

# CLARENCE VALLEY

## Employment Land Strategy



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# Executive Summary

**The Clarence Valley is a community of opportunity. Clarence Valley Council is open to new ideas and investment that helps grow our economy while protecting our stunning natural environment. The Clarence Valley is in a strategic location with enviable accessibility, natural assets and lifestyle. Council's collaborative approach to supporting business and community aspirations means that we are primed for future prosperity.**

This Employment Land Strategy (the Strategy) provides an evidence base to progress with actions to better support local business, grow the economy and help achieve Council's vision for the Clarence Valley to be a community of opportunity - aligning with our Community Strategic Plan and the Clarence Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy.

This Strategy, and the supporting Background Study prepared by Consultants HillPDA, examine the issues and opportunities associated with employment land in the Clarence Valley and surrounding local government areas. The strategy and its actions will also inform decision-making for future land use and the types of investment we want to attract to the Clarence and direct the prioritisation of Council resources.

In particular, this Strategy:

- identifies a need for **more Industrial zoned land with larger lot sizes**
  - land constraints for other council areas on the North Coast, particularly our neighbour Coffs Harbour LGA along with constraints in Lismore and other areas to the north of us, mean that land in the Clarence Valley is becoming increasingly attractive. Access to the new Pacific Motorway, Big River Way and the Gwydir Highway and in flood free locations makes the Clarence an appealing opportunity
  - the Clarence Valley has reasonably affordable land and the range of actions in the Strategy provide ways to unlock that potential to provide more jobs along with sustainable and resilient economic growth.
- **highlights the importance of our 'Strategic Infrastructure'**, including:
  - growing a **Health Precinct around Grafton Base Hospital and the former gaol**
  - opportunities at and around **Clarence Valley Regional Airport** (which is flood-free)
  - leveraging accessibility, particularly from the **new Pacific Motorway**
  - expanding on **Marine-based opportunities** - Goodwood Island, Harwood Marine precinct and other potentially suitable locations in the lower Clarence
  - progressing investigations for a distribution centre or **intermodal facility** and a focus on 'last mile' freight and logistics.
- Further endorses efforts to **make Grafton a successful regional city**
  - the Strategy details future retail, business and commercial trends, and while aspects are changing (online sales, working from home, COVID impacts etc.), 'bricks and mortar' commerce will continue to be critically important
  - it is vital that our commercial centres are attractive and inviting places and this reinforces the need to progress the recently adopted Grafton CBD Plan and **supports recent 'placemaking' initiatives for Yamba, Maclean, Ulmarra and South Grafton.**
- Highlights changes and opportunities to **support existing and emerging industries**, particularly:
  - to promote the Clarence Valley's **agri-food** brand and support value adding industries
  - to **attract skilled workers** to the region and recognising the regional shift of people moving from cities to desirable regional locations, working from home, and interest in localism and sustainability
  - **creative industries, new technology, supporting the arts** community, utilise existing space and resources, promote 'tech friendly' approach
  - maintain and improve strategic partnerships with the construction, manufacturing and trade industries.
- Highlights **opportunities for Council to take a leadership or 'concierge' role** to support business and grow a sustainable local economy.

The Strategy outlines a number of recommended actions targeted at Council, as well as actions that require collaboration with other stakeholders. Some of the recommended actions are underway within Council and the Strategy reinforces the need to progress or realign our efforts. This includes reforms to development contributions, evolving improvements to the planning framework (our Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plans) and a continued focus on community and industry engagement.

Council and other stakeholders will continue to identify opportunities to improve housing choice and ensure accommodation availability for potential workers to support growing industries and make a positive contribution to the Clarence Valley.

## The role of the Clarence Valley in the North Coast

The Clarence Valley is the largest local government area (LGA) on the east coast of NSW, by area. As industrial and business land supply around the North Coast becomes scarcer as a result of constraints in other LGAs, such as flood prone land, biodiversity and environmental constraints, important agricultural land, topography, residential development and many others, the Clarence Valley will have an increasingly important role in the supply of industrial and business land.

Engagement with industry indicates that there is an existing demand for larger lots for industrial development. Analysis as part of the strategy also indicates that the relatively affordable land, compared to other areas, makes the Clarence Valley an attractive proposition, with strong links north, south and west from the Clarence LGA. The Table below illustrates the regional employment and industry statistics for comparison.

**Regional Employment and Industry Statistics (refer Table 1 of the Employment Land Background Study)**

	Coffs Harbour	Lismore	Clarence Valley	Ballina	Byron	Richmond
<b>Zoned Employment Land (ha)</b>	*411	*516	*1,458.8	*384	*126	*403
<b>Undeveloped Employment Land (ha)</b>	*73	*116	*106.8	*30.1	*35	*135.4
<b>Gross Regional Product (\$m, June 2020)</b>	\$3,752	\$2,443	\$2,339	\$2,193	\$1,846	\$998
<b>Population (est. June 2020)</b>	77,648	43,6567	51,730	45,217	35,773	23,490
<b>Annual Population growth rate (2020)</b>	0.5%	0.05%	0.14%	1.33%	1.99%	0.12%
<b>Unemployment (June 2021)</b>	5.6%	5.5%	4.7%	3.6%	6.0%	5.8%

Source: All statistics sourced from Profile.id, with additional sources, including: Byron Shire Business and Industrial Lands Strategy (2020); Coffs Harbour Local Growth Management Strategy (2020); Lismore Growth Management Strategy (2015); North Coast Employment Land Review (2015); HillPDA Audit (2021)

\* Note that some land may have constraints that prevent it from being fully developed (e.g. flood, topography, biodiversity, powerlines or other constraints).



# INTRODUCTION

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

**This Employment Land Strategy provides a framework to guide growth and development of employment lands and business to create job opportunities, economic activity and sustainable growth across the Clarence Valley.**

HillPDA was commissioned by Clarence Valley Council (Council) to undertake a review of employment lands within the Clarence Valley Local Government Area (LGA). This review includes an analysis of growth influencers, current land supply, capacity for growth, and a projection of the future floorspace/land requirements to accommodate additional growth to capitalise on the Clarence Valley's strategic location. Findings from that review are provided in a technical background report. This document provides a summary of key findings and presents strategies and actions to ensure a range of developable employment land is available to meet projected demand.

## 1.1 What are employment lands?

For this Employment Land Strategy, "employment land" comprises land zoned in the *Clarence Valley Local Environmental Plan 2011* (LEP) as:

- B1 – Neighbourhood Centre
- B2 – Local Core
- B3 – Commercial Core
- B5 – Business Development
- IN1 – General Industrial
- IN4 – Working Waterfront
- SP1 – Special Activities
- SP2 – Infrastructure
- SP3 – Tourist
- W3 – Working Waterways.

Employment lands can be located in commercial centres, industrial precincts, and special use zones.

**Commercial centres** can be recognised as Clarence Valley's cities, towns, and villages. They are predominantly comprised of land zoned B1 Neighbourhood Centre, B2 Local Centre and B3 Commercial Core zoned, and are typically occupied

by administrative, commercial, retail, personal and health services.

**Industrial precincts** are usually located on the periphery of the commercial centres, providing land for uses that may conflict with those uses that are within the commercial centres and residential areas, or require larger land lots. Industrial precincts typically provide support and logistics services to businesses throughout the North Coast and are comprised of land zoned B5 Business development, IN1 General Industrial and IN4 Working Waterfront.

**Special use zones** refer to land zoned SP1 Special Activities, SP2 Infrastructure, SP3 Tourist and W3 Working Waterways which are typically occupied by infrastructure, tourist health and water uses.

## 1.2 What is the purpose of an Employment Land Strategy?

This Employment Land Strategy will assist Clarence Valley Council to plan for future employment growth. The development of an employment land strategy (the Strategy) is a key component in preparing a new Local Growth Management Strategy. The Strategy is also needed as part of Action 11.1 of the Local Strategic Planning Statement which aims to align the planning framework (zoning and other regulatory tools for business and employment land) to help achieve ecologically sustainable development and implementation of Council's Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS). One of Council's objectives in preparing this strategy was:

*To develop strategies and actions to ensure a range of developable employment land is available to meet projected demand (presented in a separate document).*

# SOCIO ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

## 2.0 SOCIO ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

In 2020, the Clarence Valley LGA's Gross Regional Product was estimated at \$2.34 Billion, with opportunities to grow. In 2020, there was also an estimated 51,730 persons living in Clarence Valley, representing 13% of the North Coast's population (397,836 persons). Population growth over the next 21 years is forecast to be strong with around an additional 9,000 people expected to be living in the Clarence Valley. This would increase the resident population to around 60,000 persons by 2041.

Strong population growth typically has a corresponding demand for increased employment

opportunities. To maintain its current employment to population ratio, it is estimated that approximately 2,600 additional jobs would need to be created in the Clarence Valley over the 21 years to 2041.

Most of these jobs would be accommodated within Clarence Valley's employment precincts, highlighting the need to understand their status, land uses, capacity and the actions necessary to appropriately managing their growth and to capitalise on their strategic location.





## 2.1 Key socio-economic metrics

A snapshot of important socio-economic trends and metrics for the Clarence Valley is provided below.

### Local resident characteristics



#### Ageing population

Over the 2001-20 period, residents aged 60 years and over increased as a proportion of total population by 13% to 36%. Ageing of the population is likely to continue, with associated demand for aged care, health services and place making in the LGA.



#### Loss of prime working aged residents

Between 2001-2020 residents in the prime working age cohort of 15-49 years decreased in both total numbers (-3,088 persons) and as proportion of the population from 42% in 2001 to 34%. Growth in this age cohort has a corresponding demand for increased employment opportunities, such as those provided in Clarence Valley's employment precincts.



#### High self-containment rate

Of the around 17,500 employed residents in Clarence Valley, around 15,150 or 87% worked in the LGA (referred to as a self-containment rate), while 91% of employed residents worked within the North Coast. This implies that as the population increases the majority will seek employment within Clarence Valley



#### High population projections

Profile.id estimates Clarence Valley resident population will increase from around 51,775 in 2020 to 60,735 persons by 2041. This represents a growth of around 9,000 persons or an annual growth rate of about 0.76% over the 21-year period, more consistent with the north coast average of 0.86% over the past 19 years.



#### Demand for local jobs

Applying the 2016 labour force participation rate to the forecast number of residents over 15 years between 2020 and 2041, it is estimated that around 3,715 additional residents would be in the labour force. Of these, around 3,230 would seek employment in Clarence Valley. The LGAs employment land would provide a significant role in accommodating these jobs.

### Employment characteristics



#### Low employment growth

Over an 18-year period to 2019/20 total jobs generated in Clarence Valley increased by around 2,340 or 15%, reaching a total of around 18,220 jobs.

This represented an average annual compounded growth rate of 0.8% over the period which was around half the rate experienced across the North Coast (1.6%).



#### High productivity in industrial and commercial jobs

Although knowledge intensive and industrial sectors generated the lowest amount of employment, they had the two highest worker productivity rates at around \$121,879 and \$100,690 per worker, respectively. This implies that industries in these Business Industry Codes are generally more productive than other industries. This highlights that although they are not high employment generators, they significantly contribute to the overall economic growth and sustainability of the Clarence Valley economy.



#### High forecast employment growth

Employment would increase from around 18,220 jobs in 2020 to 22,225 by 2041. This represents an increase of around 4,000 jobs or 22% over the period in a high growth scenario.

## 2.2 A strategic location

The Clarence Valley is home to the Bundjalung, Gumbayngirr and Yaegl nations who have lived in this rich valley, enjoying food and natural resources for thousands of years. Since the mid 1800's, the Clarence Valley's wealth has relied on natural assets – rich alluvial soil, a great climate and demand for produce like timber, beef, milk, sugar and seafood as key economic drivers. Grafton and the Clarence Valley have been through many cycles of technological and structural economic change. More recently the key economic drivers include tourism, agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, forestry, marine manufacturing and logistics, along with business enabling activities such as construction, utilities and financial and professional services, along with internal 'population serving' industries including health, aged care, justice, retail and public administration. Clarence Valley LGA has a strategic location being about 600 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD and 300 kilometres south of the Brisbane CBD.



The new Pacific Motorway is transforming the ease with which people and goods can move around the North Coast region, and to south-east Queensland and beyond. The

shorter, safer drive to the Gold Coast and Brisbane places Clarence Valley's existing employment land and areas for investigation within a 12-hour drive of an estimated population of just under 13 million persons, representing just over half of Australia's population or 97% of New South Wales and Queensland's population in 2020. This highlights the strategic location and potential of the Clarence Valley's employment lands to provide for the storage, distribution and transportation of goods along the east coast. Other LGAs in the region are also planning to take advantage of this strategic location with the Richmond Valley Regional Job Precinct one example of the way in which suitable employment lands are seen as key to this.

Agriculture remains a dominant land use throughout the LGA, with 69% of land within the LGA being zoned for Rural (RU) land uses. Historically, established industries have been forestry, sugarcane, beef, dairy and fishing and aquaculture. Currently emerging industries include berries, macadamia nuts, as well as specialist food and vegetables. The continuing importance of this sector to the economic prosperity of the LGA is clear, with the value of agriculture, forestry and fishing growing from 26% in 2019/20 to 32.2% (or \$258.8million) of all exports, double the next nearest contributor.

The way First Nations people lived with the landscape, used fire, procured food and built an understanding of the local area needs to be acknowledged to help inform future decision-making. The health of a people and their community is reliant on a strong physical and emotional connection to place and this Strategy acknowledges a strong belief amongst Aboriginal people that if we care for country, it will care for us. Land use planning decisions about future employment lands, urban areas, infrastructure and other development, will stay with us for generations.

Thinking about multi-generational use and occupation of the Clarence (not just current economic or political cycles) and being open to a different world view when making decisions will have long term benefits for the sustainability and resilience of our communities. Conserving Aboriginal heritage and respecting the Aboriginal community’s right to determine how it is identified and managed, will preserve some of the world’s longest standing spiritual, historical, social and educational values. Council commits to work closer with the Clarence Valley’s First Nations People to improve the way we care for country and to improve the prospects and opportunities for Aboriginal people in the Clarence Valley. Employment lands covered by the Strategy may also be subject to native title rights and interests or be in close proximity to these areas. As such, consideration must also be given within the context of planning for employment lands, for its potential role in the provision of sustainable and meaningful employment and business opportunities, to Traditional Owners.

## 2.3 Market trends

Key market trends that will impact on the future of the employment lands in Clarence Valley LGA are summarised below.

**Table 1: Key market trends in industry**

Trend	Description	Implications
<b>Proximity to key transport routes</b>	The proximity of employment precincts to key transport routes has emerged as a key priority for industrial occupiers. Transport costs typically comprising a large share of an industrial businesses’ operational cost base, compared to its rental cost. An industrial business makes costs savings by locating themselves nearer to key infrastructure.	<b>Any new industrial land should be planned in locations that have strong access to motorway connections</b> and, if possible, rail freight connections. These connections should have multi- directional access intersections.
<b>Automation and technology advancements</b>	Industries associated with manufacturing and transport, warehousing and distribution are at the forefront of automation and technology advancements. This is forecast to cause a reduction in overall employment generated but will not necessarily translate into a reduction in the amount of floorspace or land required.	It is prudent to <b>appropriately plan for the future land-based needs of manufacturing industries even as their employment densities shift.</b> Increased automation may enable greater site utilisation with reduced parking demand and opportunity for multi- storey and high bay industrial types.
<b>e-commerce</b>	The rise of e-commerce has seen significant growth in the demand for freight and logistics industrial space in close proximity to customers, often referred to as “last mile” customer logistics.	Employment precincts that are ideal locations for last mile logistics services are close to population centres and have good access to major highways and motorways.
<b>Increasing demand for waste services</b>	Demand is growing for infrastructure for receiving and processing domestic, commercial and industrial waste.	There will be a need to <b>secure the long-term future for processing and disposal of waste.</b> Attracting waste services and ancillary industries could be an important contributor to jobs growth.

Trend	Description	Implications
<b>Non-traditional uses within industrial areas</b>	Industrial precincts (IN1 and IN2) are increasingly being occupied by other non-traditional uses such as knowledge intensive businesses, large format retailers and factory outlets and education/health services. The presence of these uses can increase market rents and land values in industrial precincts.	<b>Permitted uses in industrial areas should be limited to those that require separation from sensitive receivers.</b> Delivering an appropriate supply of B5 Business Development and B7 Business Park zoned land can reduce the pressure on IN1, IN2 and IN3 zoned industrial land. This then preserves the industrial areas for uses that require greater separation from sensitive receivers.

**Table 2: Key commercial trends**

Trend	Description	Implications
<b>Traditional retail is evolving</b>	<b>The COVID-19 pandemic</b> has significantly disrupted the physical retailing paradigm globally and nationally. It has dramatically increased the adoption and use of online platforms, with many retailers moving towards a more digitalised business model.	<b>There may be a potential reduction in demand for brick-and-mortar stores.</b> Store networks may also be reduced as retailers may opt to consolidate their physical assets rather than expand (since one physical store is able to service a significantly wider catchment through its online platform).
<b>Retail as entertainment</b>	To compete with the <b>online shopping</b> experience, brick-and-mortar stores became increasingly more experiential over the last decade. Retailers increasingly focused on curating immersive in-store experiences to drive foot fall and in-store sales. This trend is expected to continue in the post-COVID era, in response to the COVID-induced rise of online shopping.	<b>Shopping centres and strip retailing may benefit from integrating entertainment uses with their retail uses.</b> Pending on the type of entertainment and leisure anchor, the integration of leisure anchors at centres may have implications on centre design, floorspace requirements of centres and the types of permissible uses on commercial zones.
<b>Growth in localism</b>	The COVID-19 pandemic has seen <b>retail spending</b> being redirected from the city centres to the outer suburbs and regional areas and greater interest in supporting local businesses.	<b>Remote working due to the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to encourage residents to shop closer to where they live,</b> with smaller local and neighbourhood centres benefiting at the expense of CBD and major town centre retailers.
<b>New Format supermarkets</b>	The demand for <b>larger format retail space</b> and other new format supermarkets in smaller centres is growing. This trend would see an increase in proposals seeking to develop supermarkets of around 1,000sqm to 1,500sqm in smaller retail centres where previously smaller supermarkets or convenience stores may have prevailed.	Consideration should be given to restricting supermarkets to commercial centres to reduce out of centre retailing impacts. Consideration should be given to effects on the retail hierarchy before approving any new supermarket developments.

Trend	Description	Implications
<b>Bulky Good retailing</b>	The continuing high level of demand for floorspace from <b>bulky goods operators</b> (and other retailers such as supermarkets) will lead to continued pressure to develop on out-of-centre industrial and employment sites, given the constraints of in-centre development.	<b>Where insufficient land is available to meet demand in centres over the longer term, consider identifying additional land within centres</b> (e.g. council car parks or additional levels above existing shopping centres) to facilitate new retail development.
<b>Eating experiences</b>	The rise of <b>café culture</b> and increased food awareness, the eating experience has become increasingly important. Customers seek an experience that is not just about the food but also the environment they eat in, creating the need for designing venues that also enhance and excite a customer’s sense of touch, smell.	<b>Effective integration and encouragement of indoor-outdoor dining opportunities can improv place and experience.</b> Outdoor dining has implications for the physical layouts of precincts, including a need for and a focus on urban amenity including elements street furniture and ensuring pedestrian safety.





# EMPLOYMENT LAND SUPPLY

## 3.0 EMPLOYMENT LAND SUPPLY

### 3.1 Industrial land

Of the 558 hectares of zoned employment land within Clarence Valley, the majority (481.2 hectares or 86%) is zoned IN1 - General Industrial with a further 47.5 hectares or 9% of land stocks being zoned IN4 - Working Waterfront (largely within Yamba and Iluka). The remaining 29.7 hectares or 5% was zoned B5 - Business Development. These areas are concentrated in Grafton and South Grafton.

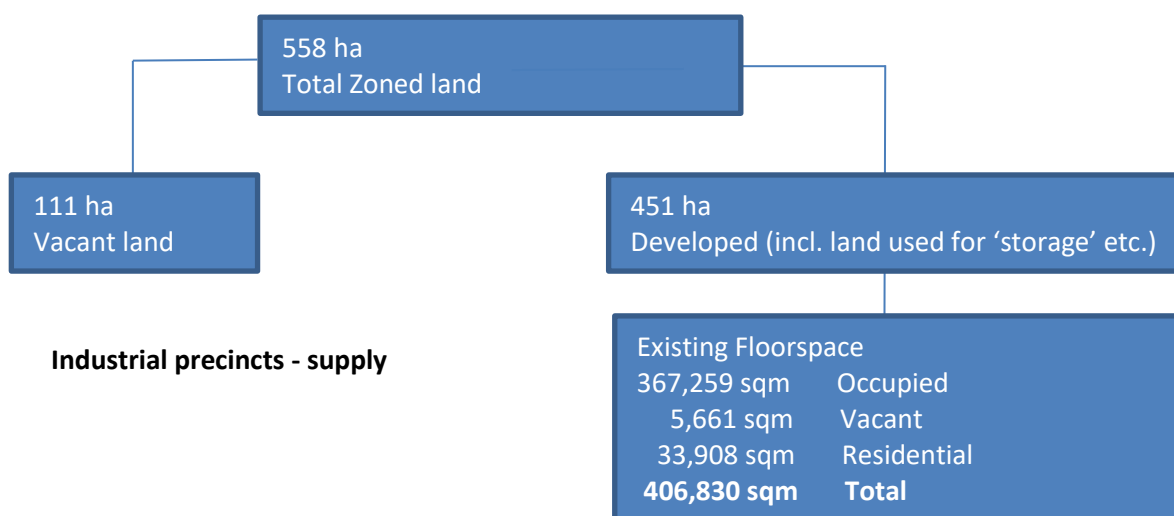
A detailed land use audit of each employment precinct in the Clarence Valley was completed in November 2021. The audit found that the 16 precincts contained a combined 406,830sqm of employment and residential space. Of this total floorspace around 372,980sqm or 92% was employment-related while the remaining 33,908sqm or 8% was residential.

The largest employment precinct, by total employment floorspace, was South Grafton Industrial with a total of almost 173,293sqm or 46% of the total employment floorspace. This was followed by Koolkhan with almost 63,200sqm or 17% of total space, Yamba industrial with 35,374qm or 9%, and North Grafton Industrial with a total of 34,100sqm or 8% of all employment space across the 16 centres.

A capacity gap assessment has been completed for the Clarence Valley LGA. Clarence Valley is projected to require a total of between 21 and 44 hectares of appropriately zoned industrial land to accommodate its forecast floorspace demand. Currently, Clarence Valley LGA contains approximately 111 hectares of land that is zoned for industrial purposes and is currently identified as being vacant land. However, the suitability of that land for development is mixed, with some land being constrained.

HillPDA undertook a high-level constraints assessment to better understand the amount of vacant land that is unconstrained and considered available for development. This assessment excluded land which was either flood prone, not serviced by water or sewer services, powerlines, environmentally sensitive or its typography is unsuitable for industrial development.

This assessment found that of the 111 hectares of vacant land, around 56 hectares or 50% was not constrained and considered available for development. The amount of constrained and non-constrained vacant land stocks for each employment zone is documented in the background report.



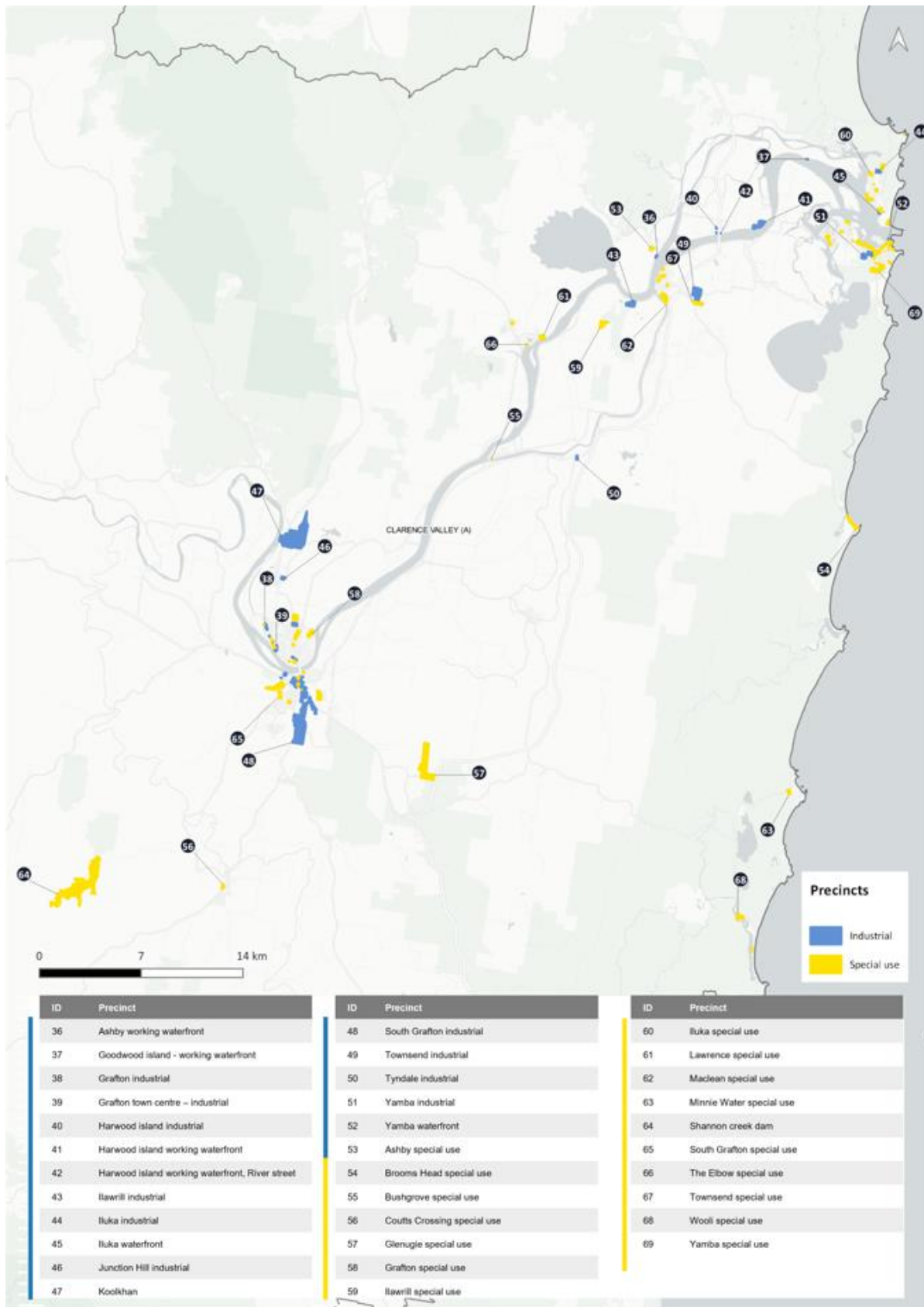


Figure 1: Industrial precincts



### 3.2 Commercial centres

In 2021, there were 35 commercial centres located within Clarence Valley LGA. Combined, these precincts contained approximately 82.6 hectares of employment zoned land.

The largest centre by zoned land is Grafton Town Centre with around 26.8 hectares or 32% of land stocks. This centre forms the primary regional administrative, retail, leisure and employment centre within the LGA and surrounds.

The second largest centre by land area is Yamba, with a cumulative 18.1 hectares or 22% of total commercial land across four precincts (Yamba village, Yamba town centre, Yamba neighbourhood centre and Yamba Plaza). Yamba village is the primary shopping and tourism area, including dining, shopping and other services.

Summarising the results of the floorspace audit (refer to Appendix B audit methodology) it was found that the 35 commercial centres provide a total of around 305,830sqm of floorspace. Of this, around 227,638sqm or 74% was occupied employment space, 65,780sqm or 22% was residential related and 12,413sqm or 4% was vacant space/storage.

Of the total occupied floorspace (excluding residential), the largest portion was related to commercial uses (e.g. offices and consulting suites) comprising 60,747sqm or 24% of the total occupied floorspace. The next largest groups were specialty non-food retail with 54,155sqm or 21%, specialty food retail with around 37,158sqm or 15%, and

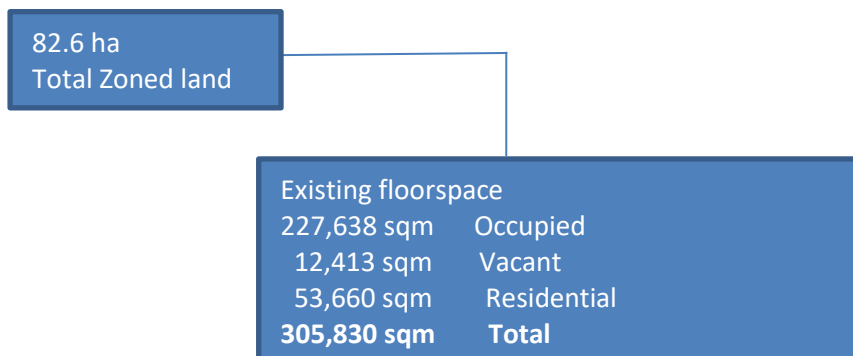
community uses with around 24,118sqm or 10% of occupied floorspace.



Under the redevelopment scenario, there is sufficient residual capacity across the LGA of between 119,870sqm to 154,580sqm. Compared to the vacant capacity scenario, there is additional capacity in most centres, with most having sufficient capacity to accommodate the projected demand in floorspace. The exception to this is the three neighbourhood centres of Angourie, South Grafton (Federation St) and Minnie Water and the Grafton and Yamba town centres under the high demand scenario. The shortfall in floorspace for these centres is considered minimal and would be redirected into nearby centres or achieved through intensification of development on key sites.

This is the more probable capacity scenario and, as such, indicates that there is sufficient capacity across the LGA and each centre to accommodate the projected demand.

#### Commercial precincts – Supply



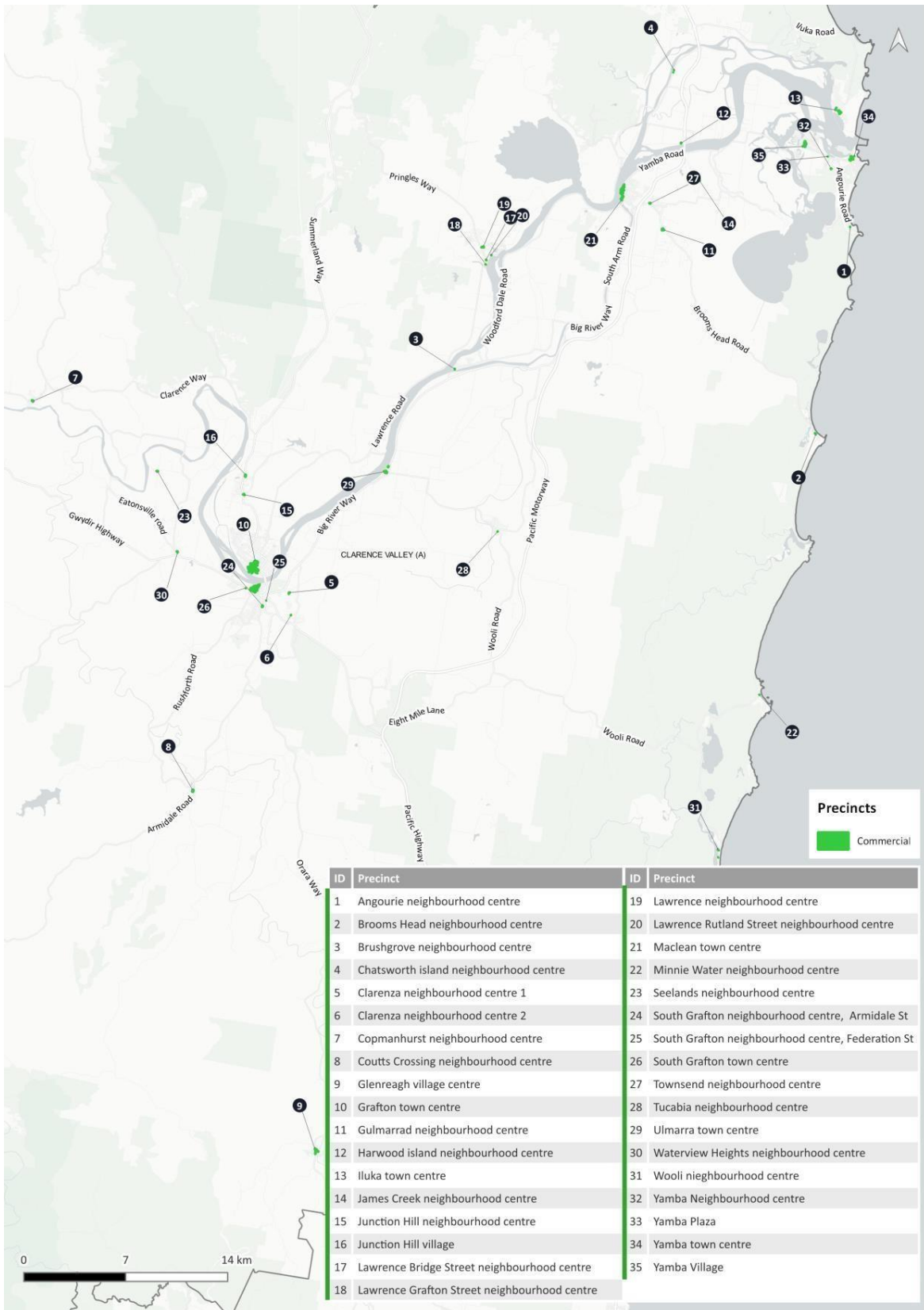


Figure 2: Commercial precincts



# EMPLOYMENT LAND STRATEGY

POST OFFICE HOTEL

## 4.0 EMPLOYMENT LAND STRATEGY

### 4.1 Strategic directions

This strategy envisages that employment in Clarence Valley will continue to grow and diversify. Planning for growth to 2041 will require planning for a supply of employment land to serve the growing LGA population and capitalise on the highly accessible location by providing opportunities for regional and inter-regional businesses. By providing appropriate zoned and services land, Council can support growth in investment and jobs.

The goals of this strategy are to:

- Support sustainable and resilient businesses and jobs growth
- Leverage the strengths of the Clarence Valley as a place to do business
- Support ongoing revitalisation of commercial centres and improve the character, amenity and sustainability of the Clarence.

#### 4.1.1 Role of Council in employment lands

The Clarence Valley already offers diverse employment opportunities and makes a valuable contribution to the regional and state economies. As the LGA grows, the number of jobs need to keep pace with population growth. Investment by businesses and industries may generate population growth, by attracting a skilled workforce to the LGA. Positioning the LGA to attract investment and growth can benefit the local economy.

The wellbeing of Clarence Valley’s residents depends on having a thriving and resilient economy with a diverse range of businesses, industries and jobs. Table 3 indicates some of the ways that Council can influence employment outcomes and economic growth.

**Table 3: Role of Council in employment lands**

Lever	Council role
Planning framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manage land use zoning to provide a sufficient long-term supply of employment land that is able to meet the needs of industry and businesses.</li> <li>● Provide land use permissibility that permits industry and business to grow, innovate and evolve.</li> <li>● Provide land use permissibility that allows agglomeration of employment uses and development of high-quality places where people work with compatible supporting uses.</li> <li>● Align local planning policies with regional strategic plans and local employment needs.</li> </ul>
Promotion and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic development work is aligned with the need of businesses and industries and is reflected in the planning framework.</li> <li>● Economic development work promotes the LGA to industries and businesses that may benefit from the LGA’s strategic location.</li> <li>● Tourism promotion reflects local environmental and cultural assets and is supported by a planning framework that facilitates tourism development.</li> <li>● Promotion and branding of the LGA attracts new industries and businesses.</li> </ul>
Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Investment in local infrastructure aims to capture opportunities created by investment in regional infrastructure</li> <li>● Placemaking, public realm improvements, improved roads, public transport, and pedestrian and cycling connectivity increase the attractiveness of employment precincts and centres.</li> </ul>

#### 4.1.2 Employment planning principles

Council will consider future development applications and planning proposals against the following employment planning principles:



##### Jobs growth:

Development contributes to a sustainable long-term economy through:

- Increasing the number of competing businesses
- Providing opportunities to cluster and agglomerate
- Diversifying the types of industries, businesses and land uses while supporting existing business



##### Infrastructure:

Development should be supported by infrastructure such as:

- Reliable road, rail and active (walking, cycling etc) transport infrastructure and connections
- Water and wastewater services, sewerage and electricity
- Effective communications infrastructure (internet and phone service)
- Adequate car parking for customers and employees



##### Opportunities:

Development supports people and businesses by providing:

- Increased employment opportunities
- Opportunities for further education and up-skilling



##### Successful centres:

Retail centres provide a hub for commercial activity and community life by offering:

- A convenient service offering that is appropriate to the scale of centre
- High levels of amenity
- Places for people to interact as well as engaging with businesses.

## 4.2 Industrial land: strategic directions and actions

This section outlines a number of strategies and actions that Council may consider when planning for the future of employment lands in the Clarence Valley LGA.

### 4.2.1 Provide and manage an optimum supply of industrial land supply

Generally, the findings indicate that the Clarence Valley LGA has sufficient supply of zoned land for employment in most precincts. However, some precincts are projected to experience a deficit in supply. Further detail is provided below:

- **North and South Grafton** – There is a projected demand for up to an additional 23 ha of industrial land across the North and South Grafton industrial precincts by 2041. While North Grafton has no unconstrained vacant land, South Grafton contains about 24 ha, with theoretical capacity to cater for demand from both areas. The precincts offer a range of advantages, particularly their excellent road and rail connections to Brisbane and Sydney. The precinct services a large catchment extending to nearby Copmanhurst, Ulmarra and Nymboida. These

employment precincts will likely become more attractive as industrial land in Coffs Harbour is absorbed.

- **Yamba** – There is projected demand for up to an additional 6 ha of industrial land in Yamba, assuming the development of West Yamba. Future additional demand will be catered for through development of the southern industrial zone (11 ha), which is under construction. This indicates that current development will be sufficient to meet Yamba’s future industrial land needs to 2041.
- **Iluka** – There is projected demand for up to 2.2 additional ha of industrial land in Iluka by 2041. However, there is currently no vacant, serviced and unconstrained land available to meet additional demand.
- **Maclean/Townsend** – There is projected demand for up to 3 additional ha of industrial land in Maclean-Townsend to meet general service demand. The existing industrial zone has a vacant 0.6ha available for development, but demand is likely to outstrip this and additional land should be identified and bought forward.
- **Junction Hill** – There is a projected need for up to 0.7 ha of additional industrial land by 2041, with no vacant serviced land available. Long-term consideration of areas to the north may assist in meeting this additional demand.

Action	Detail
Action 1	Building from the audit provided in this study, undertake ongoing monitoring of industrial zoned land. Use this information to inform the timing of future investment in water and sewer servicing plans, with the goal of maintaining a buffer of serviced industrially zoned land in a variety of lot sizes for future growth.

#### 4.2.2 Long term planning for future employment areas

The North Coast Regional Plan2041 has identified five investigation areas for future employment land being:

- land near the Clarence Valley Regional Airport
- South Grafton, adjacent to Alipou Creek
- South Grafton, to the west of Armidale Road
- Koolkhan, to the north of Junction Hill
- Townsend, to the south of Yaegl Nature Reserve.

Clarence Valley Council and Geolink have investigated the potential for each of these areas, excluding Townsend, with regard for environmental constraints, infrastructure and servicing requirements<sup>1</sup>. On the basis of that work it is suggested that Council prioritise long-term planning for South Grafton adjacent to Alipou Creek investigation area. This investigation area is favoured because:

- The site has a total developable area of around 66 ha subject to the resolution of the extent of potential flooding constraints.
- The site can be divided into two sub-areas for servicing and staging:
  - the 22 hectares parcel fronting Swallow Road, and
  - the 44 hectares parcel adjacent to Alipou Creek.
- This investigation area has excellent access to the Big River Way and the Pacific Motorway, offering the potential for sites that would be ideally suited to the transport and logistics sector.

<sup>1</sup> Geolink (2020) Clarence Valley Industrial Land Bank Capability Assessment

- The relative lower servicing costs compared to the other precincts.
- The proximity of the investigation area to the existing Grafton centre and associated facilities, services and workforce.



**Figure 3: Employment Land Investigation area, South Grafton**

Source: Geolink (2017) *Industrial land Bank Capability Assessment*, prepared for Clarence Valley Council

Action	Detail
<b>Action 2</b>	Continue planning work to enable the future rezoning of the Grafton South Alipou Creek Investigation area in the short term, including a flood study to confirm the developable areas and consultation with the Transport for NSW on the likely access point to Big River Way.

### 4.2.3 Improve roads and connectivity to support transport and logistics

Clarence Valley LGA, being located about 600 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD and 300 kilometres south of the Brisbane CBD offers a strategic location for distribution and transportation of goods along the east coast of NSW and Queensland. The LGA is within a 12-hour drive of an estimated population of just under 13 million persons, representing just over half of Australia’s population, or 97% of New South Wales and Queensland’s population in 2020.

Providing employment lands that offers sites with easy main road access and ample space for storage and parking will likely attract storage, distribution and transportation related development. Despite major upgrades in road transport in the Clarence Valley in recent times (e.g. the Pacific Highway upgrade), many stakeholders noted that access to their sites was inadequate for B-double trucks, or that it was in poor condition (see section 9.4.3 of the Background Report). Stakeholders also identified poor access to the newly-constructed Pacific Motorway as a concern. Industrial employment in the Clarence Valley needs high-quality and well-located access for road transport to prosper.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 3</b>	<p>Improve road connections from employment precincts to the Pacific Motorway including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Upgrade Eight Mile Lane to enable B-Double operators access to the Pacific Motorway northbound at Glenugie, removing the need to travel to Tyndale to gain entry to the motorway</li> <li>● Improve and maintain road surfaces on Big River Way</li> <li>● Improve and maintain road surface providing access to Clarence Valley Regional Airport.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 4</b>	Develop and implement a Transport Strategy for the LGA that prioritises delivery of new roads, bridges and maintenance and upgrade of existing roads to areas of critical importance for employment, infrastructure and resilience.
<b>Action 5</b>	Engage with TfNSW and neighbouring LGAs to identify areas where regional transport improvements should be prioritised.



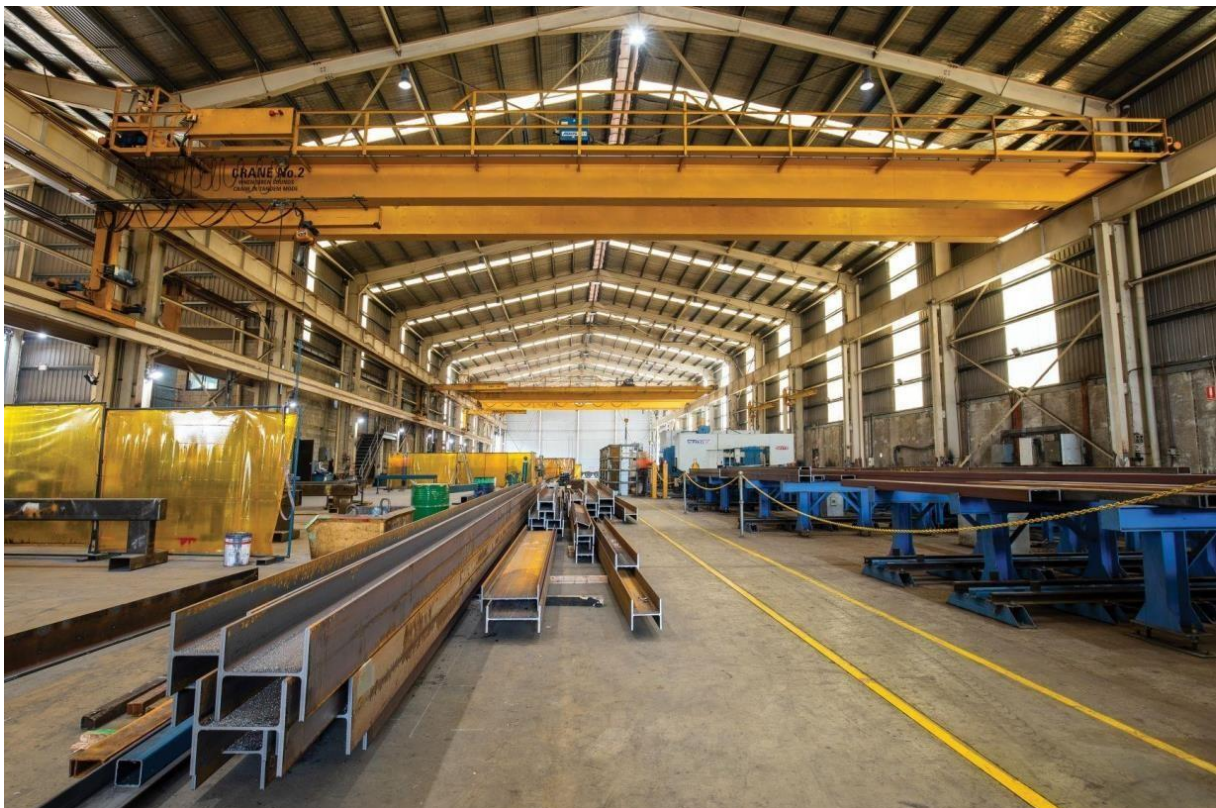


#### 4.2.4 Encourage more large lots for industrial land uses

Industrial requirements vary considerably. Providing a variety of lot sizes through the LGA in a variety of price submarkets can assist meeting overall industrial need. Providing opportunities that support clusters of related firms to co-locate can also contribute to efficiencies, increased productivity, and innovation. Though the Clarence Valley LGA is often able to offer an attractive price point for industrial land compared to neighbouring areas with more constraints, stakeholders have identified that demand is high and prices are rising (see section 9.4.4 of the Background Report). Stakeholders report that when large lots are offered for sale they are purchased immediately.

Stakeholders have also identified a shortage of large lots which has caused some businesses to look to other LGAs for sites or continue to operate from a constrained site. An insufficient supply of large lots may result in businesses with operations within the LGA being unable to move to a larger site that enables growth. Stakeholders have also noted that businesses seeking to establish in the area have been unable to identify sites, especially in South Grafton, that are sufficient for their needs.

Action	Detail
Action 6	Engage with potentially interested parties to determine needs, interest, and whether existing sites can meet their requirements.
Action 7	Consider applying large minimum lot size to future releases of employment land to encourage a supply of large lots in appropriate locations
Action 8	Consider application of reduced or capped contributions for subdivisions that provide lots above a predetermined size
Action 9	Encourage development of applications for subdivision of employment land to deliver a range of lot sizes



#### 4.2.5 Protect employment land from land use conflict

The NSW Government has a renewed focus on the economic recovery and the importance of manufacturing and commercial development. The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) are also undertaking reforms of the Business and Industrial Zones across NSW and changing the name of all Industrial and Business Zones to “Employment Zones”. The translation of land uses and objectives from the existing zones to the new zones is expected to retain the same or similar outcomes and permit the same types of land uses for this site. Consultation on the new zone names and land use tables is currently underway (until 12 July 2022). DPE advise that the final translation amendments can seek Council endorsement in late 2022 (in consultation with DPE) before commencement of the changes in December 2022.

Much of the employment zoned land in the Clarence Valley LGA is in proximity to residential or other sensitive land uses, such as some B5 Business Development lands in South Grafton that serve a mixed-use employment and residential function. Similarly, there is an area in Heber Street, South Grafton which is zoned IN2 General Industrial which includes several residential properties. Some residential land uses would have followed industrial development, potentially introducing land use conflict related to noise, air quality or visual amenity.

Providing or maintaining a buffer between industrial areas and nearby residential development would help protect industry in the future. This may take the form of a buffer zone where less sensitive commercial uses are encouraged or controls that space uses away from borders with sensitive uses.

Planning controls that establish a buffer around industrial areas would enable industries to operate over extended periods, potentially enabling 24-hour operations. Establishing a clear policy position that enables industry to operate for extended hours in industrial zones may also assist in managing the expectations of residents.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 10</b>	<p>Council can continue to support industries to operate in industrial zones for extended hours by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a clear policy position, in the DCP or other document, that extended hours of operation are acceptable in industrial zones.</li> <li>• Implementing a buffer area between residential land and future industrial land, such as the western interface of the South Grafton Alipou Creek Investigation area, including enforcement of the 20m buffer required by the DCP.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 11</b>	<p>Council can review the B5 Business Development zone with the goal of emphasising lower impact urban services that buffer residential and more intensive industrial land uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibit residential land uses in B5 Business Development lands, establishing them as primarily urban support areas that service residential and industrial lands and assist in establishing a buffer between the two.</li> <li>• Consider rezoning land that is currently zoned B5 Business Development but is predominantly used as residential, to a B4 Mixed Use (or E3 productivity support) as part of the State led review of employment zoned that is currently in progress), as indicated in Figure 4, to more accurately reflect the status and potential of this land.</li> <li>• Consider the benefit of an additional local provisions that would permit ongoing operation of existing dwellings in the B5 Business Development zone, eliminating the complexity of the existing use rights process without permitting new residential uses.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 12</b>	<p>Council can review the IN1 General Industrial zoning in Heber Street in South Grafton with the goal of emphasising lower impact urban services that buffer residential and more intensive industrial land uses including transitioning the site to an E3 Productivity Support zone if the employment zone reforms are implemented.</p>



Figure 4: Area in South Grafton for consideration of revised zoning

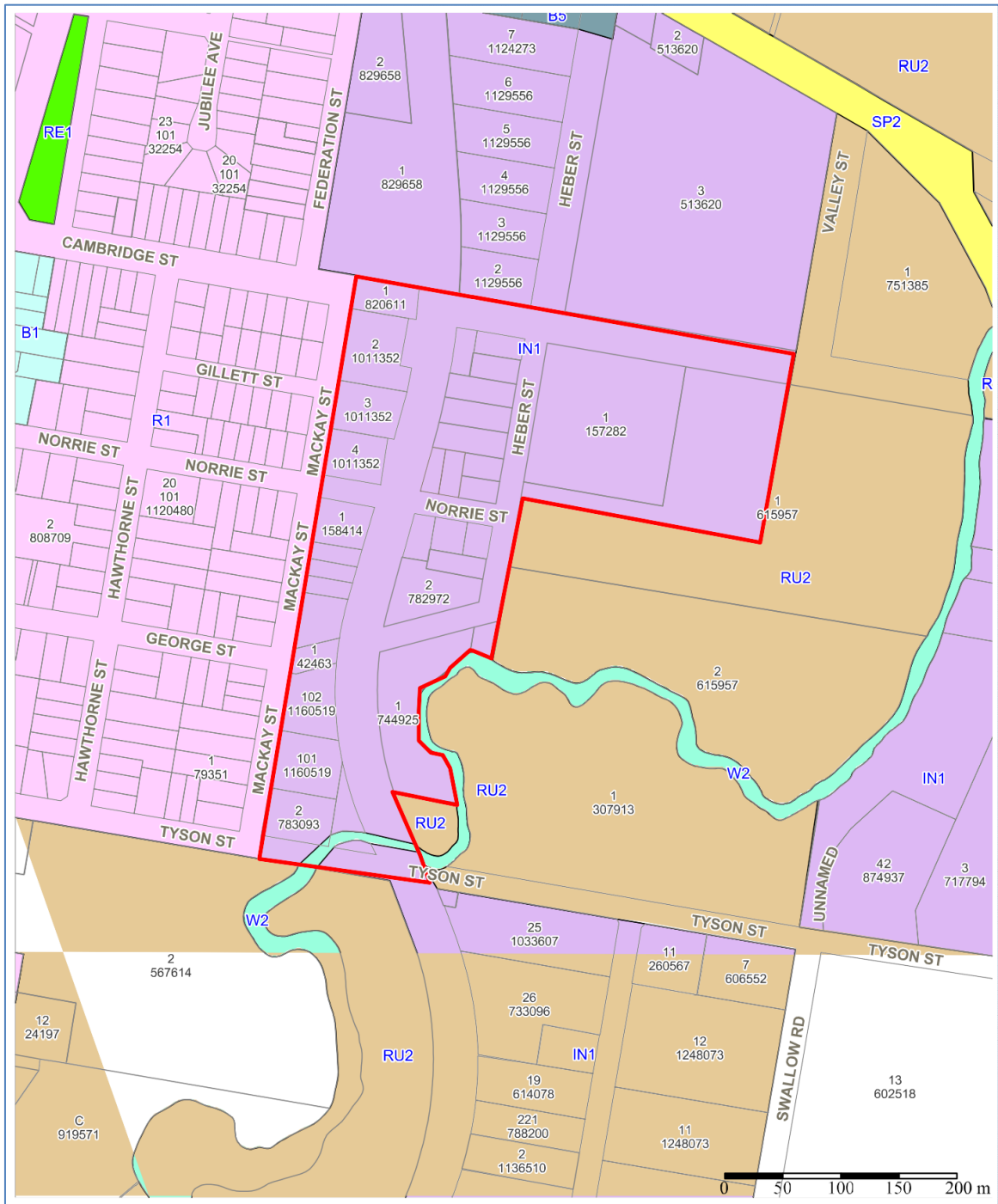


Figure 5: Heber Street area South Grafton for re-zoning consideration

#### 4.2.6 Deliver better places of employment

Employers are seeking to provide a good working environment for their employees as it helps them to attract and retain talent. Employees may like to dine out or order takeaway food during meal breaks, and have access to services such as a childcare, a bank or gym, and convenience retail services. Businesses therefore benefit from being co-located with services.

For example, major corporations may need to have a hotel or function centre nearby while a medium-sized business may benefit from access to services such as printers. The LGA offers a diversity of employment locations. Improving the amenity of employment locations will attract businesses and employers to the LGA. It will also support businesses to attract and retain talent.

Action	Detail
	Support businesses and workers by providing a planning framework that encourages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Convenience retail and services (e.g. childcare, gyms, banks and the like) in employment areas.</li><li>• Pleasant locations for people to rest or interact with others during the working day (e.g. parks and open spaces).</li><li>• Improved connectivity to surrounding open space and bushland (for workers to mountain bike or bushwalk or relax during breaks).</li></ul>
<b>Action 13</b>	
<b>Action 14</b>	Council could consider developing Activation Strategies for its tier two (local) centres at Yamba, Maclean and Ulmarra (see section 4.4.1 of the Background Report).

#### 4.3 Encourage emerging and growth industries

Engagement undertaken with key local and regional knowledge-holders revealed that the LGA is well-positioned to host a range of new and emerging industries to diversify and increase employment in the region. Emerging industries are based around the Clarence Valley LGA's existing strengths and natural assets, including agri-food businesses, and creative industries and technology. Growth industries are based around the LGA's existing strengths in skills and employment, typically including construction, manufacturing and trades, and healthcare and nursing.

Targeting these growth and strength areas can also assist the LGA to host jobs that young people are interested in, whilst maintaining continuity and stability in core employment areas. By doing this, the Clarence Valley can retain its young and skilled workers and demonstrate that young people do not need to leave the LGA for metropolitan areas in search of work. This could also help maintain demographic balance in the LGA.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 15</b>	Develop and grow Council's internal economic development resources and programs
<b>Action 16</b>	Develop a marketing strategy in collaboration with key stakeholders in the LGA (including government agencies and business representatives) to promote investment in the LGA
<b>Action 17</b>	Work with industry groups and stakeholders to promote the Clarence Valley agri-food brand, supporting and encouraging the expansion of value-added food and beverage industries in the LGA.

### 4.3.1 Agribusiness

Agriculture is a highly important industry in the Clarence Valley, with historically significant employment and productivity contributions. However, the Australian agriculture industry has undergone significant changes in recent decades, and often utilises both contract and overseas workers for a large percentage of their labour<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, much of this work is seasonal. Despite this, expanding and emerging agriculture industries can boost the LGA's employment and productivity. Growth agriculture industries such as hemp and derivative products<sup>3</sup> and macadamias<sup>4</sup> have expressed interest in the Clarence Valley, with expansion providing new opportunities and flow-on benefits for local industry and employment. Continuing to support and expand agricultural land uses also effectively utilises flood affected areas that are otherwise difficult to develop.

The presence of a strong agricultural production sector can also boost light and rural industries that process locally produced goods, local accommodation and the local food services industry. Value-add industries, using our unique local produce such as seafood, sugarcane, beef and other sectors, including artisan food and beverage production, can enable regions such as the Clarence Valley LGA to capitalise on its strong agricultural sector and provide more local employment.

The Clarence Valley would be an attractive location for proponents of the 'slow food'<sup>5</sup> movement due to its wide range of fresh produce including horticultural produce and seafood. Food and beverage operations that focus on experience, quality and provenance can establish a local brand, support premium prices reflective of those qualities and promote wider agritourism benefits.

Action	Detail
Action 18	Explore opportunities for a major distribution centre or intermodal facility within the LGA to support future business establishment and job creation through generating interest from supply chain businesses seeking to benefit from clustering.
Action 19	Investigate opportunities in the agribusiness supply chain such as processing and packaging facilities. The growth of the agribusiness industry would create flow-on supply chain benefits with potential business attraction from product processing, packaging and sales companies.
Action 20	Consider supporting Artisan Food and Drink Industry by providing dedicated space for farmers markets and implementing the Council's Rural Lands Strategy, once completed.

### 4.3.2 Creative industries and technology

In May 2021, the Australian Government announced its Digital Economy Strategy, identifying various creative and technological industries including artificial intelligence, drones, supply chain flexibility, fintech, film production, and video game development as key growth areas for the Australian economy<sup>6</sup>. Australia is already home to a strong film and television production industry, however it has limited studio and stage space<sup>7</sup>. Attracting jobs in the creative and technology industries will also be critical for positioning the LGA to benefit from new technologies and to provide resilience against mechanisation of labour<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> ABARES (2021), *Labour use in Australian agriculture: Analysis of survey results* <<https://www.awe.gov.au/abares/research-topics/labour#horticulture-farm-labour-use>>

<sup>3</sup> Strydom E. (2021), *The Good Oil from Solum*, Coastbeat, 30 September 2021, <<https://coastbeat.com.au/the-good-oil-from-solum-farm/>>

<sup>4</sup> McMahon J. (2017), *Clarence to be maca nut king*, Clarence Valley Independent, October 4 2017, <<https://clarencevalleynews.com.au/clarence-to-be-maca-nut-king/>>

<sup>5</sup> Nichols, J. (2018), *Slow Food: The international movement encouraging ethical and sustainable farming*, ABC News, 26 August 2018 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-26/international-slow-food-movement-encourages-australian-producers/10156180>>

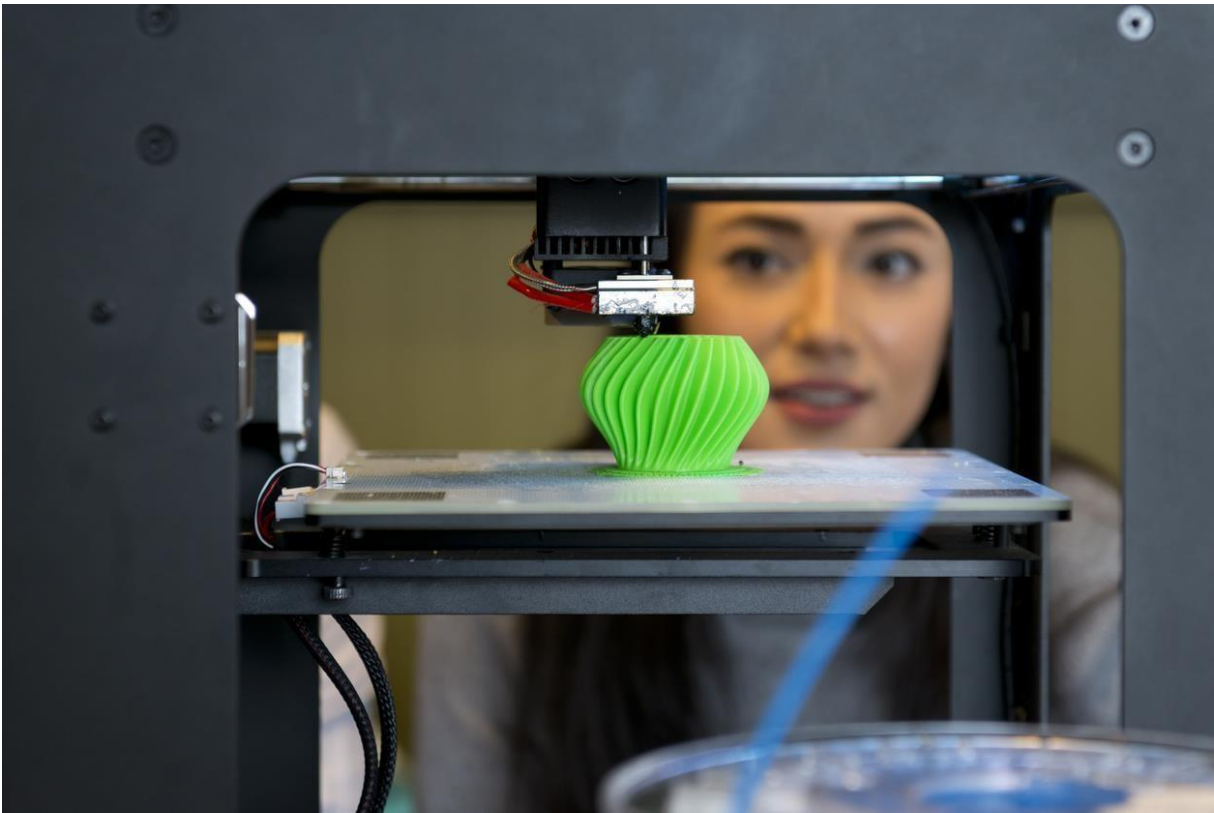
<sup>6</sup> Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2021), *Digital Economy Strategy 2030* <<https://digitaleconomy.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-07/digital-economy-strategy.pdf>>

<sup>7</sup> Screen Daily (2020), *Australian production focus: a new gold rush* <<https://www.screendaily.com/features/australia-production-focus-a-new-gold-rush/5154864.article>>

<sup>8</sup> Bureau of Communications and Arts Research, Department of Communications and the Arts (2018), *Creative skills for the future economy working paper* <<https://www.arts.gov.au/publications/creative-skills-future-economy>>

Creative industries and technology have been identified by a range of stakeholders as industries that the Clarence Valley LGA can accommodate and grow. As identified during the COVID-19 pandemic, many industries are able to operate efficiently whilst their staff work from home. Some operators may choose to establish in (or relocate to) regional areas to secure more affordable operational costs whilst maintaining strong networks with metropolitan areas. Many creative and technological organisations are good examples of businesses that can benefit from remote or regional operations centres. Council can leverage the completion of the National Broadband Network and wide availability of high-speed mobile internet connection to attract technology and internet driven businesses to establish in the LGA.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 21</b>	Collate a list of rehearsal, practice, and performance spaces are available within the LGA to share and grow.
<b>Action 22</b>	Establish a working group with key local knowledge-holders in the creative and technology sectors to help attract investment and growth (potentially including representatives of groups such as Screenworks NSW).
<b>Action 23</b>	Promote the LGA as ‘tech-friendly’ and leverage manufacturing expertise in the LGA.
<b>Action 24</b>	Explore potential partnerships with TAFE including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• utilising the Yamba Connected Learning Centre’s state-of-the-art technological facilities to grow creative industries and technology in the LGA</li> <li>• delivering more creative and technology-focused courses within the LGA.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 25</b>	Explore options to partner with community and/or local business groups to deliver creative and technology-focused spaces (i.e. makerspace) in underutilised Council spaces.



### 4.3.3 Construction, manufacturing and trades

The Clarence Valley LGA hosts a strong construction, manufacturing, and trades sector. In 2019-20, the construction and manufacturing sectors constituted 18% of employment in the LGA (see section 5.2.2 of the Background Report for details). Construction also had the highest industry value added contribution to GDP in the LGA, adding \$424 million (see section 5.2.5 of the Background report for details).

The Clarence Valley LGA has the expertise and ability to undertake a wide range of projects with local resources and can leverage these skills to enable further growth in this and other industries. Supporting the construction, manufacturing and trades industries should be a key component of any employment strategy undertaken by Council.

Local procurement also helps the local economy and local communities. Council's *Sustainable Procurement Policy* is a great start. Likewise, agreements by SERCO to source locally is an example that could be expanded to other government services and suppliers.

Action	Detail
	Maintain and improve strategic partnerships with construction, manufacturing and trade industries:
<b>Action 26</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with local industries and representative bodies to identify areas that require attention or advocacy (i.e. skills shortages).</li> <li>Consider developing a directory of local suppliers to provide to residents and investors.</li> <li>Advocate with State and Federal governments to secure projects and investment in the LGA to leverage skills (e.g. defence manufacturing, aerospace manufacturing).</li> </ul>
<b>Action 27</b>	Develop a <i>Local Procurement Strategy</i> to encourage procurement of supplies and labour from within the LGA. This could either be undertaken as an expansion clause 5.7 (Supporting Local Business) of Council's <i>Sustainable Procurement Policy</i> , or as a standalone strategy and could expand to other government agencies and industry.

### 4.3.4 Health

Grafton Base Hospital (and any potential Grafton Health Precinct) presents a strong health offering to the region. Due to its distance compared to similarly-sized hospitals in metropolitan areas, Grafton Base Hospital offers a wide range of health services. The health industry is also the largest employer in the LGA, representing 16% of jobs. Despite this, there are no health education or training facilities within the LGA. Healthcare industry stakeholders have reported that it is also difficult to recruit and retain skilled staff. Maclean Hospital and other health services are critical to the local economy and need to be supported.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 28</b>	Identify and establish a Grafton Health Precinct to improve the health offering in the Clarence Valley and to strengthen employment (see section 4.5.1 of the Background Report for details)
<b>Action 29</b>	<p>Engage with tertiary education providers (University of Wollongong, TAFE NSW) to advocate for stronger presence of tertiary education in a potential Grafton Health Precinct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with TAFE NSW to determine feasibility of providing health related courses in Grafton Health Precinct.</li> <li>Engage with tertiary education providers (e.g. University of Wollongong, University of Newcastle, Southern Cross University, or any other identified institution(s)) to determine the feasibility of providing a health-related courses in the Grafton Health Precinct.</li> </ul>



## 4.4 Centres: strategic directions and actions

### 4.4.1 Establish and reinforce a clear centres hierarchy across the LGA

Establish a clear centres hierarchy that provides clarity to the market around growth expectations and the desired role and function of centres. The hierarchy will serve to reinforce the commercial significance of Grafton as a regional centre in providing significant and diverse employment, including in major anchor retailers, services, and administration. It has regard to the position of centres in the context of the broader district and regional centres hierarchy. The role of other centres is to support, rather than compete with, the primary role of the regional centre, providing local job opportunities and services to support the weekly and daily needs of residents.

Action	Detail
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<b>Action 30</b>	Council could consider adopting the proposed centres hierarchy outlined below:
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**Table 4: Proposed centres hierarchy for Clarence Valley LGA**

Type of centre	Description
<b>Regional centres</b>	<p><b>Regional centres</b> are the highest order centre in Clarence Valley LGA, containing major health, education, retail, community and civic services for the broader region. A regional centre is a significant employment and economic generator with a wide catchment.</p> <p><i>Relevant centre: Grafton</i></p>
<b>Local centres</b>	<p><b>Local centres</b> provide essential access to day-to-day goods and services close to where people live. Local centres provide a mix of retail, commercial and community space with retail space typically being anchored by one or two supermarkets over 1,000sqm.</p> <p><i>Relevant centres: Maclean, Yamba town centre, Yamba Village, South Grafton town centre</i></p>
<b>Neighbourhood centres</b>	<p><b>Neighbourhood centres</b> provide retail, community facilities and other population supportive services to meet the day-to-day shopping needs of the surrounding population and workforce. Typically, these centres offer a mix of specialty retail floorspace, may contain a small neighbourhood supermarket (1,000sqm or less) and serve a local residential catchment.</p> <p><i>Relevant centres: Iluka, Ulmarra, South Grafton neighbourhood centre, Junction Hill, Harwood Island, Wooli, Glenreagh, Tucabia, Lawrence, Angourie, Brooms Head, Coutts Crossing, Copmanhurst, Minnie Water, Chatsworth, Lawrence-Rutland Street, Townsend, Lawrence Bridge Street, Brushgrove neighbourhood centre.</i></p>
<b>Emerging centres</b>	<p><b>Emerging centres</b> are areas that have been identified and protected for future employment use. They are generally in locations that have been identified for residential growth. In Clarence Valley LGA, some centres have been zoned for employment uses for some time but are yet to develop.</p> <p><i>Relevant centres: Clarenza, Gulmarrad, James Creek, Junction Hill village, Lawrence neighbourhood centre, Seelands neighbourhood centre, South Grafton neighbourhood centre, Federation Street, Waterview Heights neighbourhood centre and Yamba neighbourhood centre.</i></p>

#### 4.4.2 Restrict out-of-centre retailing

The development of out-of-centre retailing, especially for supermarkets, has the potential to affect the continued economic viability of the Clarence Valley LGA's established centres. International research has found that the presence of out-of-centre retailing can negatively affect retail activity in nearby centres by around 12%<sup>9</sup>. A relative lack of large and well-serviced sites in established centres (for example, sites typically required by 'big box' retailers and supermarkets) and relatively higher land values contribute to the attractiveness of out-of-centre developments. Out-of-centre developments also benefit from economies of scale as contrasted to infill developments, making them more attractive to developers.

Despite the benefits to developers of out-of-centre developments, existing centres should be the primary location for new commercial and retail floorspace. This approach should enable the LGA to retain employment in areas that are co-located with housing, existing services and other (non-industrial) businesses and contribute to vibrancy and activity in centres.

Action	Detail
Action 31	Planning proposals and development applications should be assessed having regard for the potential impact to the proposed centres hierarchy. In particular, proposals of out-of-centre retail developments of a significant scale could require an economic impact assessment to determine the potential impacts to established centres.
Action 32	Consideration should be given to reducing barriers to in-centre development (e.g. discounted contributions).
Action 33	Identify parcels of land in existing centres that can facilitate large floorplates (e.g. vacant land, Council carparks).

#### 4.4.3 Support the growth of Grafton as a regional centre

Council intends for Grafton to maintain its prominence as a regional centre and important city within the North Coast region. In order to achieve this goal, Council developed the Grafton CBD Precinct Plan in 2021. The plan aims to reorient Grafton toward the Clarence River, improve amenity and public space, and improve and extend Grafton's commercial and food and beverage offering. These improvements are especially prescient during a period where many regional LGAs are welcoming new residents from metropolitan areas following the growth of decentralisation and remote working trends. A revitalised Grafton with a strong 'regional centre' offering can help the entire LGA to thrive.

Planning controls can assist in achieving Council's goals for Grafton by enabling a wider range of uses to occur within and adjacent to the CBD.

Action	Detail
Action 34	Consider increasing height limits where suitable (potentially increasing feasibility of infill development and shop-top housing) to be competitive with other regional centres.
Action 35	Council to implement the recommendations of the Grafton CBD Precinct Plan and the Clarence River Way Masterplan II.

<sup>9</sup> *Land Use Policy, The impact of out-of-town shopping centres on town-centre retailers and employment: The case of the Region of Murcia.* Armando Ortuño Padilla; Antonia Alarcón Hermosillab; and Olga Tomás Ozoresc 2017; Cunningham P., (2010) Case Studies into the Impact of Out-of-Centre Retailing on Town Centres, <https://accessibleretail.co.uk/consultations/case-studies-into-the-impact-of-out-of-centre-retailing-on-town-centres>, Astbury G & Thurstain-Goodwin M. Measuring the Impact of Out-of-town Retail Development on Town Centre Retail Property in England and Wales in *Applied Spatial Analysis and Policy* volume 7, pages301–316 (014)

#### 4.4.4 Support start-up businesses and flexible working spaces

New businesses and flexible working spaces can help to drive innovation and growth in centres. The Clarence Valley LGA is well-positioned to capitalise on these opportunities due to its well-serviced centres and attractive environment with high levels of amenity. The NSW Treasury estimated that, in 2019, during the COVID-19 pandemic 43% of work done across the NSW economy was undertaken remotely<sup>10</sup>. This trend is likely to continue, though in a reduced capacity, enabling more remote work opportunities.

Opportunities to work from home, in more affordable housing options within a stunning natural environment presents opportunities for the Clarence Valley economy. These changes within our communities will result in better outcomes if they are managed strategically. In addition, start-ups and flexible working spaces can both benefit from this trend by capitalising on reduced costs and increase flexibility of office space requirements. However, working from home, start-ups and flexible working spaces can have specific needs to thrive, such as:

- Strong and reliable internet connections
- Strong local professional services offering
- Affordable rent
- Flexible opening hours
- Smaller, modular, or adaptable floorplates
- High levels of local amenity.

Providing suitable spaces for start-up businesses and flexible working spaces would also help to enable existing local small businesses and freelancers to grow and change their operations, whilst remaining in the LGA.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 36</b>	Ensure strategies recognise work from home arrangements and opportunities for the Clarence Valley and seek to partner with flexible workspace providers to investigate the delivery of options within the LGA.
<b>Action 37</b>	Consider possibility of delivering flexible spaces through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Utilising existing underutilised Council-owned spaces.</li><li>● Voluntary Planning Agreements.</li><li>● Providing co-working spaces in vacant commercial premises.</li></ul>

<sup>10</sup> NSW Innovation and Productivity Council (2020), *Our experience during COVID-19 and what it means for the future of work* <<https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/Full-Report-NSW-Remote-Working-Insights-Report-1-2020%20%281%29.pdf>>



#### 4.4.5 Provide a supply of commercial land to support growth as needed

In general, HillPDA’s analysis of Clarence Valley LGA’s centres has revealed that they are performing well. Under the vacant capacity scenario utilised in the earlier sections, there is sufficient residual capacity of between 38,760sqm to 73,000sqm. Therefore, for the most part, Council’s role should be to maintain and monitor supply in commercial centres.

However, there are several centres which do not have sufficient capacity to accommodate their identified demand. Of note are the centres of Coutts Crossing, Grafton town centre, Yamba town centre, and Yamba village. For these centres, Council may need to consider how and where it should accommodate growth.

Action	Detail
Action 38	Work with DPE to reinvigorate and maintain an employment lands monitor.
Action 39	Develop a plan for addressing commercial land shortages in Coutts Crossing, Grafton town centre, Yamba town centre, and Yamba village (as necessary).

### 4.5 Key sites: strategic directions and actions

#### 4.5.1 Grafton health precinct: Grafton Base Hospital and former gaol site

The Grafton Base Hospital and the former Grafton Gaol site constitute two of the LGA’s most important potential future expansion sites. Grafton Base Hospital provides a wide range of health and medical services to the LGA, as well as allied health services. However, Clarence Valley residents are required to travel to hospitals in Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Brisbane, or Sydney if they require some forms of specialist treatment.

The Grafton Gaol site is located opposite the Grafton Base Hospital, and since the construction of the Grafton Correctional Centre, is no longer utilised as a gaol. As such, there is potential for an extensive adaptive reuse project at the site, to redevelop it as part of a Grafton Health Precinct. Additionally, the proposed Grafton Private Hospital has been approved and would be located adjacent to the existing hospital site. If constructed, the private

hospital would contribute to the health precinct and help to attract and retain specialists.

The Grafton Gaol site has strong heritage appeal and considering its co-location with the existing hospital and proposed private hospital, it is in a prime position to contribute to a developing health precinct in Grafton. Such a redevelopment could include education and training facilities (potentially in partnership with the University of Wollongong) including classrooms and lecture theatres, allied health spaces, specialist consulting rooms, accommodation for students and/or families visiting patients, and retail, food and beverage, and customer service operations. A re-purposed Grafton Gaol site would help to replace jobs in central Grafton that were lost when the Gaol concluded operations.

The site is constrained by a proposed subdivision which would divide the site into four parcels, two of which would be provided to the Grafton Ngerrie Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), comprising over half of the site. Part of the site remainder is proposed to be provided to NSW Health, with the other part to be divested.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 40</b>	Council could consider options to progress the redevelopment of the remainder of the former Grafton Gaol site, including engaging with potentially interested parties (including local allied health operators, University of Wollongong, TAFE).
<b>Action 41</b>	Council could consider purchasing the site remainder and partnering with interested health industry and/or education parties to develop the site, subject to feasibility assessments and health partners being identified.

**4.5.2 Clarence Valley Regional Airport**

The presence of an airport contributes to Grafton’s attractiveness as a regional business hub. However, without consistent servicing and vital upgrades, the airport will likely not contribute strongly to employment. Council recently prepared an Airport Masterplan as an initial step in capturing opportunities presented by the airport and facilitating its expansion over the next 15 years. Some submissions suggested that the master plan is too ambitious and a more targeted and cost-effective approach to expanding operations would be appropriate.

Regular passenger flights are currently limited to return flights to Sydney three days per week, although, more frequent flights occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Establishing a flight schedule that permits day trips to Sydney, and potentially to Brisbane, will be key to future development for Grafton as a business centre that attracts state government and other public sector roles. Establishing routes to Sydney and Brisbane will be essential to maintaining and expanding connections to business headquarters, government, and administrative authorities. Additionally, Grafton Airport’s proximity to the new Grafton Correctional Centre (that will house up to 1,700 inmates from across NSW) suggest that the airport may be utilised for visitors to the Centre.

A recent announcement has been made of \$8.9m of grant funding for a Rural Fire Service emergency operations centre and co-location facility for RFS to be built at the Grafton Airport. Funds in the order of \$1.9m are available for investigating and providing water supply to the airport and potentially opening up some industrial land around the Airport<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Clarence Valley Council



Action	Detail
	Council should undertake further discussions with airport stakeholders to develop a staged approach to updating and implementing the airport masterplan and airport upgrades in a way that seeks to minimise risk to Council and maximise the chance of success. This may include:
<b>Action 42</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the market for complimentary land uses such as a flying school, residential air park, flight training for overseas airlines, or rentable hangar space, to help with cost recovery.</li> <li>Investigate past development proposals to identify and remove barriers to development.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 43</b>	Examine feasibility of extending servicing to the airport from the new Grafton Correctional Centre
	Investigate appropriate level of runway upgrades and relevant costings to enable additional future uses, potentially including:
<b>Action 44</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded passenger usage</li> <li>Freight</li> <li>Emergency services.</li> </ul>
	Further upgrades could be considered at a later time including:
<b>Action 45</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parallel taxiway</li> <li>Private hanger apron</li> <li>Airfreight hub.</li> </ul>

#### 4.5.3 Port of Yamba

The Port of Yamba is a key access point to the wider region and provides important support services for the LGA's fishing and shipbuilding and repair industry. It also hosts customs facilities and enables import and export of goods to the region. The Port currently hosts mainly ad hoc trade with the Pacific Islands and Australian islands, as well as shipping repairs. Expansion of activity at the port is limited by its depth and tidal and wave issues. Stakeholders have noted that the Port Authority regularly receives enquiries about import and export activities, but that these have not eventuated recently.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 46</b>	Consult with key stakeholders to develop a Port of Yamba Options Paper and/or Marine Based Industry Strategy or similar to determine how the LGA can best utilise the facilities in the future to benefit employment in the region.



#### 4.5.4 Harwood marine precinct

Harwood Marine and Sunshine Sugar Mill, on Harwood Island creates a highly productive, industrial hub that makes an important contribution to the Clarence Valley economy. Opportunities to build on these strengths should be explored in consultation with the business operators to leverage the potential offered by these businesses. This would require resolution of current constraints including the shortage of skilled workers (addressed in section 4.6.2) and the potential sale of land to compatible users.

Action	Detail
<b>Action 47</b>	<p>If required and appropriate, support the subdivision of adjoining land to encourage compatible uses on zoned employment land such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocational training in marine industries and trades</li> <li>• related businesses, potentially including engineering services, packing and distribution, fit-out suppliers, prefabrication, fit out suppliers, sugar product production, ice cream and confectionary making.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 48</b>	<p>Support, through the application of planning controls, the use of prime deep-water frontage to the Clarence River to build a water transportation industry, by expanding slipway operations for the transfer of construction vehicles and materials (as an example), and other suitable facilities where appropriate.</p>

## 4.6 Improve opportunities for businesses to be established and succeed

### 4.6.1 Aim to reduce development approval times

Some stakeholders have indicated that the process for acquiring development approval is long, hard to understand and cumbersome. Some Council officers have indicated that the standard of information lodged with a development application is sometimes not to the required standard, requiring Council to request the applicant to provide additional information which contributes to time delays (see section 9.4.1 of the Background Report).

Efficient and effective assessment of development applications, along with competitive land prices and rents, could improve the competitiveness of Clarence Valley LGA in attracting new businesses and industries compared

to other north coast LGAs. Council could adopt an “open for business approach” with development proposals, although this should not compromise the need to manage and mitigate impacts of development.

Council has recently released updated guidance for the preparation of development applications on its website. This will go some way toward addressing these concerns. Some additional actions that could be considered include:

Action	Detail
<b>Action 49</b>	<p>Encouraging the application of SEPP (Exempt and Complying Development) to reduce the number of comprehensive development applications that Council has to assess. This could be done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information on Council’s website about the circumstances in which a complying development application can be used (rather just a than a link to the planning portal).</li> <li>• Having the Duty Planner inform prospective applicants of the opportunities under part 5 of the SEPP for a fast track assessment via the complying development pathway.</li> <li>• Supporting applicants to complete the online complying development.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 50</b>	Holding an information session(s), targeted to local developers and consultants, to outline expectations for DA documentation and encourage higher quality development applications that can be assessed with fewer requests for additional information
<b>Action 51</b>	Developing a DA template to guide prospective proponents through the DA process
<b>Action 52</b>	Encouraging formal and informal pre-DA meetings and ongoing discussions with applicant to resolve issues prior to the DA being lodged





#### 4.6.2 Attract skilled workers to the LGA

Stakeholders have consistently highlighted difficulties in obtaining staff due to a shortage of skilled and unskilled workers in the area. Many attribute the issue to recent increases in housing prices being a critical factor influencing prospective workers to choose to move to an alternative location. In addition, there is a need for any employment land planning to consider the native title rights and interests as well as the provision of sustainable and meaningful employment and business opportunities, for Traditional Owners. This would have the added benefit of not only empowering Traditional Owners towards the path of economic self sufficiency, but to increase the pool of trained workers for all employers to draw upon. For some businesses, the worker shortage has been a critical factor that has stifled growth. Resolution of this issue extends beyond Council’s control, however there are several things Council can do to assist:

Action	Detail
<b>Action 53</b>	Council should continue to prepare a Local Housing Strategy to investigate housing affordability and ways of increasing housing supply
<b>Action 54</b>	<p>Council should bring together local real estate agents and major employees affected by the skilled worker shortage to develop practical workable solutions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real estate agents giving early notice to businesses of upcoming rental vacancies</li> <li>A real estate agent establishing and maintaining an accommodation register of upcoming properties that are likely to appeal to workers</li> <li>Investigating opportunities for companies to headlease rental properties and sublease them to their workers as needed, potentially as part of an attractive salary package</li> </ul>
<b>Action 55</b>	Investigate opportunities to improve transport linkages between residential areas and places of work
<b>Action 56</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Australian Government’s Industry Training Hub initiative to explore opportunities for vocation and training opportunities within the LGA that are matched with employee needs. Over time, this may provide an opportunity to address the worker shortage reported by various stakeholders.</li> <li>Work with Investors and business owners within the Clarence Valley to actively encourage and incentivise them to engage with Traditional Owners</li> </ul>

#### 4.6.3 A flexible and effective planning framework

Planning controls are not necessarily keeping up with market trends and changing needs of industries and businesses. For example, height limits and parking requirements may be too restrictive for the types of industrial development from being built. There have been reports that more land is needed to meet demand for heavy industries.

The table below provides a comparison of height limits in regional CBDs on the north Coast. The height limits in Grafton are generally more restrictive than in most regional centres, suggesting the potential for height to impose a barrier to development that is not occurring in comparable centres on the north coast.

**Table 5: Comparison of height limits in North Coast regional centres**

Location	Typical height limits
<b>Grafton CBD</b>	<b>14m height limit</b>
Lismore CBD	20.5m CBD
Coffs Harbour CBD	44m CBD, 28m surrounding and other various heights
Port Macquarie CBD	Two sites 26.5m, mostly 19m varies 16m, 17.5m
Tweed CBD	49.5m, 34m and 28m and various
Byron Bay	11.5m in the B2 zone
Casino CBD	14m
Ballina CBD	18m
Newcastle	Up to 90m

Source: Clarence Valley Council

Action	Detail
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Council should review current planning controls to see how they align with business and industry needs, including identifying any unintended barriers to development. Controls should then be refined as part of any forthcoming review of the Clarence Valley LEP, including the state led employment zone reforms. Based on the research undertaken for this report, consideration could be given to:

**Action 57**

- Removing maximum building height limits in the IN1 General Industry zone, to avoid unnecessarily deterring or restricting development which is unlikely to cause impacts through building height, and to support multi-storey warehousing and bulky goods retail.
- Reviewing parking requirements to ensure that they are not overly restrictive and do not unnecessarily increase development costs.
- Update sustainable water controls to reflect current best practice.
- Formal review of height limits in the Grafton CBD to encourage appropriate and resilient development where this is sympathetic to the heritage, character and urban typology of Grafton.



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## **SYDNEY**

Level 3, 234 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
GPO Box 2748 Sydney NSW 2001  
t: +61 2 9252 8777  
f: +61 2 9252 6077  
e: [sydney@hillpda.com](mailto:sydney@hillpda.com)

## **MELBOURNE**

Suite 114, 838 Collins Street  
Docklands VIC 3008  
t: +61 3 9629 1842  
f: +61 3 9629 6315  
e: [melbourne@hillpda.com](mailto:melbourne@hillpda.com)

**[WWW.HILLPDA.COM](http://WWW.HILLPDA.COM)**