural zones and two conservation zones that are subject to this Strategy being:

- RU1 Primary Production
- RU2 Rural Landscape
- RU3 Forestry
- C2 Environmental Conservation
- C3 Environmental Management

Each of these zones have their own objectives and the LEP outlines the extent of development permissible within each zone. The application of these zones across the LGA was previously identified in Figure 5 (see Page 10). A summary of the spectrum of zones on the rural landscape (including the RU4 and C1 zones that are not used and not subject to this strategy respectively) is outlined in Figure 9.

Council's primary agricultural zone, RU1 Primary Production, has the overarching objective of protecting the best quality agricultural land in the Clarence Valley, while the RU2 Rural Landscape zone allows for more diverse set of rural uses.

Of the land identified in the Far North Coast Farmland Map, 82% is zoned RU1 and 10% is zoned RU2. This indicates a generally positive correlation between the RU1 zone and important farmland. While there is room to further refine the RU1 and RU2 zones in context of this mapping, it should be noted that there is generally strong alignment between these two State and local land use planning mechanisms. Further alignment could also be explored in context of aligning conservation zones and areas of high environmental value. This could be achieved through a voluntary process, or another form of local clause protection.

Related recommendations within Focus Area 1 therefore emphasise reviewing and reinforcing of the application of land use zones and objectives within the CVLEP 2011.

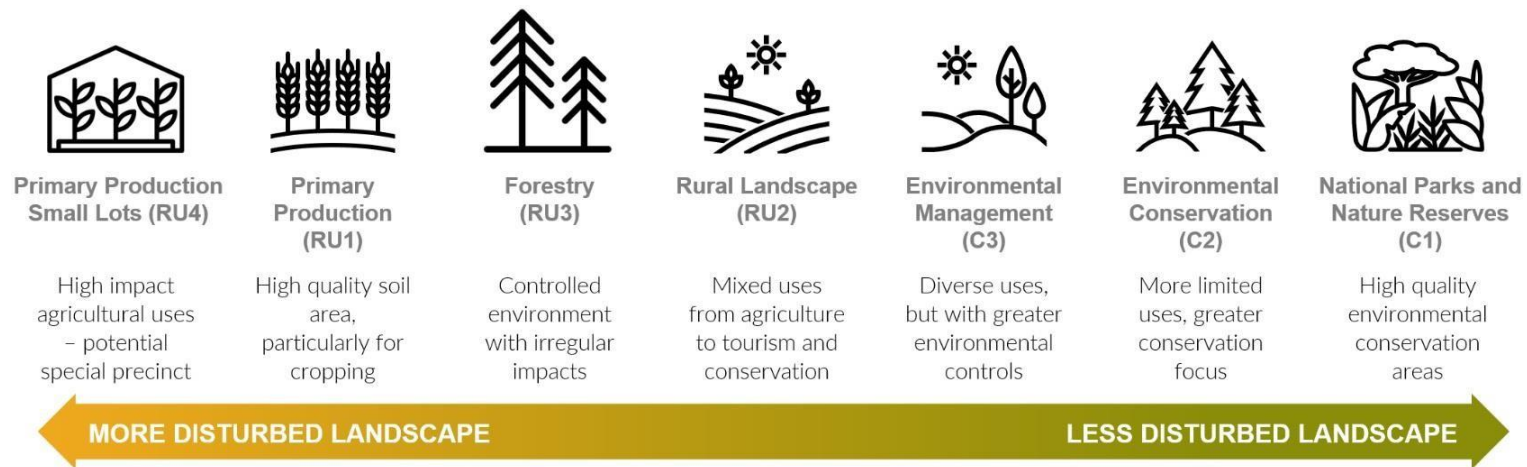


Figure 9: Spectrum of zones on the rural landscape

Clarence Valley Development Control Plan 2011

Another key mechanism to facilitate effective rural land use planning is the application of Council's DCP that supports and complements the LEP by further establishing controls and direction on future development.

Council's *Environmental Protection, Recreation and Special Use Zones DCP* (Special Zones DCP) applies to the two conservation or 'C' zones and encourages development of land in ways that complements the character of a locality, is of an appropriate scale, minimises impacts on the environment and minimise land use conflicts.

In addition, Council's *Rural Zones DCP* applies to the three rural or 'RU' zones and provides more detailed development controls that address such matters as the protection of amenity, privacy and scenic values, flooding and tidal inundation, flora and fauna, development design along with operational requirements.

One important way these two DCPs can influence land use planning is through establishing direction on the application of buffers. DPI has developed a 'Primefact' interim guideline entitled *Buffer Zones to Reduce Land Use Conflict with Agriculture 2018*. This provides consolidated advice on recommended buffers to agricultural activities for the use of industry, development proponents and consent authorities. It suggests buffer zones between 50m and up to 1km between incompatible land uses, with the onus on the developer to use their own land as a buffer zone to mitigate land use conflict.

The Agricultural Commissioners Report also establishes the need for further work in this area from the State Government - including potential for stronger application of buffers through LEPs. The Agricultural Commissioners Report also includes the use of the 'agent of change' approach, which places the onus on proponents of new developments to recognise and mitigate any potential impact that their development may impose on, or experience from, existing land uses in the vicinity.

Embedding buffers within Council's DCP, noting that some already exist in the Special Zones DCP, will assist in providing consistent land use assessment on rural or conservation lands. It is recommended that these controls are updated to reflect best practice approaches pending any mandated LEP changes that may be required by the State Government.

Farm and Industry Viability

To ensure ongoing productive use of important agricultural land, individual farm and broader industry viability is critical. In the Clarence Valley certain agricultural sectors require increasingly large areas of agricultural land to facilitate viability. Sugarcane production is an example of a sector where the costs of production and economies of scale, together with the fact that it is typically located on important agricultural land on the floodplain, means that farm size and the high cost of land has a significant influence on viability.

At the same time, there is increasing pressure on rural land to be used for 'lifestyle' purposes. This can result in important agricultural land becoming more valuable for its residential uses rather than for its agricultural productivity - this being the core intent of rural zones. A potential consequence is that important agricultural land no longer being used for these purposes.

Small but consistent loss of agricultural land impacts not only individual and neighbouring farmers but may also have a broader impact on particular sectors. Some of these sectors in the Clarence Valley, with sugar again being an example, rely on having a critical mass of producers who collaborate through shared infrastructure and logistics which is critical to ongoing viability.

To ensure this does not occur, the intent of this Strategy is to facilitate rural subdivision for the purposes of agricultural production, but which does not result in additional dwelling entitlements being created. It is recommended that Council review subdivision controls to facilitate agricultural production whilst minimising the establishment of new dwelling entitlements in the RU1 zone.

Strategic Directions

Strategic directions for Focus Area 1 have an emphasis on reviewing and reinforcing existing zones and applicable land uses through CVLEP2011 and Council's DCP. This includes opportunities to review and refine the zone objectives, seeking to meet both the desired outcomes of retaining important agricultural land, whilst enabling more flexibility in areas of lesser agricultural importance. This review would be timely considering Council's existing zoning maps and permissible land uses as outlined in CVLEP 2011 has not been thoroughly reviewed in the past decade and the range of rural planning changes being explored by State agencies.

With respect to conservation zonings, this action area would also explore the potential of better incorporating land of high environmental value land or having other significant biodiversity conservation value into a more appropriate land use zone or identified within an LEP clause and mapping overlay. This could include lands already subject to long-term or perpetual conservation mechanisms, land identified in high environmental value land mapping and high value biodiversity corridors. Such changes are initially being considered within the context of voluntary landowner support. Such an action would also consider mapping of cultural and scenic landscapes, again with a view to establishing planning controls and mechanisms to facilitate retention of these valued areas.

Regardless of the land use zone, more well-defined development assessment considerations through the application of buffers to reduce land use conflicts is recommended. Changes to the LEP are also recommended to recognise the need for planning flexibility to ensure that agricultural activities can remain viable rather than being lost to lifestyle purposes due to the land being more highly valued for residential use.



Focus Area 1 - Facilitate effective rural land use planning

Recommendations for Focus Area 1

- 1 Review the applicability of rural land zones
- 2 Review land use permissibility in, and objectives of, rural land zones
- 3 Review planning controls applying to rural lands that have high environmental values, form part of strategically important biodiversity corridors and/or which have significant scenic values
- 4 Collaborate with State agencies and industry on opportunities to best protect agricultural activities adjacent to existing and proposed urban areas
- 5 Review subdivision controls to facilitate agricultural production whilst minimising the establishment of new dwelling entitlements in the RU1 zone
- 6 Review LEP and/or DCP controls to include greater certainty and direction around expectations for buffers to and between agricultural activities
- 7 Reinforce existing DCP controls for protection of biodiversity and environmental outcomes through review of buffers and related provisions



Focus Area 2

Elevate the importance of rural lands within Council and the community

The scale of rural lands, combined with the vast range of activities and environments within them, means that they are synonymous with the Clarence Valley. However, consultation undertaken to inform this Strategy highlighted that there are various issues and opportunities that are not being well-captured within Council's existing structure and strategic documents and are misunderstood within the community.

To address this, the Strategy seeks to elevate the importance of rural land within Council through dedicated resources. These resources can then be used to assist rural land holders, and the general public, to better understand and respond to rural issues. Together, this can assist the Clarence Valley to embrace the importance of rural lands in a coordinated and deliberate way.

Elevating the importance of rural lands within Council

Despite the Clarence Valley having the most rural land and being the largest agricultural producer in the Northern Rivers, there is no centralised officer or position that is associated with rural activities. Other councils in the region have identified the need for a focus on rural land activities, and particularly to assist small farm productivity and land management sustainability. Examples include:

- Tweed "Sustainable Agriculture Program" that works with local landholders, community groups, State agencies and research organisations to improve the viability and environmental management capacity of the Tweed's rural landholders. This includes education programs, on-ground research and demonstration projects, policy work and advocacy.
- Byron Council offers a free onsite farm consultation through their Agricultural Extension Officer alongside guides and toolkits for farmers in the area, as well as ongoing co-ordination of workshops, field days, farming events and grant opportunities.

Based on consultations for the Strategy, it was regularly noted that many organisations have a greater focus with these councils as a consequence of more acute land use conflicts, but also enjoy a more direct collaboration with the respective councils. Several identified the appointment of agricultural officers as a conduit to working more closely with local government in the delivery of programs education events and advisory services. This creates greater opportunities for leveraging of resources given that many issues and sectors cross LGA boundaries.

Whilst a dedicated officer would provide these benefits, it is also recognised that Council is already undertaking a range of practices that assist rural land holders. A clear example is Council's website and access to information and data such as the disaster dashboard. The dashboard provides a range of real-time and pre-emptive information, including on topics that are particularly relevant to rural lands including biosecurity, bushfire and flood. The need for real-time access to emergency management information is also likely to increase in the future if climate change induced weather events such as those experienced in 2019 and 2022, are to become more frequent.

The appointment of a sustainable agricultural officer (or similar) position, designed to create consistency across a range of needs within the context of rural lands, is recommended to elevate the importance of rural lands within Council. This position can assist in ensuring that relevant information is available to rural land holders, including through existing sources, such as the Clarence Valley Disaster Dashboard. Funding of this position, if only in part initially, is encouraged by Council to ensure its longevity especially given the need to build linkages and networks among a broad range of stakeholders and partner agencies. While additional funding from State or Federal sources would also be desirable, external funds may be better directed to programs and activities associated with this position.

Collaboratively responding to local constraints and opportunities

Whilst it is important for Council to be well positioned to take the lead on rural land matters, it is also recognised that collaboration with others can help to address the broad range of issues that exist. Key examples of collaborative opportunities include those where other stakeholders also have knowledge and/or legislative responsibilities that can be leveraged to benefit rural outcomes.

One such example is identified within the context of land use conflict. In many instances these conflicts are associated with issues that fall outside the land use planning system and which cannot be addressed through simple enforcement measures. Solutions often require discussion and collaboration with land holders, sometimes to set realistic expectations (e.g. right to farm) and others to work towards changing practices or processes. These issues are often locality or sector specific, and utilising the knowledge of landholders, agencies and Council can assist in establishing change that resolves conflicts now and in the future.

A similar process could be applied to issues such as biosecurity management and native vegetation removal. These processes and enforcement activities are generally the responsibility of State authorities, such as LLS, DPI and DPE - BCD, though the impacts are very much felt locally. Council therefore has a role and ability to continue to work collaboratively with agencies on these types of issues.

Another example of the need for collaborative responses is in responding to the impacts of climate change. Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' in 2019 and has a Climate Change Policy. Anticipated impacts are expected to include more erratic weather patterns such as the extreme bushfires experienced in 2019/20 and significant flooding in early 2022. Sea level rise may impact across much of the floodplains that are mapped as important agricultural land, all of which has the potential to lead to lost agricultural land and impact on the type and scale of commodities produced. Collaborative forward planning with government, industry and not-for-profits, and educating those most likely to be impacted, will assist in positioning Council and the rural lands community to mitigate future climate change impacts.

Collaboration with First Nations peoples is also required. Key opportunities include learning from their cultural and practical understanding of the land, for example in bushfire management, whilst also identifying and planning for the protection of cultural sites.

Moreover, recognising and working with the knowledge base that First Nations peoples have with rural land in the Clarence Valley will assist with integrating cultural values with the ongoing use and planning for rural lands. Together, this collaboration can also improve cultural connection to the broader community.

The Clarence Valley has a proud history in agricultural and rural activities. Promoting this through Council and in collaboration with industry and others assists the broader community and visitors to gain a deeper appreciation of rural land activities. This process of education is also supported by the Agricultural Commissioner's Report, that highlights the need for greater public understanding of agricultural practices. This can reduce land use conflicts and create a greater appreciation for the role of farmers in producing our food and fibre.

Building on solid foundations

Consultation with various industry groups and State agencies has identified a number of potential emerging industry sectors that could be targeted to strengthen the rural economy. This opportunity would see Council working with these sectors to facilitate opportunities and to advocate for future directions, ultimately delivering a series of 'strategies' that act as catalysts for identified opportunities.

Examples could include existing industries seeking to expand through value-adding or diversification (e.g. sugarcane or forestry) as well as newer and high growth industries where co-ordination can pre-empt future issues. The macadamia industry is an example of a rapidly growing industry in the region and the apiary (bee) industry has significant potential given the symbiotic relationship it has with horticulture.

Forestry is a particularly large primary industry in the area, with both the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) and Private Native Forestry (PNF) being significant employers. This presents potential opportunities to leverage the current situation to improve supply chains, increase value adding opportunities and establish industries for by-products, review plantation nodes and co-ordinate both FCNSW and PNF needs. With a significant support industry established in and around Grafton, Council can play an important role in facilitating the growth, education and work alongside FCNSW and LLS to improve the stability and economic benefits of the industry to the local area.

In terms of apiary activities, industry has indicated that there are already close to 50,000 bees pollinating across public and private rural lands in the Clarence Valley. In conjunction with forecast horticultural growth, industry expects the demand for pollination services to grow proportionally.

However, consultation with the apiary industry while preparing this Strategy has also highlighted that a key challenge for beekeeping stems from the ability of land to host hive sites and that the removal of apiary site tenure undermines the stability of local beekeeping businesses. Limited apiary sites on public rural land, changing site ownership and lack of cross-agency communication have been identified as major challenges that impact the ability to host hives.

There is considered to be potential for Council, in conjunction with other agencies, to play a role in collaboratively identifying ways to enhance licenced site opportunities on Council and other public land locations. This process may also identify other opportunities to ensure a healthy apiary industry which is also an important benefit for broader horticultural needs.

Strategic Directions

With agriculture and rural land use under the planning spotlight from a State Government perspective, elevating the importance of agriculture and rural land activities within Council and the community is particularly important. This will assist Council and rural land holders to respond to changing State policies and directions, navigate and be engaged in the key rural issues identified and create a positive relationship between the community and rural land holders into the future.

Central to this, and of benefit to the many outcomes and actions in this Strategy, is the resourcing capability that Council has internally. Establishing a ‘Sustainable Agricultural Officer’, or similar, to leverage effective delivery of collaborative working opportunities across a range of industry, government and not-for-profit organisations is recommended.

Such a position could also facilitate implementation of existing policies and actions, including Council’s Climate Change Policy, Biodiversity Strategy, and Regional Economic Development Strategy, but also new initiatives identified through the Rural Lands Strategy – such as Emerging Industry Strategies.

The role would also focus on training, education and collaboration opportunities. For example, existing regulatory requirements (e.g. biosecurity), as well as newer developments and initiatives within rural activities (e.g. regenerative agriculture), all with a focus on reinforcing positive environmental or agricultural outcomes.

Through this role, as well as within Council more generally, public and community education on the importance of rural lands is imperative. This will improve the standing of agriculture, build on its strengths, and seek to reduce incidences of land use conflict that can detrimentally impact on productivity and public trust. The importance of this is also being recognised at the State Government level and working closely with State agencies will be a key component of this process.

With a positive mindset to agriculture, food and lifestyle aspects of the Clarence Valley, there are opportunities to engage the broader community and visitors on the importance of rural land activities. This would include collaboratively engaging on difficult topics such as climate change impacts, working with First Nations peoples and developing strategies for emerging and expanding rural industries. All of these form part of the recommendations for Focus Area 2.



Focus Area 2 - Elevate the importance of rural lands within Council and the community

Recommendations for Focus Area 2	
8	Establish a ‘Sustainable Agricultural Officer’ within Council
9	Update, maintain and promote Council’s website and associated data as a key resource for rural lands
10	Collaborate with First Nations communities in caring for country and planning for, and use of, rural lands
11	Undertake forward planning for impacts of climate change on rural lands, including emergency response to natural disasters
12	Collaboratively identify conflict inducing practices and opportunities to work with industry and agencies to reduce these
13	In conjunction with LLS and DPE - BCD, continue to work with land holders to facilitate education and understanding of vegetation clearing requirements
14	Develop ‘Emerging Industry Strategies’ to further develop and lead Council’s proactive involvement in key growth sectors



Focus Area 3

Engage with government and industry to leverage support

Background

There is considerable attention being given by the State Government to planning for rural lands at the current time. This focus is often on regional and state-wide issues and responses, meaning that Council needs to be aware of, respond to, and engage with these proposals and changes as they occur. Without close engagement, there are risks that the rural interests of the Clarence Valley may be overlooked.

Across the longer-term, it is also notable that many rural issues are not confined to LGA boundaries. Engaging and leveraging the knowledge and resources of State agencies, not-for-profits, research institutions and industry bodies is critical to addressing a broad range of issues and opportunities. Working with industry can also help to drive the diversification of rural land uses in informed and co-ordinated ways.

Working within State and regional systems

While Council has a variety of controls and regulations that relate to rural lands in the Clarence Valley, the overarching and evolving State and regional frameworks also add a layer of complex rules for both Council and rural landowners to consider. Ensuring Council's approach to rural lands is consistent with and/or responding to ongoing changes to this broader framework is paramount to ensuring long-term use of rural land is consistent with Council's land use planning and other policy objectives.

A key recent reform process is outlined by the NSW Agricultural Commissioner's Report entitled '*Improving the Prospects for Agriculture and Regional Australia in the NSW Planning System*'. Released in July 2021, the Commissioner's Report details 12 recommendations to the NSW Government across four phases of implementation.

The implementation of a number of these recommendations will have implications for the ongoing management and use of rural lands in the Clarence Valley. Key recommendations of relevance include:

- *Recommendation 1: Adoption of a State-wide policy on agricultural land use planning, including additional resources for councils to improve consistency in land use decisions on an around new State- wide significant agricultural land mapping*
- *Recommendation 9: Creating a requirement for councils to consider buffer guidelines for agricultural operations in the development application process via an agent of change approach*
- *Recommendation 11: Implementing education programs for council planners, councillors and the public around agricultural land use planning needs*
- *Recommendation 12: Establishing a Farm Practices Panel to assess and endorse industry codes of practice, including identification of "normal" conflicts that should be accepted*
- *Recommendation 13: Establishing a Council Reference Group to bring together councils to share experiences of agricultural land use conflict.*

Assuming these recommendations are implemented by the State Government, Council resources will be required to work with State agencies to facilitate positive outcomes and to discuss matters that may be of concern. Maintaining an active role through the process of implementation of these types of recommendations, as well as other State and regional policies, is a key objective of Recommendation 8: Establish a 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' within Council.

It is also noted that some funding, resource allocation and approvals processes are undertaken by State agencies. Working closely with these agencies and the development of effective working relationship will prove to be of benefit to the Clarence Valley. One such example is navigating approval pathways required to facilitate the operation of agricultural enterprises on the floodplain and in the maintenance of drainage works. This complex web of approvals is somewhat offset by annual or ongoing permits for drainage works in some instances but can be complex and difficult to navigate when it comes to renewals. Works on the floodplain are also complicated by expected rising sea levels and the presence of acid sulfate soils, whilst infrastructure funding provision from the State Government has remained stagnant for many years. Combined with an increased focus on urban areas with respect to the protection of assets and risk to lives, the resourcing available for rural flood infrastructure works, remains comparatively low. While it is recognised that many of these issues fall outside of Council's control (such as stagnant State infrastructure payments and State approval systems), Council can play a role in continuing to facilitate improvements related to the floodplain wherever possible.

Leveraging rural land expertise

Consultation has highlighted that there are a broad range of organisations, from government to industry and not-for-profits, that have significant resources and expertise in managing rural lands. Many of those consulted indicated an interest and willingness to be more involved in Clarence Valley's rural lands should such opportunities arise.

The prospective involvement of these organisations can range from helping to address and co-ordinate responses to identified issues, distribute valuable information and to increase education and knowledge relating to rural lands. Further, rural landowners themselves possess invaluable knowledge of land management at a localised scale and mechanism to better utilise this knowledge by government needs to be explored.

In recognition of this wealth of knowledge and resources that sit outside of Council's direct control, there are significant opportunities to leverage these through a central point of contact with Council. This central point can be delivered through Recommendation 8: Establish a 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' within Council, which would enable the establishment and delivery of various programs, training and education opportunities. Some of these could include:

- promoting the benefits of utilising rural land to maximum productivity and training rural landholders on how to achieve this
- assisting young and new farmers entering the industry to break down barriers to entry and navigate planning and approvals processes
- encouraging sustainable farming and production methods, including regenerative agriculture and related soils and land management techniques
- building an understanding of biosecurity risks and the obligations of landholders, with a particular focus on new land holders and small farmers
- raising awareness and building stronger understanding of the impacts of, and opportunities to respond to, climate change, including initiatives such as carbon farming
- raising awareness and building a stronger understanding of the impacts of climate change induced risk and improve natural hazards, preparedness, response and recovery
- promoting opportunities for technology enhancement of farming, for example facilitating opportunities with the NSW Government's Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund, Regional Digital Connectivity - Farms of the Future program as identified in the *Clarence Valley Economic Recovery Strategy (2021)*
- identifying and promoting compatible diversification opportunities within agri-tourism and recreation on rural lands - including planning considerations around issues such as access, biosecurity and natural hazards.
- staying informed about current programs, training and education opportunities undertaken by State agencies, not-for-profits and industry groups and establish a mechanism (e.g. e-news, social media etc) to inform rural land holders in the Clarence Valley of these opportunities
- working with State agencies, not-for-profits and industry group to run programs, training and education opportunities specifically targeted at or including opportunities for Clarence Valley rural landholders
- providing funds (or seek funding through the State and Federal government or industry) to establish programs, training and education opportunities targeted at Clarence Valley rural landholders.

Working with organisations and agencies with existing rural land expertise, either through promoting them, collaborating on projects together or creating Council-led programs can further strengthen the productive use of Clarence Valley's rural lands.

Encouraging appropriate and diverse rural land use

Rural lands in the Clarence Valley cater for a wide range of uses that are not always predominantly centred around agriculture. These can include conservation activities, and increasingly, tourism and recreation. This diverse use of land was generally supported during consultation activities, provided that they do not impact on important agricultural land as mapped under the NCRP 2036 or otherwise pose a risk to existing agricultural operations.

Supporting and encouraging investment in a range of rural lands activities can add value to farming activities, providing alternative income to better manage land, as well as diversifying the overall tourism and recreational offerings of the LGA. It is important however, that the competing demands of tourism and other development does not negatively impact on the productivity of agricultural land or have implications for infrastructure needs (e.g. access roads). With effective planning controls such as buffers in place, these risks can often be mitigated.

The *Clarence Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2022* outlines tourism as a key ‘engine of growth’ and to develop the region’s key tourism attractions and precincts. The Strategy highlights leveraging of the Clarence Valley’s nature-based tourism experiences on the river and hinterland. This is further reinforced by the recently “renewed” *The Clarence - Riverway Master Plan II* (July 2021) which establishes key directions to reinforce and continue the work of the original documents. In addition, Destination North Coast’s *North Coast Destination Management Plan* identifies in *Strategic Priority 4: Tourism Product and Experience Development* links between rural land and agriculture to tourism opportunities through key actions 4.3 and 4.4.

Whilst Council’s current programs and promotion of nature-based tourism activities, such as through the myclarencevalley.com page, can deliver actions to realise nature-based tourism opportunities, product development is also required. Tourism product development in this instance includes the provision of accommodation and activity options (an indicative heat map of existing accommodation in rural land areas is shown in Figure 10 overleaf).

The State Government (DPE - Planning) is, at the time of writing, finalising reforms in this area (agri-tourism), with new definitions for *farm stay accommodation*, *farm experience premises* and *farm gate premises* being proposed to be introduced to the Standard Instrument to broaden the extent of uses within rural areas that have a relationship to agricultural activities. Facilitating such uses in areas that do not impact on mapped farmland under the NCRP 2036 is encouraged.

Much of the rural land in the Clarence Valley also contains, or is located adjacent to, high quality and recognised recreational activities including white water rafting, mountain biking, bushwalking and pristine beaches. These rural recreational activities are popular pastimes as well as tourism attractors, with many occurring on both public and private rural land.

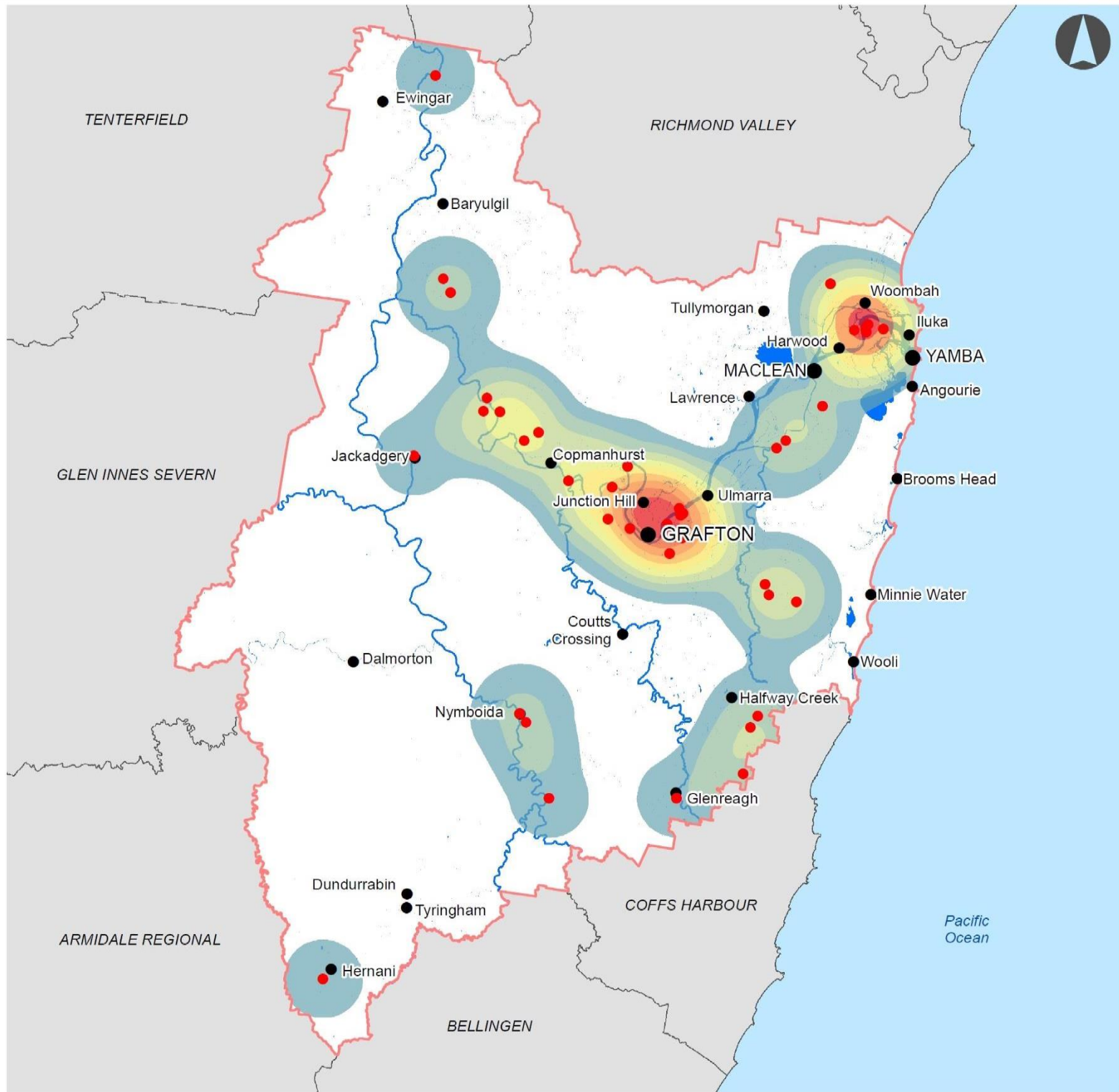
The ability of those living on appropriately zoned rural lands to provide infrastructure that supports recreation and other complementary activities in the Clarence Valley was strongly supported during consultation for this Strategy. These activities, as well as agri-tourism, can be a significant source of income for some rural land holders, particularly where it supplements other income through agricultural production. It can also encourage the productive use of the land rather than being used for private lifestyle purposes only. When combined with clearer planning controls for buffers and the use of the agent of change approach, this diversity can result in positive economic outcomes for rural communities.

Further, public land zoned RU3 Forestry managed by the FCNSW is often also utilised for recreational purposes such as camping, bushwalking and mountain biking. This land covers approximately 20% or around 200,000 hectares of the Clarence Valley. Leveraging the diverse tourism opportunities in the Clarence Valley through greater collaboration and engagement with FCNSW has the potential to result in additional opportunities being realised. This is an aspect that could be further developed through either an Emerging Industry Strategy (refer to Recommendation 14) or standalone review.

Enabling carefully planned diversification opportunities within the rural land context, for example complementary tourism and recreational activities, provides:

- a greater range of opportunities for younger farmers, assisting succession planning and attracting new entrants to the market
- creates opportunities for greater and more stable revenue, including during periods of drought, and
- assists in transition of traditional farm businesses that may otherwise struggle to remain viable.

Figure 10: Airbnb Accommodation on Rural Lands

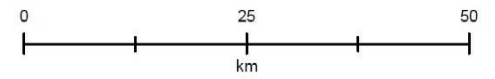


Legend

- Localities
- Rivers
- Properties on Airbnb

Airbnb Heat Map

- Low Density
- High Density
- Clarence Valley Local Government Area
- Adjoining Local Government Areas



Map produced by EMAP Consulting
 Date: 19/11/2021
 Coordinate System: GDA 2020 MGA Zone 56
 Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy

ClarenceRLS_accommodation

Collaboration and engagement with State Government

The State Government, through its numerous associated agencies and sometimes in conjunction with Council, manage both natural resources and hazards on Clarence Valley's rural lands. These include among others, water resources, native vegetation, bushfire response and mineral resources. Council plays a varying role in the management of these and will continue to collaborate and engage with relevant agencies to ensure beneficial outcomes for rural lands in the Clarence Valley.

For example, the mix of public and private vegetated land in the Clarence Valley poses bushfire risks within these lands and to adjoining properties. During the 2019/2020 bushfires 59% of the LGA was burnt, with 848 properties being damaged / destroyed and ~80% of harvestable forests being affected¹⁶. Collaboration between key State agencies such as the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), NSW National Park and Wildlife Service (NPWS), FCNSW, Council and rural land holders will be important in avoiding future impacts and losses to stock, property and life.

Just as private land holders need to consider impacts on public land, so to do agencies and organisations that manage public lands need to consider the impact that uncontrolled bushfires can have on other rural land and associated operations. These entities firefighting responses often rely on adjacent rural land holders to provide much of the emergency water supply through farm dams as well as cleared land and tracks to facilitate access and provide buffers to enable fire control efforts. Council will continue to work with these entities to improve bushfire preparedness and response. This will build increased resilience and adaptation to what is likely to be an increased risk of serious bushfires, exacerbated by climate change.

Specific engagement with First Nations peoples will also be important to integrate indigenous bushfire management knowledge into strategic bushfire planning processes.

Likewise, Council will continue to work with relevant State agencies associated with ensuring equitable access to water (particularly water extraction and harvesting). DPE - Water and the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) have key roles in this process. Recent reforms to water harvesting rights in coastal areas of NSW is expected to have a positive impact for some agricultural producers, though longer-term trends will need to be closely monitored as impacts of climate change and more severe weather patterns emerge.

Similarly, Council has indicated that they will continue to uphold its opposition to both current and future mining activities in the Clarence River catchment that was resolved in December 2014, and again in November 2020, April 2021 and June 2021. Ultimately, the decision of whether mining and exploration will occur in the Clarence Valley is made by the State Government, yet Council will continue to play a key advocacy role.

Strategic Directions

Recognising that many rural and agricultural activities are not bound by LGA boundaries, there is a strong need to engage and leverage opportunities with government and industry. This will help to drive the establishment of a range of programs, training and education opportunities to be funded by agency, industry, Council and others as a basis for encouraging collaboration across rural lands.

Engagement with First Nations peoples, as well as RFS, NPWS, Crown Lands and FCNSW will be important to address the interface between public and private land and to obtain desired outcomes for First Nations peoples. Similarly, engagement with DPI, LLS, NRAR and DPE - Water will be important to ensure equitable access to water and to manage longer-term trends towards intensive agriculture.

¹⁶ Clarence Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy - Fire impact addendum (May 2020)

There is also a number of reforms that are being proposed. Monitoring these and maintaining consistency with ultimate directions of the *NSW Agricultural Commissioners* recommendations will be an important consideration. Likewise, reform in more specific areas such as agri-tourism and water access will also need to be monitored and where needed, advocacy by Council will need to be considered.

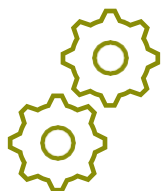
Encouraging the responsible diversification of use of rural lands through both collaborative and Council driven initiatives is also a key direction. This includes opportunities for both tourism and recreational activities across private and public land.

More broadly, this area also looks to engage with government in areas which are outside Council’s control. Examples include prohibition on mining or exploratory licences, as well as reviewing and allocating additional funding for floodplain infrastructure, maintenance and improvements.



Focus Area 3 - Engage with government and industry to leverage support

Recommendations for Focus Area 3	
15	Continue to review, collaborate and, where required, maintain consistency with evolving State legislation and policies
16	Engage with government to seek options to reduce delays and costs associated with drainage, floodplain maintenance and approval requirements
17	Facilitate access to a range of programs, training and education opportunities for rural landowners and the broader public
18	Strengthen opportunities for rural tourism and recreation compatible with the primary production potential, rural character and environmental capabilities of the land
19	Collaboratively work to ensure appropriate bushfire land management across the Clarence Valley
20	Facilitate ongoing equitable access and use of water resources
21	Engage with government to remove existing, and prohibit new, mining leases or exploration licences



Focus Area 4

Develop supporting infrastructure that enables opportunities and builds resilience

Background

Effective infrastructure provision underpins all rural activities and uses. Without infrastructure investment, barriers can form to the productive and safe use of rural lands. However, infrastructure in rural areas can also be expensive and where not well planned, underutilised.

This focus area therefore seeks to establish and maintain core infrastructure assets that are clearly connected to demand and, where appropriate, sustainable sources of revenue to facilitate their maintenance and upkeep.

Major infrastructure assets, including the Grafton Regional Livestock Selling Centre, Clarence Valley Regional Airport and the port of Yamba provide for key opportunities from which to grow rural economies alongside local community infrastructure supporting broader rural needs. Recent multimillion dollar upgrades to the selling centre and airport these facilities have reinforced their importance to the area. All future infrastructure projects should be undertaken on the basis of a well-established business case, seeking to ensure sound investment is made.

Creating a collaborative space to engage in rural activities

It is recognised that supporting infrastructure can be developed by a range of entities, including private landowners, industry, not-for-profits, Council and government agencies. However, establishing individual land holder infrastructure can be high cost, often only affordable to larger producers and which can be a barrier to new entrants.

To enable greater collaboration within and between sectors, including tourism, there is potential to consider a centrally located shared

infrastructure opportunity - an 'Agri-Hub'. With a large and diverse rural landscape, this centrally located facility can be considered in collaboration with industry and State agencies to become the focal point to grow agriculture in the Clarence Valley by:

- acting as an incubator to agricultural activities and connecting those with knowledge to share
- helping reduce the cost of entry or expansion through shared infrastructure such as processing and packaging facilities
- creating a supportive and collaborative network space
- connecting agriculture directly to consumers through markets, tourism activities (e.g. restaurant / café) and related activities / attractions
- delivering positive agricultural training and program opportunities from a centralised locality, and
- providing shared access and storage of equipment.

As noted above, the facility could also closely link food with agri-tourism, providing space for related events, marketplaces and facilities that celebrate localised food production and information on tourism opportunities.

This development may also reduce the need for on-site agricultural activities that can cause land-use conflict. Centralising activities rather than have them dispersed across rural areas can reduce instances of conflict, whilst providing a central meeting, training and education point for a range of activities.

This concept of shared infrastructure could also be built upon through developing industry specific infrastructure. This may be based on the outcomes of the 'Emerging Industry Strategies' (refer Recommendation 14), or other studies and plans, but would have the same underlying premise of assisting to improve industry productivity.

Such infrastructure outcomes may be related to harvesting and processing facilities, packaging equipment, transport infrastructure or other components of the supply chain, as discussed further below. This 'hub' may also be located to leverage opportunities generated by the Grafton Regional Livestock Selling Centre and Clarence Valley Regional Airport given their existing and/or future importance to agriculture.

Connectivity between rural lands

Having adequate supporting infrastructure that connects rural producers with the end consumer and ensures that transportation and supply networks maintain pace with producer needs is critical. Project consultation suggests that supply chains are generally well catered for within many of the more established, mature and higher value rural industries of the Clarence Valley.

However, as new, evolving or expanded rural industries develop, whether that be agriculture, forestry, aquaculture or others, opportunities for supply chain modification, improvement and expansion are likely to arise. This is particularly relevant to the road network, where weight limits and bridges can impact effective production distribution.

The common touchpoint for the extensive road network in the Clarence Valley is Grafton, suggesting that this area may be well located as a freight hub. This is supported by the *Clarence Valley Economic Recovery Strategy 2021* that highlights the need to undertake a detailed North Coast supply chain analysis to identify high-yield industries that could relocate to the Clarence Valley.

Further potential opportunities are also highlighted in Council's LSPS (2020). For example, Planning Priority 7 to "*Co-ordinate local and state funded infrastructure delivery with land use planning*" provides direction for the efficient use of infrastructure provision, including key roads and transport connections that support rural lands. The project priority of "*Support and grow the agricultural sector*" and particularly the references to "*facilitate improvements in the supply chain to support economic growth, food security, primary producers and the agri-food sector*" also provide impetus for this direction.

Strategic Directions

Carefully planned, shared infrastructure - for example an 'Agri-Hub'

- could be a focal point to grow agriculture in the Clarence Valley. When this is combined with directions to facilitate programs and educational opportunities under Focus Areas 2 and 3, the rationale for such a facility becomes even more apparent. This type of facility, and its link to economic development and rural jobs growth means that it is also well placed to attract grant opportunities, both for initial infrastructure delivery, as well as ongoing operational program funding.

Such a facility could also provide a close link to food and agri-tourism. It could be a space for related events, marketplaces and facilities that celebrate localised food production, establish value-add opportunities and connect rural lands to tourists and those in urban areas.

Beyond the 'hub' concept, there will continue to be an ongoing identification of infrastructure needs as industry strategies are adopted and other work is undertaken over the 20 year life of the Strategy. In conjunction with ensuring that transportation and supply networks maintain pace with demand, these will all need to be backed by a solid business-case, to ensure infrastructure is provided efficiently and effectively for future needs.



Focus Area 4 - Develop supporting infrastructure that enables opportunities and builds resilience

Recommendations for Focus Area 4

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 22 | Consider opportunities for, and where viable develop an 'Agri-Hub' to benefit a wide spectrum of rural activities |
| 23 | Establish a basis for industry specific and shared infrastructure opportunities |
| 24 | Collaboratively undertake a supply chain analysis to identify and establish direction for improving transportation and logistics in the short and long-term |

PART 3 – IMPLEMENTATION



3. Implementing the Strategy

Implementation of this Strategy will occur progressively over the next 20 years. The intent of the Strategy is to set a broad direction for Council, and it will be guided by a range of recommendations and subsequent actions to achieve long-term outcomes. The recommendations and actions are identified in further detail in Appendix A.

This Strategy will become a core reference document, particularly in relation to informing planning decisions and in engaging rural land holders on a range of issues and opportunities. The recommendations and actions specified in this Strategy will help to guide Council's decision making in the following, among other, areas:

- Delivering strategic and statutory planning outcomes that help to meet long-term needs of rural land holders and the broader environment
- Introducing and improving policies and guidelines relating to rural land planning and activities
- Supporting and engaging with initiatives undertaken by other organisations and agencies with respect to rural land issues
- Establishing a basis for infrastructure provision investigations relating to rural lands and uses
- Making resourcing decisions regarding the extent of Council's involvement in rural lands activities.

CVLEP 2011 and Council's DCPs, along with other associated strategies, plans and policies, will provide the primary means of ensuring that development of rural lands is consistent with the long-term land use vision and guiding principles identified in this Strategy.

3.1 Implementing the actions

Council will utilise the following tools when implementing the actions contained in this Strategy.

- **Capacity building** - Council will provide information, education and resources to develop both internal and external capacity and understanding regarding rural lands issues and opportunities.
- **Collaboration** - Council will collaborate with State agencies, not-for-profits, research institutions and industry organisations through both formal and informal partnerships to deliver initiatives and advocate for change.
- **Policy development** - Council will develop policies based on the actions contained in this Strategy. The policies will draw on the evidence-base provided in the Background Report, best practice and innovative approaches to address rural issues over time.
- **Program development** - Council will continue existing and develop new programs that help to address and accelerate positive outcomes with respect to key issues and opportunities identified.

3.2 Partner organisations

This Strategy identifies a number of actions which involve participation and collaboration with State and other organisations to enable their realisation. These include, but are not limited to, the following (listed in alphabetical order):

- Aboriginal organisations including Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) and Traditional Owners
- Adjoining councils
- Destination North Coast NSW
- Destination NSW
- DPE - Planning
- DPE - Water
- DPE - BCD
- DPI
- FCNSW
- Crown Lands
- Landowners
- LLS
- Not-For-Profits including, but limited to, Landcare, Environment Centres or Groups, Clarence Valley Food Inc and others
- NPWS
- NRAR
- Protected Cropping Australia
- RFS
- Transport for NSW (TFNSW)

Council may also have sole responsibility for the implementation of actions that are identified in Appendix A.

3.3 Review

While this Strategy sets out a 20-year vision for the management of Clarence Valley's rural lands, it is likely that characteristics of the area, and the demands placed on it, will continue to change over time. This is particularly the case for the evolving implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic (including land prices and population change), as well as the current focus on rural land use planning by various State agencies.

As a result, it is recommended that this Strategy be reviewed at five yearly intervals to ensure that it still reflects contemporary planning practice (including response to expected policy change), while maintaining the needs and requirements of the local community.

Appendix A – Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy Implementation Plan

Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy - Implementation Action Plan

OVERVIEW

This Implementation Action Plan provides further details to enable implementation of the recommendations identified under each of the four focus areas of the Clarence Valley Rural Lands Strategy.

The Implementation Action Plan establishes:

- o supporting actions that underpin each of the recommendations identified
- o the role of Council in the delivery of each action
- o any partner organisations that may also be relevant to the action
- o the timing of when the action is expected to be undertaken

While Council typically takes a leading role in implementation of the actions identified, there are also actions that are not bound by the Clarence Valley LGA or under Council's control. For these reasons, Council's role may sometimes take a different form as shown below.

Council's Role	
Lead	Council leads implementation of the action
Collaborate	Council is a partner in implementation
Support	Council is an enabler for others to take a lead role
Advocate	Council advocates for an outcome out of its direct control

The Implementation Action Plan also establishes the anticipated timing for implementation of actions. Not all actions can be undertaken in the immediate or short-term. Implementation may need to occur over the long-term or be subject to available resources or funding, along with being subject to future reviews of this Strategy.

Some actions will also provide further details and influence the timing of other actions. As a consequence, there are few long-term actions currently identified, although actions such as the development of emerging industry strategies will be subsequently implemented over the long-term.

Anticipated Implementation Timing	
Immediate	1 – 2 years
Short-term	2 – 5 years
Medium-term	5 – 10 years
Long-term	10+ years
Ongoing	Continues through the period of the plan
As required	Timing is dependent on other factors

CLARENCE VALLEY RURAL LANDS STRATEGY - IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

Focus Area 1 – Facilitate effective rural land use planning

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
1	Review the applicability of rural land zones	1.1 – Where land zoned RU1 is not captured within the Far North Coast Farmland Mapping (NCRP 2036), undertake a detailed investigation on which individual land parcels could potentially be rezoned to RU2 (or other applicable conservation zone in the case of areas of mapped high environmental value (HEV) land) to allow for greater land use flexibility.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
		1.2 – Where land not zoned RU1 is captured within the Far North Coast Farmland Mapping (NCRP 2036), undertake a detailed investigation on which individual land parcels could potentially be rezoned to RU1 to protect agricultural productivity into the long-term.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
		1.3 – Undertake a detailed investigation into other potential land that could potentially be rezoned to protect key agricultural lands, to provide additional flexibility to rural land uses, or to conserve areas of high environmental value.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
		1.4 – Discuss with DPI, and other agencies as may be applicable, the outcomes of the above processes outlining the areas proposed to be rezoned and seeking to be actively informed of any updates to the agricultural land mapping undertaken by DPI (noting the exhibition of the State Significant Agricultural Land Map in late 2021).	Collaborate	DPI	Short-term
		1.5 – Seek to amend the Clarence Valley LEP 2011 through a Planning Proposal that rezones those identified land parcels and (subject to, and in conjunction with, Recommendation 2) amends the land use tables and zone objectives for the RU1 and RU2 zones, as well as C2 and C3 zones if applicable, to achieve the clear delineation between zones and the land to which they apply.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
2	Review land use permissibility in, and objectives of, rural land zones	2.1 – Considering the zone analysis provided in Appendix A of the Background Report, identify and consider permissibility of land uses and objectives within the RU1, RU2, C2 and C3 land use table of Clarence Valley LEP 2011.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
		2.2 – Discuss with DPI and BCD the outcomes of the above processes outlining the proposed changes, seeking their agreement and input prior to preparing a Planning Proposal as per Action 2.3 below.	Collaborate	DPI & DPE - BCD	Short-term
		2.3 – Seek to amend the Clarence Valley LEP 2011 through a Planning Proposal that amends the land use tables and zone objectives for the RU1, RU2, C2 and C3 zones, and (subject to, and in conjunction with Recommendation 1) that rezones those identified land parcels, to achieve the clear delineation between zones and the land to which they apply.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
3	Review planning controls applying to rural lands that have high environmental values, form part of strategically important biodiversity corridors and/or which have significant scenic values	3.1 – In conjunction with related actions of Council's LSPS, undertake an analysis that identifies all land captured in the RU1 and RU2 zone that is covered by coastal wetlands, conservation agreements, biodiversity offsets and similar environmental protections in perpetuity to identify those that meet appropriate environmental standards to justify rezoning to an appropriate conservation zone or inclusion in a new local provision.	Lead	N/A	Medium-term
		3.2 – Where such land is identified, establish a program (such as a recurring LEP amendment) to work with and encourage landowners to voluntarily enter into arrangements to facilitate rezoning or another form of LEP protection, such as a 'terrestrial biodiversity' and 'riparian land and watercourse' local provisions (including associated mapping), in line with the outcomes of Action 3.1.	Collaborate	Landowners	Medium-term
		3.3 – In conjunction with DPE – Biodiversity Conservation Division, community organisations such as Landcare groups and Environment Centres (and others as may be applicable), review mapping relating to biodiversity corridors and land of high environmental value (HEV) across the Clarence Valley (including key fish habitats), with a view to establishing those that may be justified for rezoning to a suitable conservation zone or inclusion in an additional local clause such as a 'terrestrial biodiversity' clause as above.	Collaborate	DPE - BCD	Medium-term
		3.4 – Where such land is identified, establish a program (such as a recurring LEP amendment) to encourage landowners to voluntarily enter into arrangements to facilitate rezoning (if required) in line with the outcomes of Action 3.3.	Collaborate	Landowners	Medium-term
		3.5 - Acknowledging the value residents and visitors place on scenic amenity and rural land as a cultural landscape, undertake scenic value and cultural land mapping to identify and provide appropriate controls to high value localities.	Lead	N/A	Long-term

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
4	Collaborate with State agencies and industry on opportunities to best protect agricultural activities adjacent to existing and proposed urban areas	4.1 – Identify existing and proposed residential land that adjoins RU1 or land mapped on the Far North Coast Farmland Map and, in conjunction with DPI, DPE and industry, explore long-term protection measures through the strategic land use planning process. Mechanisms may include a regional or sub-regional approach in the regional plan, a specific LEP clause and map, DCP controls including specific buffers, or other policy amendment.	Collaborate	Industry, DPI & DPE - Planning	Short-term
		4.2 – Seek to amend the Clarence Valley LEP 2011, Clarence Valley DCP 2011 or other policy as may be applicable, subject to the outcomes of Action 4.1, to achieve appropriate protection for important agricultural lands and activities.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
5	Review subdivision controls to facilitate agricultural production whilst minimising the establishment of new dwelling entitlements in the RU1 zone	5.1 – Investigate options for the establishment of a new or amended local clause (such as Clause 4.2 of the Clarence Valley LEP 2011) to assist in retaining agricultural production on land within the RU1 Primary Production zone. The intent of this new clause would be to allow a landowner to create a rural subdivision that does not result in the creation of an additional dwelling entitlement, but may extract an existing dwelling with appropriate setbacks from agricultural activities.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
		5.2 – Discuss with DPI, DPE and industry (notably the sugarcane industry) the option identified through the above process, seeking to reach consensus that may benefit the long-term retention of land within the RU1 zone for agricultural purposes.	Collaborate	Industry, DPI & DPE - Planning	Short-term
		5.3 – Prepare a Planning Proposal to establish a new clause or amend clause within the Clarence Valley LEP 2011 based on the outcomes of the above processes.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
6	Review LEP and/or DCP controls to include greater certainty and direction around expectations for buffers to and between agricultural activities	6.1 – Undertake a review of buffers associated with agricultural practices within Council's land use planning controls (LEP and DCP) with a view to including recommended best practice buffer guidance from DPI or other appropriate best practice, including whether such buffers may need to be modified for local conditions. <i>Note: This should be undertaken if the statewide review of buffer guidelines and associated controls recommended by the 2021 NSW Agricultural Commissioner's Report has not progressed by the medium-term.</i>	Lead	N/A	Medium-term
		6.2 – Pending the review at Action 6.1, utilise the <i>Buffer Zones to Reduce Land Use Conflict with Agriculture</i> Primefact (November 2018) developed by DPI as an interim measure when assessing applications and planning proposals. Consider options for inclusion or reference to this document within Council's DCP.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
7	Reinforce existing DCP controls for protection of biodiversity and environmental outcomes through review of buffers and related provisions	7.1 – Undertake a review of buffers contained within the Clarence Valley DCP with respect to 'controls for biodiversity and habitat protection', including key fish habitats, waterways and National Parks, ensuring they continue to meet appropriate best practice standards.	Lead	N/A	Medium-term
		7.2 – Seek to amend the Clarence Valley 'Rural Zones' DCP and the 'Development in Environmental Protection, Recreation and Special Use Zones' DCP to reflect the outcomes of the review at Action 7.1.	Lead	N/A	Medium-term

Focus Area 2 – Elevate the importance of rural lands within Council and the community

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
8	Establish a 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' within Council	8.1 – Liaise with other local government entities in the region to confirm the necessary attributes of current similar current roles (for example at Tweed Valley and Byron Shires), lessons learnt in establishment of the position, and confirm the structure for a Sustainable Agricultural Officer (or similar titled) position.	Collaborate	Adjoining Councils	Immediate
		8.2 – Based on the above discussions, develop a position description for a position based on internal needs with the overarching objective of facilitating the effective delivery of this Rural Lands Strategy, and more broadly, collaborative working opportunities across a range of industry, government and not-for-profit organisations. Core goals of the role could include, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve productivity and sustainable land use practices on rural lands ○ Improve communication, engagement and trust with all rural landholders ○ Ensure agriculture remains a major economic contributor to the Clarence Valley Gross Regional Product (GRP) and the Northern Rivers more broadly ○ Engage landholders and the public more broadly on the benefits of rural land productivity. 	Lead	N/A	Immediate
		8.3 – If required, seek funding through the State or Federal government to assist in funding of the 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' position.	Lead	N/A	As required
9	Update, maintain and promote Council's website and associated data as a key resource for rural lands	9.1 – Develop a 'sustainable agricultural' section of Council's website that (based on similar pages of others in the region, e.g. Tweed Valley and Byron Shire) provides a hub of resources and program information for rural landowners. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An overview of rural lands in the Clarence Valley ○ A resource base / toolkit of other key resources and contacts such as DPI, LLS, Young Farmers and Clarence Valley Food Inc ○ Key agricultural projects in the Clarence Valley ○ Promotion of the benefits of, and how to undertake, regenerative agricultural practices, carbon farming and the other opportunities as required. ○ Links to other Council resources such as the Climate Change Policy and Council's Disaster Dashboard. 	Support / Lead	N/A	Short-term
		9.2 – Maintain the Clarence Valley Council Disaster Dashboard as a key source of information for landowners on natural hazards, biosecurity and others matters with links to important resources for managing risks.	Lead	N/A	Ongoing
		9.3 – In conjunction with the RFS (and other agencies where applicable), revise bushfire prone land mapping as envisaged by Council's LSPS Action 17.2.	Collaborate	RFS	As required
		9.4 – Maintain, and update as required, flood information on Council's public mapping programs.	Lead	N/A	Ongoing
		9.5 – Continue to provide plain English and easily accessible resources on Council's website in relation to flood risks in the Clarence Valley.	Lead	N/A	Ongoing
		9.6 – Continue to provide plain English and easily accessible resources on Council's website, conjunction with DPE – BCD and LLS, in relation to vegetation clearing requirements.	Lead	DPE – BCD & LLS	Ongoing

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
10	Collaborate with First Nations communities in caring for country and planning for, and use of, rural lands	10.1 – Progress and implement Action 2.3 of Council's LSPS relating to collaboration with Traditional Owners, Local Aboriginal Land Council's as well as State agencies to better utilise, manage and develop Aboriginal landholdings in the interest of the First Nations peoples.	Collaborate	Traditional Owners, LALCs & State Agencies	Immediate
		10.2 – Finalise the Yaegl Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Values Mapping project to inform future planning on associated rural lands.	Collaborate	Yaegl Traditional Owners	Immediate
		10.3 – Work with other First Nations peoples to facilitate cultural heritage values mapping over other rural land areas as funding becomes available.	Collaborate	Traditional Owners & LALCs	Ongoing
		10.4 - Work with other First Nations peoples and RFS to integrate indigenous bushfire management knowledge into strategic bushfire planning processes – cultural burns etc., as envisaged by Action 13.6 of Council's LSPS.	Collaborate	Traditional Owners, LALCs & RFS	As required
		10.5 – In collaboration with Traditional Owners, Local Aboriginal Land Council's as well as State agencies, consider options and appropriateness of a new local provision to identify assessment considerations and to map sites of cultural significance with the Clarence Valley.	Collaborate	Traditional Owners, LALCs & State Agencies	As required
11	Undertake forward planning for impacts of climate change on rural lands, including emergency response to natural disasters	11.1 – Based on Council's Physical Climate Risk Assessment (2021) and any further updated modelling of anticipated impacts of climate change across the LGA more broadly, identify (in collaboration with NSW Government and industry) rural land that may be significantly impacted by sea level rise or other climate change related impacts.	Lead / Collaborate	Industry, DPI & DPE - Planning	Medium-term
		11.2 – In collaboration with government, industry, landholders and not-for-profits such as Landcare and conservation groups, develop a "Rural Lands Climate Change Adaptation Plan" or similar program-based approach that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consults and engages with those industries that have agricultural land impacted by projected sea level rise (e.g. sugarcane / aquaculture) or other identified climate change impacts ○ Establishes short, medium and long-term needs, including associated costs ○ Identified options for funding and basis for grant funding submissions ○ Develops succession planning or mitigation measures to adapt to Climate Change implications ○ Ensures consistency with Council's Climate Change Policy 2019 	Lead / Collaborate	Industry, DPI, DPE – Planning & Not-For-Profits	Medium-term (Implementation into the long-term)
		11.3 – Implement the outcomes of Action 11.2 across the period of this Strategy.	Lead / Collaborate	Industry, DPI & DPE - Planning	Ongoing
12	Collaboratively identify conflict inducing practices and opportunities to work with industry and agencies to reduce these	12.1 – Council review internal records and identify key localities or uses from which reported land use conflict typically occurs.	Lead	N/A	Short-term
		12.2 – Work with State agencies (including DPE – Planning, DPE – BCD, DPI and LLS) to establish a plan for undertaking targeted engagement with rural and adjoining urban landholders to seek to address options for reducing ongoing concerns.	Collaborate	DPE – Planning, DPE – BCD, DPI & LLS	Short-term
		12.3 – Work with State agencies (including DPE – Planning, DPE – BCD, DPI and LLS), industry and rural land holders adjoining urban land to implement land use conflict reduction opportunities as identified through the above planning.	Collaborate	DPE – Planning, DPE – BCD, DPI, LLS, Industry & Landowners	Short-term
		12.4 – Through Council's 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' (or similar), work with State agencies (including DPE – Planning, DPE – BCD, DPI and LLS), and industry to undertake broader communication and education to normalise standard farming practices so that expectations of non-farming rural land holders can be consistently considered. <i>Note: See the 2021 NSW Agricultural Commissioner's Report with respect to the development and communication to interested parties on what operating practices associated with land use conflict are 'normal' and should be acceptable.</i>	Collaborate	DPE – Planning, DPE – BCD, DPI, LLS, Industry & Landowners	Ongoing

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
13	In conjunction with LLS and DPE - BCD, continue to work with land holders to facilitate education and understanding of vegetation management requirements	13.1 – In conjunction with LLS and DPE - BCD, undertake an analysis to confirm high risk areas or land use types with propensity for vegetation clearing. This may include new land holders and intensive plant agriculture based on anecdotal evidence.	Collaborate	LLS & DPE - BCD	Medium-term
		13.2 - Through Council's Natural Resource Management Team, work with LLS and DPE - BCD to establish a program that works with rural landholders identified through the above process to provide education and compliance with vegetation clearing requirements.	Collaborate	LLS & DPE - BCD	Medium-term
		13.3 – Continue to work with partner agencies to educate landholders as to their general biosecurity obligations as outlined in the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> , particularly in relation to weed control.	Collaborate	LLS and DPI	Ongoing
14	Develop 'Emerging Industry Strategies' to further develop and lead Council's proactive involvement in key growth sectors	<p>14.1 – Identify and develop 'Emerging Industry Strategies' that incorporate economic development and agricultural objectives for the area across key growth or opportunity sectors. Example sectors may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forestry (both FCNSW and PNF) and associated flow-on industries ○ Macadamia nuts ○ Protected cropping ○ Apiary activities (including bee keeping) ○ Others as may arise through the life of this Rural Lands Strategy (e.g. renewable energy, food manufacturing, established sector value adding opportunities and food security planning for the region during natural disasters) <p>Each Strategy should incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The active involvement of, or lead by, Council's 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' (or similar) ○ Establishment of Council's position and involvement with respect to facilitating the growth of the industry ○ Industry and stakeholder consultation and co-operation ○ Review of the trends and opportunities for further growth of the industry ○ Establishment of short, medium and long-term directions ○ Identification of options for funding and basis for grant funding submissions ○ Details on education initiatives for landowners on the relevant environmental legislation 	Lead / Collaborate	Industry & DPI	As required (Implementation into the long-term)
		14.2 – In conjunction with the Action 14.1 above, and in conjunction with DPI, LLS and Protected Cropping Australia, investigate the potential for the development of a specialised precinct or zone to facilitate long-term growth of intensive agriculture.	Collaborate	Industry, DPI, LLS & Protected Cropping Australia	Medium-term (Implementation into the long-term)
		14.3 – Based on outcomes of the above, and as part of an Emerging Industry Strategy where applicable, implement as funding and resourcing become available.	Collaborate	Industry, DPI, LLS & Protected Cropping Australia	Medium-term

Focus Area 3 – Engage with government and Industry to leverage support

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
15	Continue to review, collaborate and, where required, maintain consistency with evolving State legislation and policies	15.1 – Through Council's 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' and Strategic Planning Team, stay updated with the current State agricultural policies and directions and identify the implications for rural lands in the Clarence Valley. Examples in the short-term include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcomes and implementation of the NSW Agricultural Commissioner's land use planning review process Review and renewal of the North Coast Regional Strategy documents Changes in land use planning terminology, including the potential for new land use definitions for agriculture and agri-tourism related uses. 	Lead	DPI & DPE - Planning	Ongoing
		15.2 – As required, advocate for changes to proposed reforms to ensure the ongoing integrity of rural lands in the Clarence Valley, or where agreed, align and integrate relevant policies, directions and outcomes from the State Government within the Clarence Valley LEP and DCP and other Council processes and policies such as the Climate Change Policy.	Advocate / Support	DPI & DPE - Planning	Ongoing
		15.3 – Participate in training and education programs aimed at council planners or Councillors if and where available. See for example, Recommendation 11 of the NSW Agricultural Commissioner's report.	Collaborate	DPI & DPE - Planning	As required
16	Engage with government to seek options to reduce delays and costs associated with drainage, floodplain maintenance and approval requirements	16.1 – Continue discussions with the State Government to seek additional funding provision to improve drainage and floodplain maintenance that has been in decline in relative terms over the last 30 years.	Advocate	State Agencies	Immediate
		16.2 – Work with State agencies to review and develop sustainable funding plans or programs for rural floodplain infrastructure improvements that reflect best practice outcomes (e.g. outcomes of the <i>Marine Estate Management Strategy Coastal Floodplain Project</i> once available) for agricultural lands and environmental considerations.	Collaborate	State Agencies	Short-term
		16.3 - Continue to work with relevant agencies to identify and improve approval processes for floodplain maintenance to avoid time delays and uncertainty in investment and industry progression.	Collaborate	State Agencies	Ongoing
17	Facilitate access to a range of programs, training and education opportunities for rural landowners and the broader public	17.1 – Through Council's 'Sustainable Agricultural Officer' (or similar), and others as applicable to the program topic, seek to develop or create participation in programs that target Clarence Valley rural landholders and the broader public in areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promoting the benefits of productively utilising rural land to ensure maximum productivity from recognised farmland areas, including opportunities to break down barriers to entry for emerging and young farmers encouraging sustainable farming and production methods, including regenerative agriculture and related soils and land management techniques, including livestock access to waterways and minimising agricultural runoff building understanding and acknowledgement of biosecurity risks, with a particular focus on new land holders and small farmers raising awareness and building stronger understanding of the impacts of, and opportunities to respond to, climate change, including initiatives such as carbon farming raising awareness and a stronger understanding of natural hazards, preparedness, response and recovery within the context of rural lands promoting opportunities for technology enhancement of farming, e.g. facilitating opportunities with the NSW Government's Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund, Regional Digital Connectivity - Farms of the Future program as identified in the <i>Clarence Valley Economic Recovery Strategy (2021)</i> identifying and promoting compatible diversification opportunities within agri-tourism and recreation on rural lands - including considerations for planning, such as access and natural hazards providing education on how to identify, avoid, mitigate and minimise common environmental impacts of agricultural activities Encouraging rural landowners whose land contains high environmental values to consider conservation programs such as those under the Biodiversity Conservation Trust 	Lead / collaborate	State Agencies, Industry & Not-For-Profits	Ongoing (Implementation into the long-term)

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
		<p>17.2 – Based on the above potential program target areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> staying informed on the current programs, training and education opportunities undertaken by State agencies, not-for-profits and industry groups and establish a mechanism (e.g. e-news, social media etc) to inform rural land holders in the Clarence Valley of these opportunities working with State agencies, not-for-profits and industry group to run programs, training and education opportunities specifically targeted at or including opportunities for Clarence Valley rural landholders providing funds (or seek funding through the State and Federal government or industry) to establish programs, training and education opportunities targeted at Clarence Valley rural landholders. 	Support	State Agencies, Industry & Not-For-Profits	Ongoing (Implementation into the long-term)
18	Strengthen opportunities for rural tourism and recreation compatible with the primary production potential, rural character and environmental capabilities of the land	<p>18.1 – With an emphasis on supporting / complementing agriculture, local food and healthy lifestyles, work with Destination NSW to develop a <i>Rural Lands Tourism Implementation Plan</i> to identify and establish a co-ordinated pathway for rural tourism opportunities in the Clarence Valley. The Plan may potentially include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> relevant actions and source direction from <i>The Clarence – River Way Master Plan II</i> development of food trails, farm gate enterprise and related on farm activities (e.g. tours and value-added produce) RV Hinterland Trail concept identified by the <i>Clarence Valley Economic Recovery Strategy (2021)</i> identification of opportunities for on-farm / eco-tourism and related accommodation identification of opportunities for development of other tourism attractions and associated infrastructure requirements connection and promotion of farmers markets and other avenues for access to locally grown produce 	Collaborate / Lead	Destination NSW & Destination North Coast NSW	Short-term
		<p>18.2 – Work with Destination North Coast NSW, and others as applicable, to identify and pursue funding opportunities for both Council and operator lead tourism events, infrastructure needs, and promotion related to the implementation of the <i>Rural Lands Tourism Implementation Plan</i></p>	Collaborate / Lead	As referenced	Ongoing
		<p>18.3 – Work with rural landowners to recognise and realise the potential for rural tourism opportunities on their land and the requirements for undertaking / implementing these opportunities</p>	Lead	N/A	Ongoing
		<p>18.4 – Maintain and update myclarencevalley.com ensuring that current and new rural tourism opportunities are actively promoted</p>	Lead	N/A	Ongoing
		<p>18.5 – In conjunction with Crown Lands, FCNSW and other public land managers where relevant, develop a <i>Rural Lands Recreation Implementation Plan</i> to identify and establish a co-ordinated pathway for rural recreational opportunities in the Clarence Valley.</p>	Collaborate / Lead	As referenced	Short-term
		<p>18.6 – Work with public land managers, and others as applicable, to identify and pursue funding opportunities for both Council and operator lead recreation events, infrastructure needs and promotion related to the implementation of the <i>Rural Lands Recreation Implementation Plan</i>.</p>	Collaborate / Lead	State Agencies	Ongoing
		<p>18.7 – Continue to promote active nature-based recreation and lifestyle opportunities on rural lands such as Bom Bom State Forest Mountain Bike Park and Clarence Valley Canoe and Kayak Trail.</p>	Support	N/A	Ongoing
19	Collaboratively work to ensure appropriate bushfire land management across the Clarence Valley	<p>19.1 – Collaborate with RFS, NPWS, Crown Lands, FCNSW and Timber NSW, to ensure the optimal management of bushfire prone land on public lands including preventative management measures such as low fuel zones and the provision of sufficient water sources and communicate these with landowners (including collaboration with First Nations peoples as identified under Recommendation 10).</p>	Collaborate	As referenced	Ongoing
		<p>19.2 – Collaborate with RFS, NPWS, DPI, Crown Lands and FCNSW to prepare Council bushfire emergency standard operating procedures including for issues such as activating emergency water supply points, bridge inspections, dangerous tree inspections and the like.</p>	Collaborate	As referenced	Short-term

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
20	Facilitate ongoing equitable access and use of water resources	20.1 – In conjunction with DPE – Water, DPI and NRAR, continue to monitor and respond to issues to ensure ongoing equitable access and use of water resources through water sharing strategies and other arrangements.	Support	DPE – Water, DPI & NRAR	Ongoing
		20.2 – Monitor the implementation of water harvesting changes and implications for drought resilience and consider in conjunction with the development of a Rural Lands Climate Change Adaptation Plan as identified in Recommendation 11.	Lead / Collaborate	DPE – Water, DPI & NRAR	Short-term
21	Engage with government to remove existing, and prohibit new, mining leases or exploration licences	21.1 – In line with Council resolutions, continue to lobby government to remove existing and prohibit new mining or exploratory licences on Clarence Valley Rural Lands due to impacts on farming and the environment.	Advocate	N/A	Ongoing

Focus Area 4 – Develop supporting infrastructure that enables opportunities and builds resilience

No.	Recommendation	Action	Council's Role	Partner	Timing
22	Consider opportunities for, and where viable develop an 'Agri-Hub' to benefit a wide spectrum of rural activities	22.1 – Develop a business case for a carefully planned, shared infrastructure arrangement, such as 'Agri-Hub', potentially in collaboration with industry and State agencies, that can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ create of a supportive and collaborative network of producers, suppliers and consumers ○ showcase agriculture and rural lands activities, through opportunities such as café, restaurant, marketplace and related retail spaces ○ act as an incubator to agricultural activities with links to food and agri-tourism ○ provide spaces for training, education and events that celebrate localised food production ○ ensure the delivery of positive agricultural training and program delivery opportunities ○ reduce the cost of entry to agricultural production through collaborative and supportive networks ○ provide for shared access and storage for production, processing and related equipment (e.g. mobile abattoir and processing facility). 	Lead / Collaborate	Industry / State agencies	Short-term
		22.2 – Based on or in conjunction with Action 22.1, identify potential funding sources and project location for the facility, including an operating model to ensure financial sustainability by leveraging commercial opportunities that related to rural lands and subsidise other aspects of the facility operations. This action should be undertaken collaboratively with industry and State agencies.	Lead / Collaborate	Industry / State agencies	Short-term
		22.3 – Undertake implementation pending demonstrated business case and funding availability.	Lead / Collaborate	Industry / State agencies	As required
23	Establish a basis for industry specific and shared infrastructure opportunities	23.1 – Based on outcomes of 'Emerging Industry Strategies' (refer Recommendation 14) or other studies and plans as applicable, develop and maintain a co-ordinated approach to rural lands infrastructure opportunities and needs to assist in industry specific and/or broader rural lands productivity. Examples may include, and as identified by the <i>Clarence Valley Economic Recovery Strategy (2021)</i> , sector-specific supply chain analysis for various sectors, and overarching analysis for the broader Clarence and North Coast areas (see further in Recommendation 24).	Lead	Industry & DPI	Ongoing
		23.2 – Work with State agencies to leverage funding opportunities for co-ordinated implementation as opportunities arise.	Lead / Collaborate	State agencies	As required
24	Collaboratively undertake a supply chain analysis to identify and establish direction for improving transportation and logistics in the short and long-term	24.1 – Identify funding partners to assist with the collaborative development of a supply chain analysis (and in particular, a road network strategy) to identify opportunities to support existing and growth industries with particular reference to local food production and forestry activities. Other examples may include, as identified by the <i>Clarence Valley Economic Recovery Strategy (2021)</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ sector-specific supply chain analyses for cattle, fishing / aquaculture and macadamias ○ ongoing resilience and feasibility of the sugar supply chain ○ completing Armidale Road bridge replacements and associated works to increase regional resilience, connectivity and productivity ○ a detailed North Coast supply chain analysis to identify potential high-yield industries that could be relocated in the Clarence to improve productivity and local opportunities 	Lead / Collaborate	Industry, DPI & TFNSW	Medium-term (Implementation into the long-term)
		24.2 – Ensure the analysis as identified in 24.1 establishes clear priorities and costs of required improvements, and establishes a process for implementation to be undertaken as funding enables.	Lead / Support	N/A	Ongoing

