



NSW GOVERNMENT
Department of Planning

2006-31

MID NORTH COAST REGIONAL STRATEGY



Influenced by a coastal lifestyle and rich environment, the Mid North Coast has experienced a history of sustained growth. While there is capability for further growth, it is important that the natural, coastal and social values that attract people to the Region are not lost.

The Mid North Coast Regional Strategy applies to the eight local government areas of Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Port Macquarie–Hastings, Greater Taree and Great Lakes. It is one of a number of regional strategies prepared by the Department of Planning. The Regional Strategy reflects the work contained in current local council settlement strategies as well as setting regional parameters for future strategic planning.

The primary purpose of the Regional Strategy is to ensure that adequate land is available and appropriately located to accommodate the projected housing and employment needs of the Region's population over the next 25 years. The Strategy sets the policy to govern where and how growth can occur. While it is clear that expected growth can be accommodated in the Region, the Strategy places limits on growth in some areas where the value of environmental/cultural assets and natural resources is high. The importance of providing for employment land to provide increased capacity for new jobs has also been addressed in the Strategy.

The Regional Strategy incorporates the specific regional infrastructure requirements identified in the *State Infrastructure Strategy 2008–09 to 2017–18*. The Regional Strategy will continue to inform future infrastructure investment priorities for the Mid North Coast. Infrastructure planning will take into account the broad planning framework identified in the Strategy, to ensure that future population growth is supported by services and associated infrastructure.

The Regional Strategy represents an agreed NSW Government position on the future of the Mid North Coast. It is the pre-eminent planning document for the Mid North Coast and complements and informs other relevant State planning instruments. The Mid North Coast Regional Strategy applies to the period 2006–31 and will be reviewed every five years.

Mid North Coast Regional Strategy
© State of New South Wales through the Department of Planning
March 2009
www.planning.nsw.gov.au

ISBN 978-0-7347-5580-3
DoP 09-008

Disclaimer: While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that this document is correct at the time of printing, the State of New South Wales, its agents and employees, disclaim any and all liability to any person in respect of anything or the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done in reliance upon the whole or any part of this document.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	INSIDE COVER
FOREWORD	1
THE MID NORTH COAST 'A REGION OF OPPORTUNITY'	3
REGIONAL CHALLENGES	5
A VISION FOR THE FUTURE	9
SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING	14
SETTLEMENT CHARACTER AND DESIGN	21
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH	24
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES	29
NATURAL HAZARDS	34
CULTURAL HERITAGE	37
WATER AND ENERGY RESOURCES	39
REGIONAL TRANSPORT	41
IMPLEMENTATION	43
MONITORING AND REVIEW	44
APPENDICES	
1. Sustainability criteria	45
2. Growth areas requiring significant issues to be resolved	47
3. Extractive and mineral resources	48
4. Major infrastructure projects	49
MAPS	
Mid North Coast Regional Strategy	12–13
Natural resources and hazards	31
Biodiversity	33
Growth areas (maps 1–10)	50



Foreword

As NSW Planning Minister it is my great pleasure to see the delivery of the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy.

This 25-year land use planning strategy identifies the Government's key strategic directions for the high growth Mid North Coast Region.

The Region's spectacular natural assets and location between Sydney and Brisbane make it a highly desirable place to live and a significant domestic tourism destination.

In light of the Region's attractive lifestyle and vibrant growth prospects, it is little wonder that an additional 94 000 people are expected to call the region home by the year 2031. To cater for this, the Strategy plans for 59 600 new homes and 48 500 new jobs over the same period.

It is the job of the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy to balance these competing considerations in a sustainable manner. The Strategy succeeds in this challenge, by outlining a planning approach that will deliver sufficient appropriately-located land for residential and jobs growth, while at the same time protecting the Region's valuable natural assets and character.

One of the key features of the Strategy is the creation of 'green breaks' between settlements in the high-demand coastal areas of the Region, where land releases will be limited to the mapped growth areas, easing development pressure and retaining environmental integrity.

Areas of high value bushland and farmland have also been set aside from development to ensure the natural assets of the Region as a whole are conserved.

The Region's strong expected growth in the coming years offers important opportunities for local job creation. The additional areas of valuable employment land identified in the Strategy will encourage new businesses into the Region, providing a real boost for local workers.

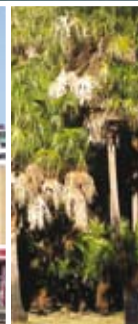
The Strategy also sets aside a surplus of new land for housing purposes in suitable areas to ensure the Region grows in a well planned and appropriate manner and, just as importantly, housing in the Region remains affordable for local residents.

Increased opportunities for medium-density housing in key centres will also ensure a wider choice of housing as the Region's population changes and ages.

The majority of new housing identified in the Strategy will build on existing centres. This will help boost the prosperity and viability of existing centres while also protecting the unique character of towns and villages across the Region – preserving the amenity of local residents and encouraging tourists to return year after year.

To assist local councils in the preparation of their own growth management strategies the final Regional Strategy also introduces identified 'growth areas'. These areas designate the Region's expected housing and employment land over the life of the Strategy, however, not all land identified within the growth areas will be developed for urban uses. Some sections of the land might be subject to significant natural hazards or environmental constraints while other sections may be set aside for conservation purposes.

The Hon Kristina Keneally MP
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo





1

The Mid North Coast covers 28 943 square kilometres, and a 532 kilometre stretch of NSW coastline – from Iluka in the north down the coast to Hawks Nest and west to Dorrigo and Stroud. The Region encompasses the traditional lands of the Gumbaynggir, Dunghutti, Birpai and Worimi people, extending into Bundjalung country in the north.

The Mid North Coast – a region of opportunity

Located between the state capital cities of Sydney and Brisbane, the Mid North Coast provides a typically Australian coastal location reflective of its early history as a series of fishing and timber-shipping ports. Because of its distance from the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Brisbane and Newcastle, there has been little demand for broad scale residential estates. Instead, the urban settlement in the Region has been located within a number of urban centres linked either directly or indirectly by the Pacific Highway.

As a region, the Mid North Coast is bordered by the Pacific Ocean in the east and the escarpment of the New England Tableland in the west. The coastal plain is dissected by a number of broad rivers running from the mountains to the sea and cutting through areas of rich alluvial soils. In addition to the broad estuaries, the Region boasts a number of large coastal lakes and lagoons, such as Smiths and Wallis Lakes to the south and Lake Cathie and Camden Haven estuary

as well as the Wooloweyah Lagoon in the north.

In recent decades, increasing numbers of visitors and new residents have been attracted to the Region's pristine ocean beaches and its natural and rural hinterland. The Region's diversity of lifestyle and economic and social opportunities are reflected in a variety of unique local cultures and individual communities.

To the north, the Region adjoins the rapidly growing Far North Coast, with its orientation to the Queensland growth areas of Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The Clarence Valley in particular has a close relationship with the Far North Coast and Queensland. To the south the Region adjoins the Lower Hunter, the sixth largest urban area in Australia.

The population of the Region in 2006 was 330 600. The majority of the community lives in the urban areas of the region, including the four major regional centres

1

the mid north coast a region of opportunity

at Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Taree as well as the six major towns of Maclean, Woolgoolga, Bellingen, Macksville, Kempsey and Forster–Tuncurry. In addition to these major settlements the Region has a variety of towns, as well as rural and coastal villages.

The Mid North Coast is biologically diverse. The long narrow coast and hinterland areas provide climates and environments that support diverse habitat types. The Region has in excess of 40 national parks and nature reserves (several World Heritage listed) as well as two marine parks, (Port Stephens and Solitary Islands). These reservations, representing 20 per cent of the total land area of the Region, protect environmental values as well as preserving many of the Region's natural icons such as its wild and scenic rivers; the rainforests and gorges of the Dorrigo Plateau and Tablelands; the lake systems of the Great Lakes; and long stretches of clean beaches containing littoral and estuarine habitats.

The Region is a highly valued place to live, a significant domestic tourism destination, as well as a place for lifestyle change or retirement. The combination of its environmental values and mix of recreational experiences provides the opportunity for the Region to further develop as a widely recognised tourism destination.

From the early timber industry and agricultural beginnings to the more recent alternative lifestylers and seachangers, the environment has always been a major influence on the Region and its community.

Over the past 25 years the Mid North Coast has experienced a 70 per cent population increase reflecting a considerable amount of growth and change. The largest increases have been in the coastal areas of Port Macquarie–Hastings and Coffs Harbour as well as the Great Lakes area, including Forster–Tuncurry.

The principal driver behind the continued growth in the Region has been the extent of migration into the area. Places like Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour,

with their attractive climate and array of activities, have drawn large numbers of retirees and people seeking a more relaxed lifestyle. Arguably the strength of the tourism industry in the Region has also resulted from the attractiveness of the area. With the continued improvement of the Pacific Highway and shorter/cheaper flights to the Region, its attractiveness to tourists and those seeking a lifestyle change can only grow stronger.





2

Regional challenges

If the Mid North Coast is to retain its rich natural assets and opportunities for sustainable development, careful management of its future growth is required. This is a considerable challenge, given the high and sustained population growth rate, the need to maintain jobs growth to match population increases, and the quality of the Region's natural environment.

ENVIRONMENT

The Mid North Coast contains a wealth of natural features, resources and landscapes that have provided the foundations for continued steady economic and population growth since early settlement. The Region is made up of a diverse range of landscape elements including coastal plains, escarpments, rivers, estuaries, lakes and a still largely natural coastline. Several of the rainforest national parks have been given world heritage status. The coastal

landscapes have long been the main attraction for tourists and are now the areas in demand for settlement.

The environmental values of the Region have been recognised through the reservation of more than 20 per cent of the land, totalling around 600 000 hectares, in national parks, wilderness and other conservation reserves, as well as over 1000 Crown reserves and two marine parks. There are also around 700 wetlands protected along the coastal strip under a State environmental planning policy. More than 70 littoral rainforests have been similarly protected under a State environmental planning policy. Outside of these reserved and protected areas extensive amounts of high value vegetation provide habitat for a wide range of species including threatened flora and fauna. It is these values, in particular the significance of the coastal environment, that make

the Mid North Coast a special place to be protected.

The Region is rich in natural resources such as fisheries, timber, groundwater, extractive resources and productive soils. These resources are an important part of the regional economy that requires careful management. Protection of important farmland from development pressures is one such natural resource imperative. It is critical to keep the best farmland areas intact to maintain economic opportunity for primary production for future generations.

Some areas in the Region are subject to natural hazards such as acid sulfate soils, flooding, and coastal inundation and recession. These issues need to be carefully managed when considering future development particularly in light of the potential coastline changes associated with climate change.



In light of the amount and quality of environmentally sensitive areas and the value of natural resources, future planning decisions will need to be made in the face of increasing shortages of unconstrained land. Much of the suitable land has already been used and the remaining suitable land that is free of constraints must be used to its greatest advantage.

The environmental challenges are to:

- protect and enhance environmental assets, including biodiversity, wetlands, littoral rainforest, threatened species habitat, estuaries and landscape values
- ensure sustainable use of natural resources
- better understand and manage natural hazards, including flooding, coastal erosion and inundation, land instability, bushfire hazard and acid sulfate soils.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

With continued migration to the area, the Mid North Coast has been one of the faster growth regions of NSW. When growth is driven by migration, it can be difficult to predict how the rate of growth will continue.

However, given factors such as the impending shift to coastal lifestyles associated with the retirement of the so called baby boomer generation and the greater accessibility of the Region arising from improvements to the Pacific Highway, it is likely that the Region will continue to experience strong population increases.

The Regional Strategy is based on a potential population increase of 94 000 between 2006 and 2031, growing from 330 600 to 424 600. These figures are compiled by the NSW Department of Planning which is responsible for producing the official NSW population projections for State government planning purposes. This represents an increase of more than 28 per cent. The average annual growth rate is expected to be approximately 1.1 per cent over the next 25 years, which will be among the highest regional growth rates in NSW. However, because of the difficulties of forecasting growth in areas driven by migration and tourist demand, this Regional Strategy has the capacity within the mapped growth areas to accommodate population growth rates higher than forecast in all subregions.

The Strategy, through ongoing monitoring and five-yearly reviews, will adapt to any changes in housing demand in the Region or parts thereof.

The greatest population growth pressure will be experienced around Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Great Lakes/Taree. New initiatives to manage coastal growth will accommodate the expected growth while protecting coastal values. Ensuring that new developments are environmentally sustainable, as well as compatible with existing towns and villages is critical to protecting not only the coastal values that exist in these places, but also the economic benefits arising from tourism that depends on these coastal values.

While the population is increasing, a considerable challenge also arises from the ageing of the population. The median age is expected to increase from 44 years in 2006 to 55 years in 2031, and the population aged 65 years and over will more than double. At the same time the proportion of children under 15 years will decline from 19 per cent to 14 per cent of the regional population.

These population changes will impact on the type and availability of dwellings that will be needed. By 2031, an additional 59 600 dwellings will be required to satisfy population growth, the changing age structure and declining occupancy rates as well as some expected tourism demands. Currently 80 per cent of all dwellings in the Region are detached houses but with



demographic change and lower occupancy ratios there will need to be a greater proportion of multiunit dwellings in future to provide accessible and adaptable housing choices. This can be achieved by increasing the amount of attached or multi-unit housing from its current level of 20 per cent to 40 per cent.

The population and housing challenges are to:

- closely monitor and review population increases and migration trends
- manage the expected population growth in a way that retains the coastal and local character of existing

settlements, enhances a sense of community, prevents urban sprawl and limits damage to environmental and rural production values

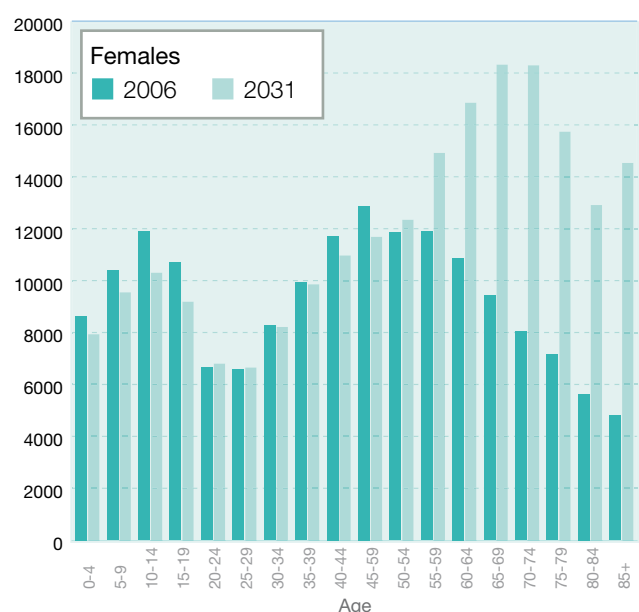
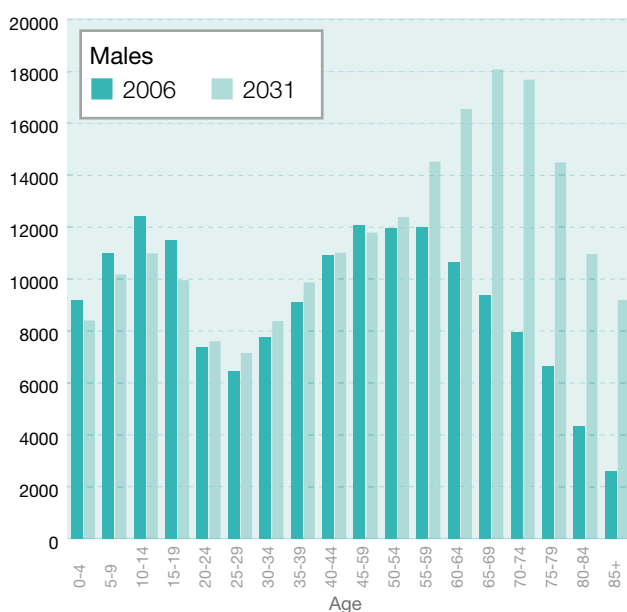
- reinforce the role of major regional centres and towns
- provide housing choice and affordability in the right locations reflecting changing population characteristics and associated reduction in household occupancy ratios
- provide a framework for the planning of new infrastructure and facilities for the growing and ageing population
- ensure that new development

reflects and enhances the character of the settlement in which it is located and is based on best practice urban design principles.

ECONOMY

Over the last twenty years the NSW Mid North Coast Region has evolved from a coastal retirement and tourist destination with a significant agricultural base (forestry, fishing, farming) to a region with a diversified service-based economy. Population growth has driven significant urban expansion, primarily centred on the Region's coastal centres. The pressures of rapid urban expansion, combined with

Age distribution, Mid-North Coast Region, 2006 and projected 2031





regional challenges

a restructuring of the Region's agricultural sectors, have posed major challenges for the organisations responsible for the provision of essential infrastructure and public services.

This growth has also placed great pressure on land use, with a growing need to balance the protection and conservation of the natural environment, the use of productive agricultural land and sustainable utilisation of the Region's natural resources, and urban expansion and settlement.

The Region's economy is now largely based on service, manufacturing, construction and primary industries. Many of the industries depend on environmental and natural resources such as extractive materials, forests, soils and water, which must be protected in the face of the growing population. A regional forest agreement is in place to conserve and sustainably manage the Region's native forests.

Tourism remains a significant component of the regional economy. The Mid North Coast has over 3.3 million overnight visitors each year, spending over \$1.5 billion. It is estimated that tourism employs more than 9000 people in the Region. This highlights the need to ensure that the character and appeal of coastal towns, villages and their hinterland,

which are drawcards for visitors, is not lost through inappropriate development.

Agricultural production also remains a key industry of the Region. While agricultural industries have declined as a per cent of all industry types, they are still critical to the economic health of local communities, the Region and the State, and are likely to become more so in the face of rising energy costs and the impacts nationally of climate change. Sustaining and growing existing industries such as dairying, oyster farming and horticulture, while encouraging diversification into other agricultural products, will be critical to the future of primary production in the Region.

As at 2006 there were about 99 300 jobs in the Region. The population growth in the Region by 2031 will generate a requirement for a projected 48 500 jobs.

Comparison between the 2006 and 2031 population profiles suggests that there will be about the same number of working age people in the Region in 2031 as there are now, despite the general increase in population. The Region therefore faces a significant challenge in finding enough suitable workers to fill expected job vacancy growth. If the need for additional workers results in more working age people coming to or staying in the Region, then

population growth could increase beyond current forecasts.

The main economic challenges are to:

- support the creation of additional service jobs by supplying adequate and well located commercial and industrial floor space within centres
- augment industrial land supply within each subregion, in particular at or near the higher order centres, to accommodate future growth needs
- recognise the value of existing primary industries and ensure land use planning decisions do not hinder the growth and diversification of primary production
- encourage new export industries to give the regional economy greater diversity and resilience and ensure that the jobs market offers a broader mix of employment options including high-wage high-skill positions
- build on the employment sectors that are currently successful and maintain the qualities that make the Region desirable to visitors.



3

A vision for the future

The vision for the Mid North Coast is to maintain and enhance the opportunity for the communities of the Region to experience a healthy, prosperous and sustainable lifestyle.

OPPORTUNITY

An extensive coastal region midway between Sydney and Brisbane with close links to the Hunter Region and outstanding natural and cultural assets, the Mid North Coast is 'a region of opportunity'.

HEALTHY

A healthy environment, lifestyle and economy as well as individual physical wellbeing.

PROSPERITY

Community members can achieve their lifestyle aspirations with collectively limited reliance on welfare.

SUSTAINABILITY

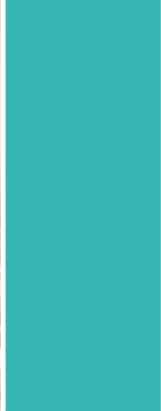
Recognising the links between our economy, environment, natural resources and quality of life, now and in the future. This requires that in taking advantage of the opportunities of the Region we leave equal opportunity for future generations to do the same.



3

a vision for
the future





THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

The Regional Strategy will guide sustainable development of the Mid North Coast Region over the next 25 years. It aims to:

- Protect high value environments, including significant coastal lakes, estuaries, aquifers, threatened species, vegetation communities and habitat corridors by ensuring that new urban development avoids these important areas and their catchments.
- Cater for a minimum housing demand of 59 600 new dwellings by 2031 to accommodate the forecast population increase of 94 000 and any anticipated growth beyond this figure arising from increased development pressures in the Region.
- Ensure that new housing meets the needs of smaller households and an ageing population by encouraging a shift in dwelling mix and type so that 60 per cent of new housing is the traditional detached style and 40 per cent is of multiunit style.
- Ensure an adequate supply of land exists to support economic growth and the capacity for an additional 48 500 jobs in the Region by protecting existing commercial and employment areas and securing sufficient land to support new employment opportunities.
- Encourage the growth and redevelopment of the Region's four major regional centres and six major towns as a means of protecting sensitive coastal and natural environments and strengthening the economic and administrative functions of these centres as well as meeting increased housing density targets.
- Protect the coast and the character of coastal villages by limiting growth to the agreed growth areas of towns and villages leaving greenbelts between settlements.
- Direct new rural residential development to areas close to existing settlements away from the coast.
- Only consider additional development sites outside of growth areas if they can satisfy the Sustainability Criteria (Appendix 1).
- Designate a Coastal Area east of the proposed final alignment of the Pacific Highway from which application of the Sustainability Criteria will be excluded (noting that approximately 70 per cent of the future dwelling capacity identified within growth areas is already within the Coastal Area).
- Limit development in places constrained by coastal processes, flooding, wetlands, important primary industry land and landscapes of high scenic and conservation value.
- Protect the cultural and Aboriginal heritage values and visual character of rural and coastal towns and villages and surrounding landscapes.
- Where development or rezoning increases the need for State infrastructure, the Minister for Planning may require a contribution to the infrastructure having regard to the NSW Government State Infrastructure Strategy and equity considerations.

MAJOR REGIONAL CENTRE

Major regional centres are existing centres suited to accommodate the majority of regional population growth and employment opportunities, and to deliver state and regional services to the entire Region or within the centre's subregion. A concentration of medium to higher density living, business, employment, professional services, higher order shopping, warehouses, transport logistics and bulky goods operations will be located in these centres. They will be the focal point for subregional road and other transport networks.

> GRAFTON

Serves the Clarence Valley subregion with major services and has some regional functions; in particular it is a major centre for state government administration in the Region. It also has significant capacity to grow through infill and with future residential growth around Junction Hill and Clarence. It has land and infrastructure available to greatly increase its industrial capacity.

> COFFS HARBOUR

Serves the Coffs Harbour/Bellingen/Nambucca subregion and has several regional functions including air transport, tertiary education, high level health care and resort tourism. It has significant capacity to grow in the life of this Strategy. A mix of medium to high densities will be encouraged around the town centre and in key precincts such as the Jetty area and Park Beach.

> PORT MACQUARIE

Serves the Kempsey/Port Macquarie-Hastings subregion and has several regional functions including tertiary education, health care and resort tourism. It has significant capacity to grow in the life of this Strategy. New urban release areas will be developed at Thuramster and Bonny Hills. Ongoing development of taller buildings will continue around the central business area.

> TAREE

Serves the Greater Taree/Great Lakes subregion with major services and some regional functions, notably health care. It has land and infrastructure capacity to accommodate significant industrial and residential growth. Development of taller buildings will be encouraged around the Taree town centre.

MAJOR TOWN

Major towns have a functional role in serving their subregions with outreaches of regional services. They are self-contained with shopping and business services and may have bulky goods, warehousing, transport logistics, farm support services, health and professional services mixed with some medium density residential.

TOWN

Like Major Towns, Towns are larger settlements, however their service catchments are limited relative to Major Towns. They have a small to medium scale concentration of retail, health and other services with lower density residential. They are reliant on major regional centres and major towns for high order services, retailing and employment.

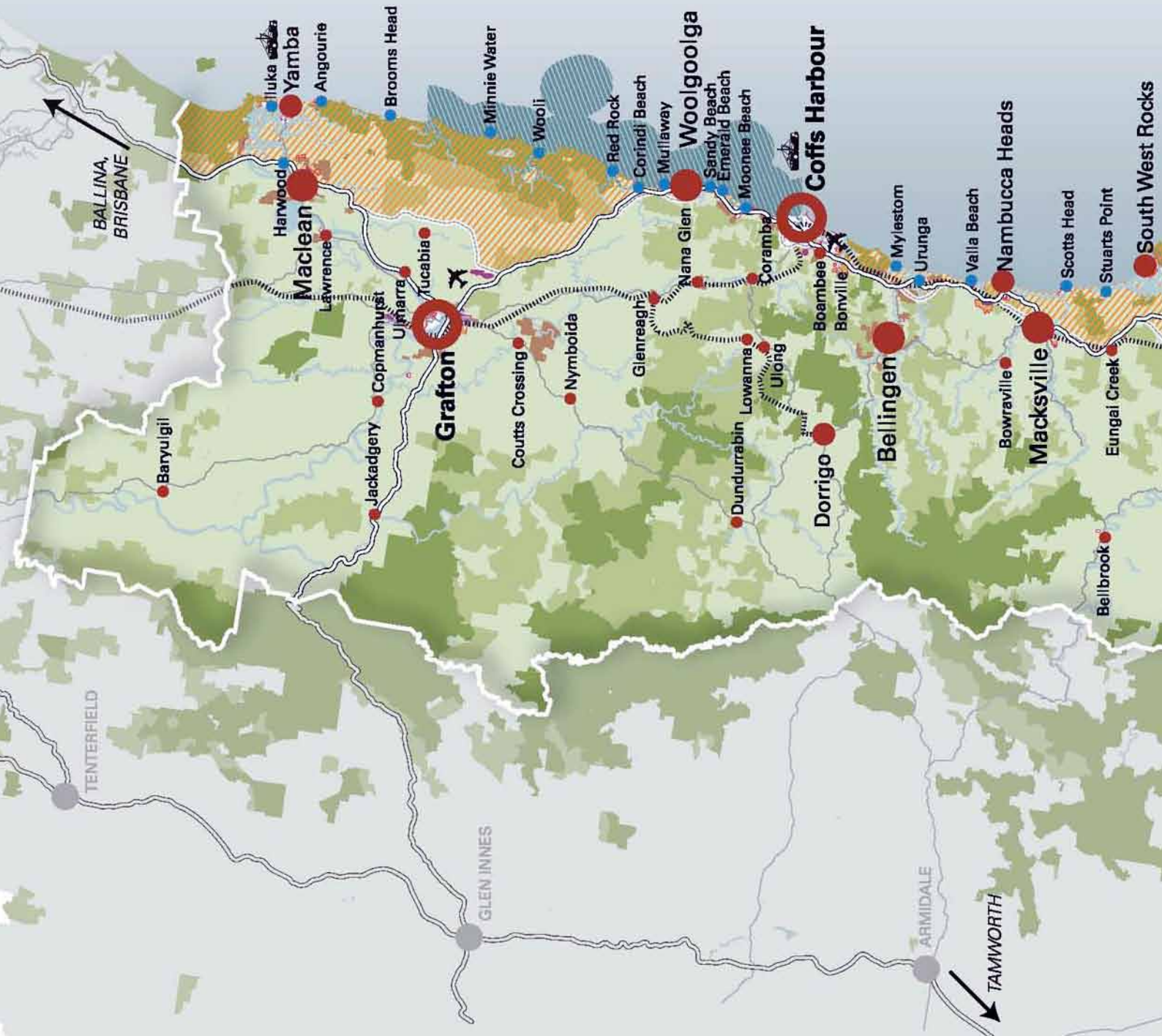
VILLAGE – INLAND

Villages are smaller settlements which have limited local services. Coastal Villages are located in the Coastal Area.

VILLAGE – COASTAL

GROWTH AREA BOUNDARY

Includes all land zoned for various urban purposes and all future urban land release areas. This area will provide for housing, business, industrial, infrastructure, community facilities, urban open space and environmental uses to accommodate the future regional population.



Not all land identified can be developed for urban uses. All sites will be subject to more detailed investigations to determine capability and future yield.

EXISTING URBAN AREA
These areas are already zoned for urban uses.

PROPOSED FUTURE URBAN RELEASE
Locations identified for future green fields land release. These areas will be developed to function as new communities with service provision to match the future population of the area.

EXISTING EMPLOYMENT **PROPOSED EMPLOYMENT LANDS**
Provides for various employment related activities such as factories, warehouses, manufacturing and transport logistics. Identifies additional future lands to meet regional employment needs.

SITES WITH SIGNIFICANT ISSUES
Sites whose status as Growth Areas is contingent upon successful resolution of planning issues. Refer to Appendix 2 for detail.

EXISTING RURAL RESIDENTIAL AREAS
These areas are already zoned for rural residential use.

COASTAL AREA
Recognises the significance of the Region's coastal area in terms of environmental values, regional lifestyle and economic impacts associated with tourism and urban development. Places limits on future urban and rural residential land releases.

MARINE PARK/PROTECTION

STATE FOREST **NATIONAL PARK, NATURE RESERVE, CONSERVATION AND WORLD HERITAGE AREAS**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS AND RURAL LAND
Identifies areas with environmental, landscape, natural resource and agricultural production values. This area will be protected from further urban settlement with existing land use rights maintained.

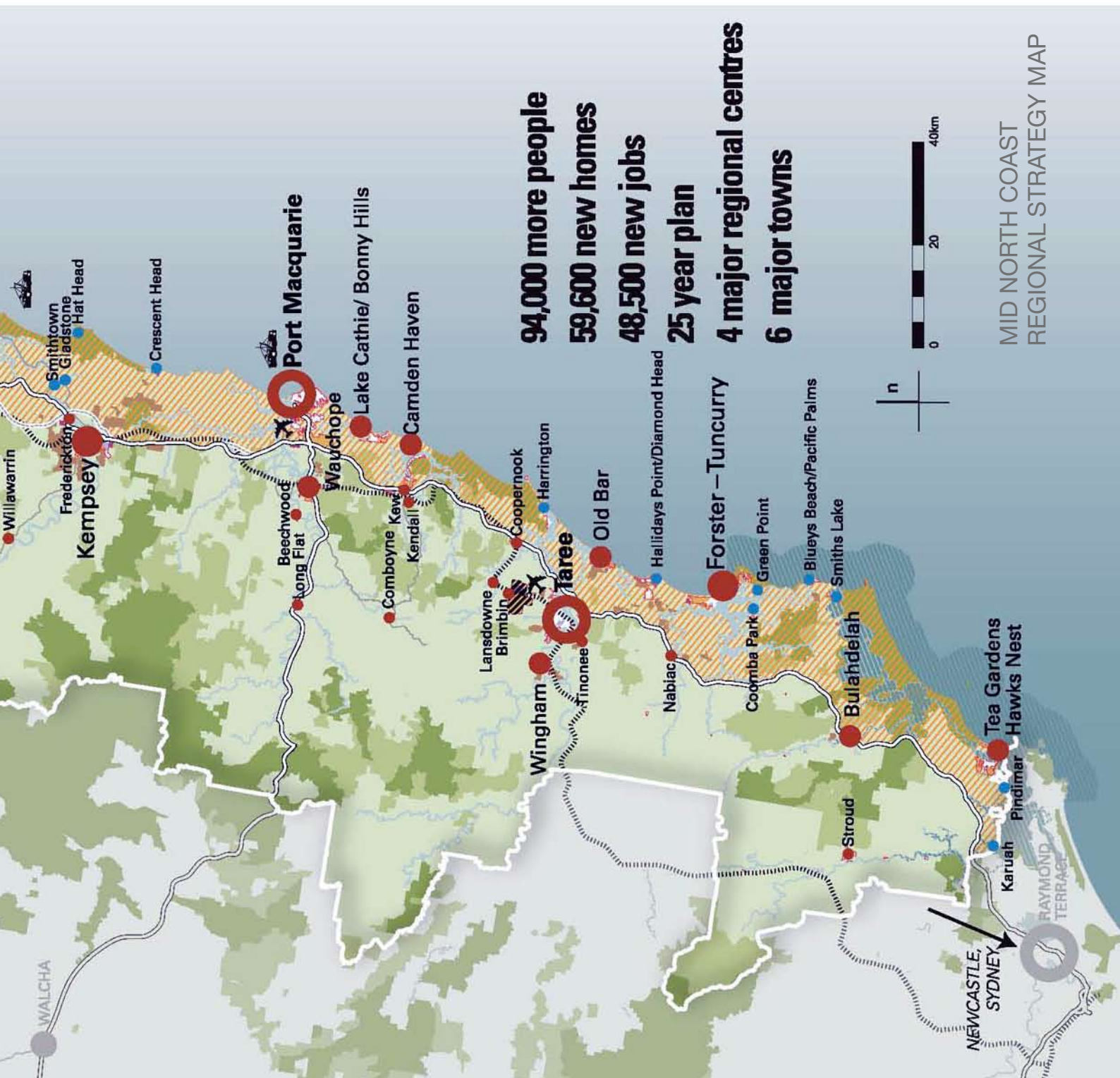
AIRPORTS

PRIORITY SHIPPING ENTRANCES FOR NAVIGATION

RAIL LINE

HIGHWAY

PROPOSED HIGHWAY UPGRADE CORRIDOR



94,000 more people
59,600 new homes
48,500 new jobs
25 year plan
4 major regional centres
6 major towns

MID NORTH COAST
REGIONAL STRATEGY MAP



Settlement and housing

BACKGROUND

The Mid North Coast Region has been one of the fastest and most consistent growth regions of NSW. This growth has seen the ongoing expansion of the settled area of the Region, as well as a continuing demand for more housing in both new urban areas and through the redevelopment of existing centres. The demand for new dwellings will be driven by a number of factors including population increase, tourism and the impact of changing demographic trends on housing preferences.

Currently there are 330 600 people living on the Mid North Coast. Population projections have identified that there will be an additional 94 000 people living in the Region by 2031, or a total population of 424 600.

The population projections used in the Regional Strategy are official projections provided by the Department of Planning, which is responsible for producing

population projections for the NSW Government for planning purposes. In undertaking its population projections, the Department has recognised that a substantial component of the growth of the Region arises from continued migration to the area driven by factors such as retirement opportunities, relative housing affordability or the demand for a different lifestyle. As with all areas where growth is heavily influenced by migration, it is necessary to monitor the extent of population increase regularly to ensure that changes (either increases or decreases) are identified.

As the population of the Region increases, it will also age and reflect changes in living patterns, particularly the decline in occupancy rates. The most significant implication of these ageing and housing trends will be that smaller households will form and a greater number of dwellings for single person and couple-only households will be needed. These trends mean that the number of

dwellings will increase and that new styles of housing, particularly smaller and easier to manage dwellings, will be required.

As with all coastal regions, the population of the Region at any one time will also include a number of tourists. The most dramatic population increases will be experienced during the tourism peak seasons at Christmas and at Easter, although there will also be a degree of tourism visitation throughout the year. Tourism will also drive some of the demand for new dwellings, whether this is through the construction of specific tourism accommodation such as hotels and resorts or through the development of short-term stay opportunities such as selfcatered apartments or holiday homes.

Vacancy rates and peak holiday populations within the Region show the strong influence that tourism has on the demand for dwellings in the area. The average number of unoccupied dwellings in the Region at the 2006 census



was approximately 13 per cent. This is higher than the NSW average of 9.5 per cent. Great Lakes had the highest number of unoccupied dwellings being just below 24 per cent, whilst Coffs Harbour had the lowest at just over nine per cent.

Overall the style of housing in the Region is typically detached, with less than 20 per cent of dwellings currently being of a multi-unit nature such as residential flats or townhouses and villas. These splits vary from place to place. For example, there are higher rates of residential flats, townhouses and villas in the major towns and centres such as Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and at Forster–Tuncurry.

With the ageing of the Region's population resulting in lower occupancy rates and at least 10 per cent of housing stock being needed for tourism, it will be necessary to produce at least an additional 59 600 dwellings over the next 25 years. These dwellings will be predominantly

located within and adjacent to existing towns and centres. The central business districts of the four major regional centres can accommodate a greater number of dwellings, provided that careful attention is paid to good urban design and the protection of the public domain.

The Strategy recognises that the location of tourism areas needs to be carefully managed to maintain the character and scale of settlements. Where possible, the Strategy seeks to direct tourism-based demands for dwellings into existing urban areas.

REGIONAL STRUCTURE AND SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

The Region, extending about 500 kilometres from north to south, has developed a hierarchy of settlement and servicing based around the main river valleys and transport routes, including sea ports. More recently the attraction of new settlers to

coastal locations has changed the traditional hierarchy and placed pressure on coastal areas.

Four distinct subregions have been recognised in the Strategy each with its own major regional centre. Each centre is reasonably accessible to the whole subregion and can provide the main State and regional services and higher order retailing, industry and related employment to that subregion. These centres are supported by major towns which can provide extensions of regional services and are important foundations of the hierarchy of centres.

The four subregions are:

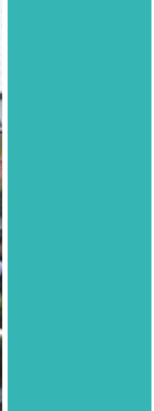
- Clarence—incorporating the Clarence Valley local government area, centred on the major regional centre of Grafton and supported by the major town of Maclean
- Coffs Coast—incorporating the local government areas of Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Nambucca, centred on the



SETTLEMENT PLANNING PRINCIPLES

When preparing local growth management strategies councils will be required to identify the growth areas for their centres, towns and villages using the following settlement planning principles:

- The four major regional centres will be promoted as the focus of settlement, employment and regional services. Major towns will provide major local services, as well as outreach centres for the provision of regional services. Potential opportunities for the growth in retail and commercial capacity of these centres are to be identified.
 - Development within all centres, towns and villages will respect and respond to the character of the area.
 - Planning for new settlement will respect the environmental, coastal and cultural heritage values of the landscape. Key environmental, cultural and coastal features will be protected, while settlement will be directed towards less valuable areas.
- > Any growth of coastal towns and villages will protect environmentally fragile areas and preserve the scenic values of the coastal landscape.
 - > Growth of inland towns and villages will be focused in areas where extra population is needed to make existing services more viable and if the risk of environmental degradation is low.
- New settlement areas will be located so as to enable the integration of transport services with the provision of community services and retail activity.
 - Settlement areas will be appropriately located and designed to maximise the affordability of housing, as well as to provide the type of housing styles and dwelling mixes that are appropriate to the ageing of the population.
 - New settlement areas are only to be identified after infrastructure capacities have been reviewed and environmental suitability assessed.
- Greater detail on the application of these settlement planning principles and the preparation of local growth management strategies is provided in the Settlement Planning Guidelines (2007) prepared by the Department of Planning for the Mid and Far North Coast. These guidelines will assist councils in preparing their local growth management strategies and implementing the Regional Strategy at the local level. They include:
- guidance on the preparation of a local growth management strategy, including its content and scope
 - settlement planning principles for development
 - a framework for a new Mid North Coast housing and land monitor
 - application of regional mapping data.



major regional centre of Coffs Harbour and supported by the major towns of Woolgoolga, Bellingen and Macksville

- Hastings–Macleay Valley—incorporating the local government areas of Kempsey and Port Macquarie–Hastings, centred on the major regional centre of Port Macquarie and supported by the major town of Kempsey
- Manning Valley–Great Lakes—incorporating the local government areas of Greater Taree and Great Lakes, centred on the major regional centre of Taree and supported by the major town of Forster–Tuncurry with strong economic and service links to Newcastle and the Hunter.

The Strategy proposes that the majority of residential and employment growth will occur in the higher order centres listed above.

Towns, identified in the settlement hierarchy, provide services just to their local area. Modest growth is planned for several of the Region's towns. In most cases the villages have very limited local services and few job opportunities. They are often located in environmentally sensitive areas such as at coastal headlands and estuaries and as a consequence their growth capacity is limited.

The Strategy map shows the full hierarchy of settlement for the Region, including the major regional centres, major towns, towns and villages.

GROWTH AREA PLANNING

This Strategy includes maps of growth areas designated to contain expected housing and employment land in the Region over the next 25 years (see back of document). The growth area maps will be used by local councils to define the land available to investigate for release as they prepare their local growth management strategies. The local growth management strategies will need to be agreed between councils and the Department of Planning before any rezoning can take place.

The location and extent of the growth areas reflects the settlement hierarchy, planning principles and the subregional dwelling projections.

Additional capacity has also been included within the growth area boundaries to allow councils greater scope for investigation of release areas, as a contingency to allow for population growth in excess of expectations, to assist with housing choice and affordability and to cater for residential tourism demand.

Not all land identified within the growth areas or local growth management strategies will be developed for urban uses. The rezoning of land or the development of existing zoned land within the growth areas for urban, commercial or industrial uses will be subject to more detailed investigations to determine capability and future yield. Land that is subject to significant natural hazards and/or environmental constraints will be excluded from development. Other land may be required for open space, drainage, maintenance of interurban breaks or environmental uses/buffers and will be protected for these purposes.

Eight of the mapped growth areas are shown hatched on the growth area maps. These sites have significant issues to be resolved to determine the extent of final development footprint and dwelling yield. Appendix 2 identifies the issues which need to be resolved for each of these sites.

Open space may be located outside the growth areas where suitable land is not available within the mapped areas. In determining where future open space for parks, playing fields and so on may be located outside the growth areas, areas of high environmental or natural resource value should be avoided.



Where demonstrated through the local growth management strategy or rezoning process that a reasonable adjustment to a growth area boundary is desirable and is consistent with the Regional Strategy, then a variation of the boundary may be considered. In determining the extent of any variation, consideration will be given to the efficient use of infrastructure/ services, avoidance of significant environmental constraints and natural resources, and reinforcement of the regional settlement hierarchy. Any variation will be determined through a joint analysis undertaken between the Department of Planning and the local council.

COASTAL AREA

The Strategy map defines a Coastal Area, located east of the proposed final alignment of the Pacific Highway. This area, which includes areas of high environmental sensitivity, coastal lakes and estuaries, significant wetlands and littoral rainforests, and the iconic coastal scenery and villages has been subject to the greatest growth pressures. Much of the Region's economic and lifestyle value is derived from this Coastal Area. Management of these natural values is a high priority of all levels of government.

The Regional Strategy confines any future urban settlement in the Coastal Area into the mapped growth areas. This action will ease development pressure on some of the State's most prized coastal assets and will maintain 'green breaks' between coastal settlements.

In order to limit urban growth along the coast and ensure efficiencies in land utilisation and infrastructure provision, no further rezoning for rural residential development, other than land in a current or future approved local growth management strategy (or rural residential release strategy) will be permitted in the Coastal Area.

DWELLING PROJECTIONS AND LAND AVAILABILITY

Each of the councils in the Region has an immediate supply of zoned land for urban development that can meet short and medium term demand and most also have additional land identified in local settlement strategies for the longer term. Collectively, the zoned and identified land is adequate to meet the needs of the Region for the next 20 years, particularly if greater infill development is pursued under the policies outlined in the Regional Strategy. However, in some high growth coastal settlements, the opportunity for further growth is

likely to be exhausted within the lifetime of this Regional Strategy.

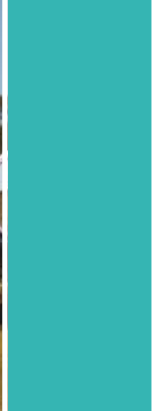
The set of growth area maps at the end of this Strategy show the land currently zoned for urban uses and the proposed new growth areas to meet urban, including employment land, demand to 2031. The maps reflect the hierarchy of settlement shown in the Strategy map, with the main focal points for growth being in the major regional centres of Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Taree and Grafton.

The minimum dwelling requirements for the Region's four subregions are set out in the table opposite.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Rural residential development will continue to be possible as one form of housing choice for the Region. However any new planning for rural residential settlement should focus on land close to an existing urban settlement, away from the coast, away from areas that may in the future have value as urban expansion areas, where significant vegetation clearing would not be required and where current or potential future primary production will not be affected.

Protection of primary production and biodiversity values of rural areas will be achieved by limiting settlement and controlling subdivision.



Minimum dwelling requirements for the four subregions

Subregion	Minimum dwelling requirements
Clarence	7 100 dwellings
Coffs Coast	19 200 dwellings
Hastings–Macleay Valley	18 300 dwellings
Manning Valley–Great Lakes	15 000 dwellings

OUTCOMES

The growth area maps in this Strategy include enough land to accommodate the expected population, plus an additional capacity to assist with housing affordability, market choice, avoidance of constraints within growth areas, and to allow for possible greater population growth than expected.

Settlement will be focused on the four major regional centres at Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Taree, and Grafton and the six major towns in the Region, where the most efficient use can be made of existing and new infrastructure. Opportunities for settlement expansion will be limited to those areas identified within the Strategy's growth area maps or where the proposal meets the Sustainability Criteria set out in Appendix 1, where they apply. The Strategy map identifies the 'Coastal Area', which is east of the new alignment of the Pacific Highway, from which application of the Sustainability Criteria is excluded.

The identification of new settlement areas in this Strategy focuses on locations that will minimise impacts on coastal values. Growth of inland centres and towns will be encouraged over the expansion of coastal areas. Key environmental and coastal values, such as scenic landscapes, coastal villages and green breaks between settlements will be retained. New settlement areas will be carefully planned within the growth areas, through local growth management strategies.

Higher dwelling densities in the major coastal regional centres of Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie, as well as major towns such as Forster–Tuncurry and Woolgoolga will enable an appropriate mix of housing styles. Similarly, opportunities for increased dwelling densities will be explored in inland centres and towns such as Taree and Grafton, as well as Maclean, Bellingen and Macksville. Where these higher density housing styles are able to be met, consistent with character and design values, it will enable affordability and tourism demands to be met, while

encouraging housing opportunities appropriate to the ageing of the population.

The focusing of new settlement in major regional centres and major towns will be reflected in a change to the split between detached and attached dwelling types. The current split of 80 per cent detached dwellings to 20 per cent attached will become 60 per cent detached and 40 per cent attached for new dwellings over the lifetime of the Strategy.

ACTIONS

Urban settlement

- Local growth management strategies, local environmental plans and other statutory planning controls will align with the Regional Strategy's settlement network (as shown on the growth area maps) to contain the spread of urban development, efficiently utilise existing services and infrastructure, and protect areas of high conservation value.

4

settlement and housing

- Councils will plan for a range of housing types of appropriate density, location and suitability that are capable of adapting and responding to the ageing of the population.
- Councils will consider a range of affordable housing strategies, including forms of low cost housing, suitable zonings and development controls to improve housing affordability and choice. These strategies must be consistent with relevant State policies.
- Where development or rezoning increases the need for State infrastructure, the Minister for Planning may require a contribution to the provision of the infrastructure having regard to the State Infrastructure Strategy and equity considerations.
- Local environmental plans cannot use the 'Transition zone' to identify land for future urban investigation.
- Local environmental plans will maintain interurban breaks between existing and new settlements.
- Greenfield sites outside the growth areas contained in local growth management strategies may be developed, subject to satisfying the Sustainability Criteria in Appendix 1. This

provision does not apply in the Coastal Area as shown on the Strategy map.

Rural residential development

- Future rural residential land will only be zoned for release if it is in accordance with a local growth management strategy agreed to between council and the Department of Planning and consistent with the principles of the Settlement Planning Guidelines.
- No new rural residential development will be permitted within the Coastal Area, other than development already zoned or in an approved current or future local growth management strategy (or rural residential land release strategy).
- Planning for rural residential land must be integrated with the supply of infrastructure and transport.

Subdivision, houses and other uses in rural zones

- Councils will maintain appropriate subdivision standards for rural zones consistent with the principles of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008.
- Local environmental plans will include minimum subdivision standards for rural and environment protection zones.
- Local environmental plans will include provisions to limit dwellings in rural and environmental zones.
- New caravan parks and manufactured home estates where there is any potential for permanent accommodation to occur, generally should be located in urban areas.
- Local environmental plans generally should locate major health and education facilities in urban areas.





Settlement character and design

BACKGROUND

The Region's towns and villages have developed a distinct character reflecting their historical development in a subtropical and temperate landscape. The coastal villages in particular are valued by the community because of their scenic appeal and lifestyle opportunities. Many of the non-coastal settlements have values and character attributes based on their settings in rural and riverine landscapes.

It is the character of the towns and villages that sets the Region apart from other places in NSW and encourages tourists to return to the Region year after year. It is important that the essential elements of these values and character be captured and understood so that new development can be sympathetic to it. Making character and design guidance available to developers and decision-makers will result in higher quality development responsive to the Region's climate, natural features and landscape.

As the Region continues to grow, it will be necessary for the character of the area to evolve to reflect other demands such as the need for jobs, better services and a range of housing types appropriate to the location. This evolution should not be at the expense of the underlying coastal values of the Region, and should help to define and enhance the coastal values by offering greater opportunities to preserve and protect important environmental and scenic landscapes. Increased densities within key centres and towns will help to achieve these goals.

With a careful design approach there is potential for councils to consider higher densities and review their height limits in centres. Some key advantages of having a taller building precinct in the main business area of a major centre are:

- reinforcing the public's perception of where the main business centre is relative to neighbourhood business centres

- reinforcing investors' perceptions of a centre's status relative to other settlement in the Region, thereby attracting further investment. This in turn increases the level of services and consolidates the centre's regional status
- the potential for residential accommodation above commercial space, which can bring a higher level of vibrancy to the centre
- a greater number of people and business in the most active parts of a centre without consuming additional land
- achieving economies of scale in the provision of basic services such as roads, drainage, water supply and sewerage
- alleviating the pressure to develop in other more sensitive locations.

There are opportunities for significant increases of density in a number of major regional centres



and towns, for example, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie.

Ensuring that the character of the coast is reflected in subdivision patterns, the identification of public domain areas and building controls relies on an understanding of the environmental, social and economic factors that define urban areas. As part of the preparation of local strategies and development controls, councils will be encouraged to clearly define character statements for their centres and towns as well as the likely future character of new urban areas.

OUTCOMES

Future built form will reflect the existing positive design aspects of character, streetscape and landscape. Building heights will be established to reflect the

future form and function of the settlement, and manage visual impacts in urban and coastal areas.

New development will include a range of well designed housing choices and an urban form based on 'neighbourhood planning principles', which maximise pedestrian and bicycle access across the settlement areas, and provide easy access to services and facilities. The result will be better places to live, with attractive, adaptable and self-reliant settlements that foster a strong sense of community.

A network of open space within and between settlements will cater for recreation, nature conservation and social interaction. Conservation of the environmental heritage of the Region will be

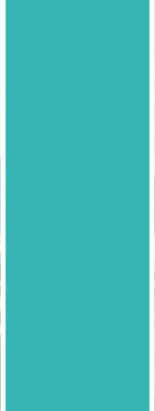
promoted, including historic townscapes and places of heritage significance.

ACTIONS

- Councils will prepare desired character statements for their localities, having regard for the Department's *North Coast urban design guidelines* (2009). Provisions should be included in development control plans to ensure that new development enhances the desired character and is based on the 'neighbourhood planning principles' listed below as well as the following:
 - > New buildings will be designed to maximise adaptability for changing demographic trends and alternative future uses.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of land uses to provide the right mix of houses, jobs, open space, recreational space and green space. • Easy access (including public transport where viable) to major centres with a full range of shops, recreational facilities and services along with smaller village centres and neighbourhood shops. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs available locally and regionally, reducing travel times and the demand for transport services. • Streets and suburbs planned so that residents can walk and cycle to shops for their daily needs. • A wide range of housing choices to provide for different | <p>needs and incomes. Traditional houses on their own block will be available along with smaller lower maintenance homes, units and terraces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation lands in and around development sites to help protect biodiversity and provide open space for recreation. |
|---|---|--|



- > New development will be designed to respond to the subtropical and temperate climate of the Region through best practice energy efficient design, landscaping and materials.
- > Land use and transport planning will be integrated to minimise the need to travel, and to encourage energy and resource efficiency.
- > New development will be designed to reflect and enhance the natural, cultural, visual and built character and values of the local and regional landscape.
- New and changing urban areas will provide access to natural features such as coastal foreshore and riparian lands, consistent with the maintenance of ecological values.
- New and changing settlement areas will incorporate open space that is accessible to the public and which provides opportunities for recreation, nature conservation, social interaction, and visual enhancement and amenity.
- Commercial centres in villages will be multifunctional, mixed-use areas (including residential) catering for diverse community needs.
- Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Greater Taree and Clarence Valley councils will be encouraged to review the building height limits in the central business areas of Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Taree and Grafton respectively with a view to increasing heights (and therefore development densities) where consistent with heritage and other local considerations.
- Local environmental plans will set building heights in urban areas. Height limits should reflect the landscape character, function and hierarchy of the future settlement and visual and cultural amenity of its location.
- Local environmental plans for areas subject to the NSW Government Coastal Policy will incorporate provisions to achieve the outcomes of the Coastal Policy with respect to overshadowing. Generally, development on urban land in Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie or Forster-Tuncurry will not result in the beach or adjoining open space being overshadowed before 3.00 p.m. midwinter (standard time) or 6.30 p.m. midsummer (daylight savings time). For other beaches or waterfront open space in the Region, development will generally not result in overshadowing before 4.00 p.m. (midwinter) or 7.00 p.m. midsummer (daylight saving time).
- Local environmental plans, development control plans (and subsequent land release development) will be consistent with the *Settlement planning guidelines: Mid and Far North Coast regional strategies* (NSW Department of Planning 2007) *North Coast urban design guidelines* (NSW Department of Planning 2009) and the NSW Government's *Coastal design guidelines for NSW* (Coastal Council of NSW 2003) as applicable.
- Local environmental plans, development control plans, bike plans and pedestrian access and mobility plans will provide for an accessible and integrated network of walking and cycling routes for safe and convenient travel to local destinations and between key land uses within urban places.



Economic development and employment growth

BACKGROUND

Increases in the population of the Mid North Coast Region will create a demand for additional employment opportunities. Using current work participation rates and population projections it is expected that the capacity for an additional 48 500 jobs will need to be created. This will create sufficient capacity to meet the service needs of the growing population and additional capacity to help encourage additional workers to the region and reduce the ageing of the population.

Economic development and employment growth is expected in areas such as finance, administration, business services, health, aged care and tourism. The Mid North Coast Regional Development Board has identified these and other sectors as requiring additional employment lands capacity.

EMPLOYMENT LANDS

The anticipated employment potential associated with expected population growth translates to a projected need for a minimum

of 232 hectares of additional industrial land and about 210 hectares of commercial land (total 442 hectares). Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie in particular will require substantial industrial lands to support their future growth. However, opportunities exist elsewhere within the Region to provide some of these needs; for instance Nambucca Heads can build on its successful vehicle manufacturing cluster.

All of the Mid North Coast councils have some vacant land zoned ready to accommodate immediate employment land needs. The Strategy identifies a significant additional supply in all subregions to accommodate the expected needs to 2031. The four major regional centres have been targeted for growth in employment land supply. This will be strategically complemented by large areas near Kempsey and Nambucca Heads. The centres further from the coast in particular have the capacity to provide the land and other infrastructure to support industry with an export focus. These centres can also take advantage of the

Australian Rail Track Corporation's recent improvements to the North Coast rail line (Sydney – Brisbane).

The minimum amount of additional industrial land needed over the next 25 years when distributed across subregions is:

- Clarence subregion — 23 hectares
- Coffs Coast subregion — 86 hectares
- Hastings–Macleay Valley subregion — 84 hectares
- Manning Valley–Great Lakes subregion — 39 hectares.

The Strategy identifies sufficient industrial land to support the development of possible new industries and new job opportunities, and to establish an employment land bank for the future. This may assist in the affordability of employment land and provide a competitive surplus to encourage the establishment of new industries.

In identification of four major regional centres and supporting major towns, towns and villages,



the Strategy recognises the existing retail and service functions of centres in the Region. In order to meet employment capacity projections additional commercial floor space (including car parking and associated services) will need to be provided in a manner that maintains and reflects this hierarchy. Additional floor space will be established through the development and redevelopment of existing centres and business zones. However, it is recognised that some new commercial development will be needed to service new release areas and these areas will need to be consistent with the commercial hierarchy and integrated into the planning of these new areas.

It is expected that Taree, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Grafton will take the majority of future commercial development as these centres have the greatest capacity for redevelopment. Centres such as Forster–Tuncurry, Kempsey, Macksville, Bellingen, Woolgoolga and Maclean are also expected to undergo some growth and redevelopment of their commercial

centres reflecting their role as major towns. Fragmentation and out-of-centre retailing should be resisted unless compelling reasons exist in order to maintain the healthy retail and service functioning of particular centres in the Region.

Although recognising the importance of restricting commercial activity to existing centres it is also necessary to provide some commercial opportunities along the Pacific Highway in accordance with the Highway Service Centres Policy of the NSW Government. This policy, identified in the Ministerial Direction No. 5.4 issued under section 117 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, will govern the identification of the limited opportunities available for commercial development in the highway corridor.

Marine-related industry presents an important employment opportunity for the Region combining tourism, manufacturing and transport and storage. There is capacity for the supply of marine berths to grow to meet demand in the Mid

North Coast Region. Commercial synergies can be capitalised on between tourism and boating services to provide specialised employment. The Region is historically recognised for its boat building industry and provides sheltered, waterside locations for this industry to grow and provide more employment.

TOURISM

The Mid North Coast is an important tourist destination. It provides diverse attractions and opportunities including its beaches and headlands, the Solitary Islands and Port Stephens–Great Lakes Marine Parks, national parks (including World Heritage areas), rural scenery, river valleys, villages, arts/crafts and events. In particular, it is a Region which still allows for a traditional beachside holiday experience for families. The Region also has close connectivity with the New England Region, adding to the number of people easily able to visit the Mid North Coast and increasing the range of tourism opportunities available from the Mid North Coast.



Tourism generates significant economic and employment benefits for the Region. The Mid North Coast has over 3.3 million overnight visitors each year spending more than \$1.5 billion. It is estimated that tourism directly employs over 9000 people in the Region and indirectly generates or supports a large number of additional businesses, and therefore jobs.

The attractiveness of the Region is dependant on the high quality natural resources and landscape values which underpin tourism. Visitors are also drawn by the coastal character of the settlements. Clearly it is in the best economic interests of the Region to ensure that the scale of development, particularly tourist development, does not overwhelm these values.

The Strategy acknowledges and protects the Region's coastal and hinterland assets, which make it both a popular tourism destination and a desirable place to live. It will also be necessary to ensure that future tourism development is designed to blend with the urban settlement pattern, thereby protecting the ambience of the Region's village, coastal and rural areas.

OUTCOMES

Sufficient zoned and subdivided industrial land will be provided in all the major regional centres, major towns and towns (where there is capacity and where otherwise consistent with the policy directions of this Strategy) so that it is readily available when opportunities emerge.

Industrial areas will be closely associated within their settlements.

Buffers between industrial and residential areas will limit conflict.

Due to their scale or nature (e.g. hazards or noise emissions) certain industries are located outside of settlements. For example some marine-based industries may be located outside towns due to their need for access to navigable waterways.

The economic value of natural resources and natural environments in the Region will be recognised as an employment generator due to its importance to tourism and primary industries including agriculture, forestry, fishing and extractive/mining industries.

The hierarchy of settlement identified in this Strategy will be reflected in the hierarchy of commercial centres – consistent in scale and centrally located within each community. Commercial development will be located within the boundaries of towns and villages, utilising existing commercial centres where possible. The Pacific Highway corridor is an exception, requiring well located highway service centres with limited defined uses.

A range of tourism opportunities will be provided across the Region, taking advantage of the wide scope of tourism assets. Large scale tourism facilities will be located in the prime tourism development areas of Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour, and as identified in an approved local growth management strategy. Opportunities for smaller scale minimum-impact tourism ventures outside prime tourism development areas which relate to the landscape

and the environment will be provided.

The Regional Strategy acknowledges the importance of essential infrastructure to underpin settlement and employment in the Region, in particular access to water and energy. Local environmental plans will play an important role in securing regional infrastructure such as gas or water pipelines and electricity transmission lines by identifying infrastructure corridors.

ACTIONS

Employment in centres

- Local environmental plans (and other planning provisions) will facilitate employment growth in the major regional centres and major towns, as well as facilitate appropriate local jobs in towns and villages and recognise appropriate home-based employment opportunities.
- In preparing local environmental plans councils will liaise with water and energy providers and make provision for any regional gas, water or electricity infrastructure corridors that may be required.
- The opportunities and development potentials of commercial centres will be explored by councils and identified in local growth management strategies, local environmental plans and development control plans. Councils will identify opportunities for bulky goods style retailing in accessible locations in or near commercial centres and restrict this form of retailing in industrial zones as set out in the NSW Government



policy *The right place for business and services.*

- Planning for commercial uses is to be integrated with transport, public domain and infrastructure opportunities.
- Highway service centres may be located beside the Pacific Highway at Maclean (at one of the Maclean interchanges), Woolgoolga (at one of the Woolgoolga interchanges), Kempsey (at the southern interchange), Port Macquarie (on the eastern side of the Pacific Highway at the interchange with the Oxley Highway) and Taree (at the Old Bar Road interchange). In the future, additional highway service centres could be located at Nambucca Heads (at the northern interchange) and Port Macquarie (on the western side of the Pacific Highway at the Oxley Highway interchange), subject to review of need by the Roads and Traffic Authority at a five year review of the Strategy. No other zonings to permit new out-of-town commercial development will occur along the Pacific Highway. This includes any industrial zones that could permit commercial uses such as bulky goods premises.

Employment lands

- Local environmental plans will ensure that sufficient lands which are zoned industrial and business and currently vacant are protected to accommodate the new jobs required for each local government area until 2031.

- The Department of Planning will work with councils to ensure that appropriate opportunities for employment lands, as identified in the Strategy's growth area maps, are brought on stream via local growth management strategies and local environmental plans.
- In the case of some marine-based industries that depend upon access to navigable waterways, additional opportunities for industry establishment may be provided outside the growth areas. The Department of Planning will work with the Department of Environment and Climate Change and other relevant State government agencies on suitable locational criteria to assist in guiding any future development opportunities.
- In consultation with councils, industry, business and other stakeholders, the Mid North Coast Regional Development Board will implement its Regional Economic Profile (2008) to encourage/ facilitate industry and employment growth and investment opportunities. It will particularly focus on those innovative, high-skill and high-wage industries that have the greatest potential to develop in the Region. The Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan will also be used to provide economic guidance to the Clarence Valley.

Tourism development

- Councils will plan strategically for tourism development in an agreed local growth management

strategy. Planning for tourist facilities and tourism development will adopt the following principles:

- > Acknowledgement of and consistency with the North Coast Regional Tourism Plan 2004–2007 (or latest version) and Northern Rivers Regional Tourism Plan 2003–2006 (or latest version).
- > A range of tourism experiences and forms of tourist accommodation will be provided for in urban areas, including 'bed and breakfast'.
- > No tourism development should be located near the Pacific Highway, except within towns.
- > Local environmental plans will locate large scale tourism development in prime tourism development areas unless other proposed locations are consistent with an approved local growth management strategy.
- > Local environmental plans will prevent permanent residential accommodation in tourism development, except where it is ancillary to existing tourism development or part of an area otherwise identified for urban expansion in an approved local growth management strategy.

Monitoring

- The Department of Planning will incorporate an employment land component into the Mid North Coast Housing and Land Monitor to ensure an ongoing supply of industrial land.



Environment and natural resources

BACKGROUND

The Region's natural environment plays a critical role in terms of life support systems including biodiversity, carbon sequestration and water purification. There are approximately 600 000 hectares of conservation reserves making up 20 per cent of the Region. The escarpment areas are clothed in wet temperate and subtropical rainforest. Connections between coastal and higher altitude habitats occur in several places such as near Bulahdelah and Smiths Lake. There are also extensive networks of conservation lands along the coast, including areas managed through a combination of planning controls such as State environmental planning policies (for coastal wetlands, littoral rainforests and koala habitat) as well as national park reservations and environmental protection zones.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is preparing a Regional Conservation Plan to

ensure that the biodiversity values of the Region are appropriately managed through local environmental plans and other mechanisms. The Regional Conservation Plan will identify areas of high conservation value as well as the importance of improving the ecological functioning of habitat areas through the creation of connecting corridors and networks.

The Region's estuaries, rivers, floodplains and wetlands are of immense environmental value, providing a variety of habitats for many aquatic and terrestrial organisms. Estuaries and rivers are popular places for a wide variety of active and passive recreational pursuits as well as being the basis of the State's valuable commercial fishery activities. The majority of fish, shellfish and crustaceans harvested in NSW are either caught or spend part of their life cycles in estuaries and rivers. Most of our sand and gravel is won from the floodplains or beds and banks of

estuaries. Many of these uses are in direct conflict with one another and require consideration in the planning process.

The Region's coastal lakes and lagoons typically have intermittently open entrances to the ocean. The lakes are unique in their biodiversity and their ecological and physical processes. They can alternate between freshwater and saltwater regimes. These lakes are highly susceptible to impact from climate change and urban activities.

The growth in access to water for stock and domestic purposes has reduced the availability of water for licensed water users and impacted on the health of riverine systems. Containing these impacts will involve limiting the creation of additional lots that front watercourses.

Traditional and emerging forms of agriculture are an important part of the Mid North Coast's economic and social base. The gross value of Mid North Coast agriculture



STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICY (RURAL LANDS) 2008

Agriculture is a significant industry, worth approximately \$7.3 billion to the economy of NSW and providing employment to 79 000 people. The ongoing orderly and economic development of the rural lands in NSW is vital to the State economy.

In response to the findings of the Central West Rural Land Review Panel, the State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008 (the SEPP) has been prepared to improve planning

outcomes in rural areas of NSW.

The SEPP contains rural planning principles and rural subdivision principles, which will assist councils in planning for the proper management, development and protection of rural lands. The SEPP also contains measures to reduce land use conflicts, including eliminating concessional lots in rural areas. The SEPP allows councils to retain their current minimum lot size(s) or vary them

in accordance with the principles in the SEPP.

The rural planning principles identify a range of matters that should be considered when councils prepare local environmental plans for rural land. This will enable opportunities for economic development, protection of natural resources and environmental values and a range of housing types in planned locations.

in 2001 was \$245 million. High quality farmland has in the past been lost to urban and rural residential development. Future population growth is likely to create more pressure on farmland.

Regionally significant farmland has been mapped under the Mid North Coast Farmland Mapping

Project. Identified on the basis of factors including slope, soil depth, drainage, water holding capacity, soil type and soil structure, this is the best farmland in the region and is considered capable of sustained use with a reasonable level of inputs.

Additionally, land important to existing horticultural industries

is currently being mapped under the Predominantly Frost-Free Horticultural Land Project. The project will map land that is important because of its slope, unique microclimate and/or soil characteristics which allow the intensive cultivation of horticultural crops including bananas,

avocados, blueberries and macadamias.

Regionally significant farmland and predominantly frost-free horticultural land need to be largely protected from encroachment, fragmentation and conflicting uses.

The importance of protecting high value agricultural land whilst providing opportunities for rural lifestyle, settlement and housing, was recognised by the NSW Government and the wider community as a challenge State wide. In response, the NSW Government has released State Environment Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008. The main purpose of the SEPP is to improve planning outcomes in rural areas of NSW. It introduces rural planning principles to provide guidance for local councils when preparing new LEPs which will accommodate economic development whilst protecting significant agricultural productive lands.

The Mid North Coast Region has extensive areas of high biodiversity and productive natural resources which need to be protected from development pressures. The Northern Rivers and Hunter-Central Rivers catchment management authorities have developed catchment action plans that include regional investment opportunities for funding of community projects and government programs

to rehabilitate and enhance environmental values and natural resources. Facilitating the land use planning objectives of the catchment action plans and those of other natural resource management plans, such as water sharing plans and estuary management plans, is important in achieving long term environmental sustainability.

The natural resources and hazards map identifies the main areas with high-value natural resources. The map shows the remaining land as 'environmental assets and rural land' indicating that it also has a range of natural resource values. The biodiversity map shows land of varying biodiversity value, identified at a regional scale.

OUTCOMES

The importance of the Region's natural environment and natural resources to its economy, character, scenery and cultural values is recognised through the planning process and these areas are protected from future urban and rural residential development.

The Strategy supports the maintenance and enhancement of the Region's biodiversity. Urban development will be directed away from areas of known or likely conservation importance, including corridors which allow wildlife to connect with or migrate to other habitat areas and climatic zones.

Where development, including new land release, may impact on biodiversity it will be designed to minimise impacts or provide offsets by protecting and enhancing the long term viability of priority vegetation and habitat corridors, as well as rehabilitating degraded priority areas.

The values and functions of riparian corridors, coastal wetlands, lakes, estuaries and fishery habitats will also be protected. Waterways will be protected to maintain water quality.

The Region's natural resources including farmland, extractive resources, energy resources and timber will be protected from urban and rural residential development, with appropriate buffers considered when development occurs near these resources.

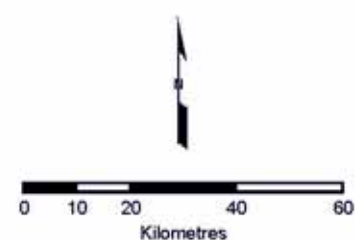




NATURAL RESOURCES AND HAZARDS

Legend

- Major Regional Centre
- Major Town
- Town
- Village - Inland
- Village - Coastal
- Existing Urban Footprint
- Region Boundary
- Highway
- Proposed Roads
- Main Roads
- Rail Line
- Rivers and Creeks
- Significant Groundwater
- Regionally Significant Extractive Resource
- Areas of Known Major Coastal Erosion
- Regionally Significant Farmland
- Regionally Significant Farmland (Interim)
- State Forests
- Environmental Assets & Rural Land



ACTIONS

Preparation of local environmental plans

- Local environmental plans will protect and zone land with high environmental, vegetation, habitat, riparian, aquatic, coastal or corridor values for environmental protection.
- Local environmental plans will zone regionally significant farmland to protect agricultural values.
- Local environmental plans will identify and zone land of landscape value (including scenic and cultural landscapes) to protect those values.
- Local environmental plans will protect land identified as having extractive resources of regional significance and their haulage routes (see Appendix 3 and Ministerial section 117 Direction No. 1.3).
- Subdivision and dwelling standards in local environmental plans will reflect the Rural Lands SEPP, the Regional Strategy and the objectives of the relevant zones.
- New development adjoining or adjacent to farmland, extractive resources, waterways, wetlands and areas with high value biodiversity will incorporate buffers to avoid land use conflict.

Biodiversity

- The Department of Environment and Climate Change will prepare a Regional Conservation Plan to guide local councils and State and Commonwealth governments in achieving conservation outcomes.
- Local environmental plans will include provisions to encourage habitat and corridor establishment in future zoning of land with environmental and rural values.

Farmland mapping

- Regionally significant farmland will not be available for future urban or rural residential rezoning other than in the limited circumstances as permitted by the Mid North Coast Farmland Mapping Project Final Recommendations Report (2008).
- Mapped farmland will be protected from the impacts of new neighbouring development through conflict risk assessment and buffers, consistent with the Mid North Coast Farmland Mapping Project and the Rural Lands State Environmental Planning Policy.
- The Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Planning will work with councils to complete a review of

land suitable for predominantly frost-free coastal horticulture, to protect the identified land.

Natural resource management

- Local environmental plans will include provisions on land fronting watercourses to limit the creation of additional water rights.
- Local environmental plans will include provisions to protect the water quality in town water supply catchments, other waterways and significant groundwater reserves.
- Councils will work with the Northern Rivers and Hunter-Central Rivers catchment management authorities to ensure that the aims and objectives of catchment action plans are considered in the future management and planning of local council areas.





BIODIVERSITY

Legend

- Major Regional Centre
- Major Town
- Town
- Village - Inland
- Village - Coastal
- Existing Urban Footprint
- Region Boundary
- Highway
- Proposed New Roads
- Main Roads
- Rail Line
- Rivers and Creeks
- Marine Park
- Biodiversity Assets Outside Conservation Reserves
- State Forests
- National Parks
- World Heritage Areas
- Fauna Corridors**
- Regional Corridor
- Subregional Corridor



0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometres



Natural hazards

BACKGROUND

The Regional Strategy recognises that some areas may be subject to the effects of natural hazards. Major hazards such as flooding, coastal inundation and shoreline recession are closely linked to the Region's coastline and estuaries. These areas are also subject to some of the Region's greatest development pressures. Planning processes have been developed to identify the risks associated with flooding and coastal hazards and how they can be minimised through land use planning.

The risk and severity of many hazards may be higher under climate change. Extra caution needs to be taken in planning and building decisions particularly in areas subject to ocean influence to account for the effects of climate change on sea-level rise and storm surge, shoreline recession, storm frequency and intensity, tidal inundation and flooding.

The *Coastal Protection Act 1979* enables councils to prepare

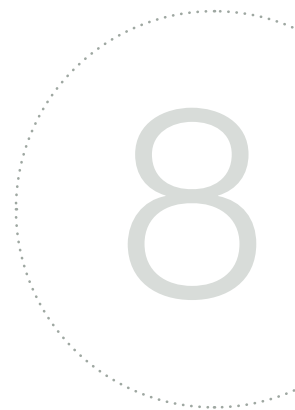
coastal zone management plans in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Manual and having regard for the higher levels of risks associated with climate change. These management plans should form the basis for the consideration of impacts on or from potential new land releases, rezoning or existing development in areas subjected to hazards. Where a coastal zone management plan is not yet in place, the Regional Strategy requires that councils consider these issues in any future development in these coastal locations. As a general principle new development should be limited in areas that might in the future be subject to coastal hazards, having regard for the higher levels of risks associated with climate change.

Flooding is a major hazard that may result in community dislocation and substantial economic and social costs. The *Floodplain development manual: the management of flood liable land* (2005) defines the NSW Government's Flood Prone Land Policy. The manual outlines the

process for councils to develop a flood risk management plan. The aim is to reduce the impact of flooding. The plans should consider the potential for risks to increase under climate change especially in areas subject to ocean influence (including sea-level rise and more frequent and more intense storm events).

In April 2007, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed a National Climate Change Adaptation Framework. Adaptation is a way of preparing for a changing climate to manage the risks and maximise opportunities. Long term climate change is likely to present new challenges that will demand careful analysis and innovative solutions. In March 2008 the Premier announced that the NSW Government will prepare a Climate Action Plan that will include adaptation measures.

Other hazards may include bushfire, acid sulfate soil disturbance and landslip.



OUTCOMES

Future urban development will not be located in areas of high risk from natural hazards including sea-level rise, coastal recession, rising watertables and flooding.

Development in areas subject to natural hazards will be assessed according to the policies of the Floodplain Development Manual and Coastal Zone Management Manual.

Appropriate planning provisions will be incorporated in local environmental plans consistent with the Floodplain Development Manual and council's risk management plan to minimise the risk from flooding and coastal erosion.

ACTIONS

- In order to manage risk associated with climate change, councils will undertake flood investigations over lands with the potential to be affected by sea level rise and inundation to ensure that risks to public and private assets are minimised.

- Local environmental plans will make provision for adequate setbacks in areas of coastal erosion risk and oceanbased inundation in accordance with coastal zone management plans.
- Until the above plans and investigations are complete, councils will not zone land or approve new development or redevelopment in potential hazard areas, unless assessed within a risk assessment framework adopted by the council.

- Zoning of land for future development within the catchments of coastal lakes (as defined in Schedule 1 of State Environmental Planning Policy No. 71 – Coastal Protection) must consider a coastal lake sustainability assessment if one has been prepared.
- Local environmental plans will zone areas subject to high hazard to reflect the limitations of the land.





natural hazards

IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCE POLICIES, PLANS AND GUIDELINES

Substantial work has been done by agencies, councils and the community in the Mid North Coast Region to develop natural resource management policy, plans and guidelines. Councils should ensure that their local growth management strategies, local environmental plans and development control plans maximise the achievement of the principles and recommendations in these policies and plans, in particular:

- NSW Coastal Policy and State Environmental Planning Policy No. 71 – Coastal Protection
- NSW Government's Water Quality and River Flow Objectives (1999)
- Northern Rivers and Hunter-Central Rivers catchment action plans
- Local stormwater management plans
- Management of flood liable land in accordance with section 733 of the *Local Government Act 1993*
- Floodplain risk management plans prepared in accordance with the *Floodplain development manual: the management of flood table land* (NSW Government 2005)
- Coastal zone management plans under the *Coastal Protection Act 1979*
- Existing coastal and estuary management plans
- Soil landscape mapping (Department of Environment and Climate Change)
- *Oyster industry sustainable aquaculture strategy* (Department of Primary Industries 2006)
- *Policy and guidelines: aquatic habitat management and fish conservation* (NSW Fisheries 1999)
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007
- *Planning for bushfire protection* (NSW Rural Fire Service 2006)
- *Acid sulfate soils planning guidelines* (Acid Sulfate Soils Management Advisory Committee, NSW Government 1998)
- The National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (Council of Australian Governments Climate Change Group 2007).



Cultural heritage

BACKGROUND

The Mid North Coast Region encompasses the traditional lands of the Gumbaynggir, Dunghutti, Birpai and Worimi people, and extends into Bundjalung country in the north. The first Europeans to settle in the Region were cedar-getters. Squatters soon followed, establishing grazing lands for sheep. The subsequent subdivision and development of land in the Region has impacted on Aboriginal communities, affecting their lifestyle and settlement and the ability to conduct traditional activities.

Despite this, the Mid North Coast is rich in cultural value to the Region's Aboriginal communities, with many places and objects of spiritual, historical and social significance known to exist.

It is possible, working closely with Aboriginal communities, to identify and map areas of cultural value to Aboriginal communities. Such mapping can identify cultural landscapes, which

are locations, areas or regions valued by an Aboriginal group (or groups) because of their long and complex relationship with that land. Areas identified as holding more specific value to Aboriginal communities due to a particular use or association can also be shown. Information identified through this mapping process would supplement that held by the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System database administrated by the Department of Environment and Climate Change and knowledge held by local Aboriginal communities. Councils and other government authorities will be encouraged to use Aboriginal cultural landscape maps to better conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage.

European settlement has changed the landscape of the Region over a relatively short period of time. The conservation areas, buildings and archaeological sites that have particular heritage significance have been well documented in

most areas. Urban growth and development in the Region has the potential to further impact on existing as well as yet to be identified cultural heritage values. The identification, recording and protection of cultural heritage are important for current and future generations. It contributes to community identity, wellbeing and sense of history. Heritage items and areas also reinforce the economic base for tourism.

Built heritage studies have been prepared for many of the towns and areas within the Region. Most, but not all of the items have been included in local environmental plans. Many of the heritage studies are more than ten years old and should be reviewed and renewed as councils complete local growth management strategies. The heritage schedules in new local environmental plans should reflect the many different types of heritage now recognised as contributing to the cultural landscape and sense of place in the Region.

9

cultural heritage

OUTCOMES

The importance of the Region's Aboriginal cultural heritage is recognised by the planning process. Development should not adversely impact on places, features or landscapes of cultural significance to Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal cultural landscape mapping and assessment guidelines, along with other information sources, will be used to inform and guide development and manage activities within the Region so Aboriginal cultural values are maintained.

The input and involvement of owners, custodians and other interest groups into the identification and conservation of cultural heritage will be encouraged through the development of a cultural heritage management protocol.

The Region's places, precincts and landscapes of cultural heritage significance will be identified (where appropriate) and protected in planning instruments.

A better understanding of the diversity of cultural heritage values in the Region, including aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, historic, scientific, social and spiritual will be encouraged.

The Region's major regional centres and major towns will continue to evolve their forms, while still maintaining the heritage values that are important.

ACTIONS

- Councils are to ensure that cultural and community values that are important to Aboriginal communities are considered and resolved in the future planning and management of the local government area.
- The Department of Planning and councils will review the scope and quality of the existing statutory lists of heritage items and ensure that all places of significance are included in the heritage schedules of local environmental plans.
- The cultural heritage values of major regional centres and major towns that will be the focus of urban renewal projects will be reviewed, with the aim of protecting cultural heritage.





10

Water and energy resources

BACKGROUND

Urban water supplies for the Mid North Coast Region in conjunction with the existing treatment and distribution infrastructure and its scheduled augmentation are adequate to meet expected demand to 2031.

The completion of the Shannon Creek water storage facility, presently under construction, and the recent filling of the new Cowarra water storage facility, will secure urban water supplies to the main growth areas of Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie. The current augmentation of MidCoast Water's water filtration and pumping infrastructure, access to a groundwater source at Nabiac in 2008 and a programmed increase to the storage capacity of the Bootawa Dam by 2012 will meet future growth and development water demand for southern areas while satisfying requirements for environmental flows.

All councils/local government water suppliers in the Region are developing integrated water cycle management plans within a whole-of-catchment framework. This will help them identify water supply issues and water management problems. The plans aim to reduce water extraction from rivers and groundwater aquifers through demand management, recycling of effluent for suitable reuse and improved management of stormwater runoff. These actions will work in association with BASIX targets for new residential construction to reduce water consumption within the Region.

The Department of Water and Energy will be determining environmental flows and water access rules for both surface and groundwater sources through the development of macro water-sharing plans. Within this planning process it is acknowledged that towns have a higher priority for access to water. These macro water plans will recognise this priority by ensuring that a full

share of water is allocated for annual urban water supplies, except where exceptional drought conditions prevent this.

Transgrid, operates the high voltage transmission network while the supply of energy to customers is the responsibility of Country Energy. The potential for coal, and seam methane, reserves in the Clarence and Great Lakes local government areas provides the opportunity for the re-development of a local energy industry, and local power generation.

OUTCOMES

The Regional Strategy acknowledges the importance of access to water and energy infrastructure in supporting settlement and employment in the Region.

The Regional Strategy aligns the work of the Department of Water and Energy and local councils to ensure a secure, safe and adequate regional water supply through:

- identification of environmental flow allocations for all unregulated rivers within the Region
- specification of per capita reduction in urban water use and strategies to achieve this
- improved water cycle management to increase reuse of effluent and reduce the impact of sewage and stormwater.
- maintenance and improvement of existing ground and surface water quality levels.
- All future development is to apply water sensitive urban design principles and meet stormwater management targets that support environmental values of the catchments.
- Suitable locally generated and/or renewable energy projects such as wind, solar, bio-waste and wave power will be supported.

ACTIONS

- Local environmental plans will recognise and protect regional water supply catchments and systems through appropriate planning provisions.
- In preparing local environmental plans councils will liaise with water and energy providers and make provision for any regional water, electricity and gas infrastructure corridors that may be required.
- Councils or water supply authorities will complete integrated water cycle management plans for their local areas.
- The Department of Water and Energy and local water authorities will prepare a Regional Water Plan to ensure long term regional water efficiencies and improved drought security.





Regional transport

BACKGROUND

The Mid North Coast Region is currently served by air, rail, road and bicycle transport networks. An estimated 520 million trips are made by residents and visitors each year, and around 11.9 million tonnes of freight are moved within and through the Region. The road network is especially important to the Region with approximately 65 per cent of all journeys within the Region being by car.

Air travel provides fast, long-distance passenger travel to and from the Region. Coffs Harbour airport provides the primary service for the Region with 5000 domestic flights carrying approximately 260 000 domestic passengers annually, with an additional 25 000 freight and charter flights, some of which are international. Domestic flights also operate at Grafton, Port Macquarie and Taree airports.

The majority of current passenger and freight trips use the Region's

extensive road network which includes:

- the Pacific Highway which is the major north–south corridor, and in the northern and southern parts of the Region, the Summerland Way and Bucketts Way respectively, which also provide important north–south corridors
- the Gwydir and Oxley Highways, Grafton-Armidale Road, Waterfall Way, Kempsey-Armidale Road and Thunderbolts Way that provide the Region's main east–west links, the Gwydir Highway being the only B-double link to/from the west
- a network of main roads linking settlements within the Region.

A major initiative of the State and Commonwealth Governments is the upgrading of the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway standard. The improvements to the road corridor will provide

greater transport efficiency and safety for residents, for both intra and interregional movements. The final length of the Pacific Highway within the Mid North Coast Region is expected to be around 500 kilometres. Of this length, 117 kilometres is already dual carriageway and a further 64 kilometres is either under construction or has planning approval. Planning is underway to upgrade the remaining length. An upgrade of the Oxley Highway between Port Macquarie and the Pacific Highway is also proposed.

The main Sydney–Brisbane rail link, which passes through the Region, enters the Region from Dungog, heads in a general northerly direction to Grafton and then exits the Region on the way to Casino (which lies in the Far North Coast Region). The line is used primarily for freight movement (around 90 trains per week), as well as for passenger transport, as part of the State's Countrylink network.

The Australian Rail Track Corporation, as lessee of the rail network from the NSW Government is currently upgrading the track and signalling on the North Coast Line between Maitland and the Queensland border.

This work involves concrete re-sleepering, the lengthening and/or upgrading of 11 passing loops and various smaller upgrade projects.

The aim of this investment is to assist in reducing travel times for intermodal freight trains by 3.5 hours and thereby to increase the amount of freight transported by rail on the North Coast Line from the present 19 per cent to 30 per cent.

Countrylink buses also link with this rail network to extend the service to Iluka, Yamba, Port Macquarie and Hawks Nest within the Region. The Countrylink transport network is then extended locally by a number of existing local bus networks which, together with local school buses, service the major towns and settlements in the Mid North Coast Region.

Several of the Region's ports are used for sea freight and recreational voyaging as well as the harbouring of the fishing fleets. The Port of Yamba is one of five deep water ports in NSW. There is potential for these ports to increase their economic and recreational roles. It is important that their entrance channels remain open for safe and reliable passage.

OUTCOMES

The Regional Strategy identifies the regional transport corridors and hubs, which link the Region's major urban centres and destinations/origins outside the Region.

The Pacific Highway will be the primary inter-region road corridor. It will also have an important role as an intra-region link in particular providing access to the major regional centres of each subregion from the other settlements in those subregions. The efficiency and safety of the Pacific Highway corridor will be enhanced and protected.

The North Coast rail line within the Region will continue to be enhanced, increasing potential for growth in freight and passenger transport.

Through its settlement planning and urban design actions, the Strategy also seeks to improve connectivity and accessibility within urban areas.

The shipping entrances at Coffs Harbour, the Clarence River, the Macleay River and the Hastings River are acknowledged as the Region's priority for continued provision of navigable shipping channels.

ACTIONS

- Local environmental plans will provide for a passenger

interchange in the four major regional centres, the major towns and the towns that are well connected to pedestrian and cycle ways.

- Local environmental plans will recognise and protect the regional transport network through appropriate planning provisions.
- New development will be located to ensure that ribbon/strip development along major roads does not occur and that it does not impact on the safety and efficiency of arterial roads.
- Planning and construction of the Pacific Highway upgrades through the Region will continue to completion.



Implementation

The Mid North Coast Regional Strategy will be implemented primarily through agreed local growth management strategies prepared by councils, local environmental plans, development control plans, the State Infrastructure Strategy and funds collected as developer contributions.

The State Infrastructure Strategy identifies infrastructure projects in the short to medium term that will be necessary to accommodate population growth and demographic change in the Mid North Coast. A list of projects from the 2008–2009 to 2017–2018 strategy is contained in Appendix 4.

The Regional Strategy sets out the agreed position of the NSW Government for the future of the Mid North Coast and is recognised by the State Infrastructure Strategy as a long term planning strategy to be used by State agencies and public trading enterprises to plan for the future infrastructure needs of the Region.

EXISTING AND FUTURE PLANNING PROCESSES

The Mid North Coast Regional Strategy will guide the development of new local growth management strategies for each local government area. These local strategies will use the Regional Strategy's growth areas as the limit of investigation for future development over the next 25 years. The local strategies will in turn guide the preparation of new local environmental plans. The eight local councils in the Mid North Coast are preparing new comprehensive local environmental plans.

Section 117 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* allows the Minister for Planning to direct the content of a local environmental plan. A section 117 direction to implement the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy will be prepared, requiring local environmental plans to be consistent with the Strategy.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Funds collected from contributions from major developments will be used for regional infrastructure, consistent with the State Infrastructure Strategy and approved biodiversity outcomes.

Where a development or rezoning increases the need for State infrastructure, the Minister for Planning may require a contribution from the development, having regard to the State Infrastructure Strategy and equity considerations.

Funds collected by councils through local contributions plans and levies will be used to fund local infrastructure.



Monitoring and review

Progress on actions established in this Regional Strategy will be monitored annually. Monitoring of the settlement and economic projections in the Strategy will also be undertaken annually through the Mid North Coast Housing and Land Monitor.

The Mid North Coast Regional Strategy will be comprehensively reviewed every five years, so that it can adjust to any demographic, economic and policy changes. This will assist local councils with their five year review of local environmental plans, required under reforms to the planning system.



Appendix 1.

sustainability criteria



The following Sustainability Criteria allow Government to take a strong position in relation to matters of urban settlement in the Mid North Coast confident in the knowledge that innovative development proposals can still be considered even though they may be outside of the Regional Strategy process. The Sustainability Criteria represent a clear, transparent list of matters that any new proposal will be assessed against.

In order that a development proposal can be considered against the Sustainability Criteria it will be necessary to demonstrate to the local council, as well as the State Government, that the proposal satisfies the Sustainability Criteria. As with all rezoning proposals the Department of Planning requires a thorough assessment of the merits of the proposal by the LEP Review Panel, as well as requiring

public consultation through the statutory processes as set out in the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The Sustainability Criteria provisions do not apply in the Coastal Area as shown on the Strategy map.

Suggested Threshold Sustainability Criteria for defining potential development boundaries	Measurable explanation of criteria
1. Infrastructure Provision Mechanisms in place to ensure utilities, transport, open space and communication are provided in a timely and efficient way	• Development is consistent with the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy, any subregional strategy, the State Infrastructure Strategy and relevant section 117 directions. • The provision of infrastructure (utilities, transport, open space and communications) is costed and economically feasible based on Government methodology for determining infrastructure development contributions. • Preparedness to enter into development agreement.
2. Access Accessible transport options for efficient and sustainable travel between homes, jobs, services and recreation to be existing or provided	• Accessibility of the area by public transport and/or appropriate road access in terms of: > Location/land use – to existing networks and related activity centres. > Network – the area's potential to be serviced by economically efficient transport services. > Catchment – the area's ability to contain, or form part of the larger urban area which contains adequate transport services. Capacity for land use/transport patterns to make a positive contribution to achievement of travel and vehicle use goals. • No net negative impact on performance of existing subregional road, bus, rail, ferry and freight network.
3. Housing Diversity Provide a range of housing choices to ensure a broad population can be housed	• Contributes to the geographic market spread of housing supply, including any government targets established for aged, disabled or affordable housing.



Suggested Threshold Sustainability Criteria for defining potential development boundaries	Measurable explanation of criteria
4. Employment Lands Provide regional/local employment opportunities to support the Mid North Coast's expanding role in the wider regional and NSW economies	• Maintain or improve the existing level of subregional employment self-containment. • Meets subregional employment projections. • Employment related land is provided in appropriately zoned areas.
5. Avoidance of Risk Land use conflicts, and risk to human health and life, avoided	• No residential development within 1:100 floodplain. • Avoidance of physically constrained land, e.g. > High slope. > Highly erodible. • Avoidance of land use conflicts with adjacent existing or future land use as planned under relevant subregional or regional strategy. • Where relevant available safe evacuation route (flood and bushfire).
6. Natural Resources Natural resource limits not exceeded/ environmental footprint minimised	• Demand for water within infrastructure capacity to supply water and does not place unacceptable pressure on environmental flows. • Demonstrates most efficient/suitable use of land. > Avoids identified significant agricultural land > Avoids productive resource lands – extractive industries, coal, gas and other mining, and quarrying. • Demand for energy does not place unacceptable pressure on infrastructure capacity to supply energy – requires demonstration of efficient and sustainable supply solution.
7. Environmental Protection Protect and enhance biodiversity, air quality, heritage, and waterway health	• Consistent with government approved Regional Conservation Plan (if available). • Maintains or improves areas of regionally significant terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity (as mapped and agreed by DECC). This includes regionally significant vegetation communities, critical habitat, threatened species, populations, ecological communities and their habitats. • Maintain or improve existing environmental condition for air quality. • Maintain or improve existing environmental condition for water quality: > Consistent with community water quality objectives for recreational water use and river health (DECC and CMA). > Consistent with catchment and stormwater management planning (CMA and council). • Protects areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage value (as agreed by DECC).
8. Quality and Equity in Services Quality health, education, legal, recreational, cultural and community development and other government services are accessible	• Available and accessible services. > Do adequate services exist? > Are they at capacity or is some capacity available? > Has Government planned and budgeted for further service provision? > Developer funding for required service upgrade/access is available.

Appendix 2.

growth areas
requiring significant
issues to be resolved

LGA	Land description	Issues / considerations
Clarence Valley	West Yamba	• Already included in an adopted local growth management strategy. • Final boundaries to be established through the local environmental plan process. • Extent of any development potential is to be consistent with a final Floodplain Risk Management Plan, currently being prepared.
Coffs Harbour	North Boambee Valley	• Westward expansion (hatched) can only occur once a series of constraints on urban development have been resolved. These include: > avoidance of conflict with Boambee hard rock quarry through the identification of an appropriate buffer > identification and protection of horticultural land, including appropriate buffer > identification and protection of land with high biodiversity values.
Kempsey	South West Rocks (western area)	• Already included in an adopted local growth management strategy. • Extent of any development potential to be based on the identification and protection of land with high biodiversity values, consistent with current study underway.
Greater Taree	Brimbin	• Brimbin is a new town concept that may ultimately comprise 8000 dwellings and 340 hectares of employment lands. • Extent of development potential relies on completion of a structure plan for the entire site that establishes a proposed urban structure, conservation planning and infrastructure requirements (include lead-in infrastructure). • The structure plan needs to address the following principles: > appropriate balance of development against high conservation values > identification and protection of key conservation values, eg regional conservation and habitat corridors, ability to maximise new development on cleared areas > maximising the locational opportunities of the site – such as context to adjacent major employment area and Taree > appropriate release of land consistent with infrastructure provision.
Great Lakes	North Tuncurry	• Northern expansion (hatched) subject to an assessment which reviews: > level of significance of environmental values > level of significance of environmental hazards > the extent of development potential that exists.
Great Lakes	Bulahdelah Golf Course	• The growth area map identifies the broad boundaries for a 200 dwelling/tourist proposal and accompanying golf course expansion. • Extent of development is to be based on completion of environmental and urban capability assessment including: > land capability > identification and protection of high conservation values > protection of any current or proposed Aboriginal places under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i>.

Appendix 2.

growth areas requiring significant issues to be resolved

LGA	Land description	Issues / considerations
Great Lakes	North Hawks Nest	- The extent of development potential is to be based on completion of environmental and urban capability assessment which addresses the findings and recommendations of the 2001 Commission of Inquiry report. - The extent of development potential will also be subject to the resolution of an appropriate environmental offset: > allowing the transfer of a major part of the site (as identified and agreed to by the Department of Environment and Climate Change) to create an effective extension of the Myall Lakes National Park > that has a legally enforceable mechanism, including triggers and timing for the transfer of the land to the conservation reserve at no cost to the Government.
Great Lakes	North Karuah	- The growth area map identifies a strategic expansion of Karuah. - The extent of development potential is to be based on joint strategic planning undertaken by both Port Stephens and Great Lakes Councils to address the wider extent and footprint of development and infrastructure provision in the Karuah locality.

Appendix 3.

extractive and mineral resources

A3

Local government area	Identification	Local government area	Identification
Clarence Valley	Tabbimoble Quarry Site A	Kempsey	Maguires Crossing
Clarence Valley	Tabbimoble Site C	Kempsey	Yarrabee Road Quarry
Clarence Valley	Wilcocks Quarry	Port Macquarie–Hastings	Sancrox Quarry
Clarence Valley	Causleys Quarry	Port Macquarie–Hastings	Bago Quarry proposal
Clarence Valley	Shark Creek Quarry	Port Macquarie–Hastings	Grants Head Quarry
Clarence Valley	Carrs Island Dredgings	Port Macquarie–Hastings	Dunbogan Sand Pit
Coffs Harbour	Woolgoolga Quarry	Greater Taree	Johns River Quarry
Coffs Harbour	Nerasko Quarry proposal	Greater Taree	Jandra Quarry
Coffs Harbour	Jungs No. 2 and Landrigans Pit	Greater Taree	Possum Brush Quarry
Coffs Harbour	Boambee Quarry	Great Lakes	Failford Quarry
Coffs Harbour	Goldens Aurania Quarry (proposed)	Great Lakes	Sweet Pea Road Sand Pit
Bellingen	Beaumonts Quarry	Great Lakes	Bare Hill Quarry (proposed)
Bellingen	Raleigh Shoal	Great Lakes	Allworth Park
Nambucca	Marriotts Quarry	Great Lakes	New Karuah Quarry
Nambucca	Warrell Quarry		

Appendix 4

major
infrastructure projectsState Infrastructure Strategy 2008-2009
to 2017-2018 projects in the Mid North
Coast Regional Strategy area

Human Services

Health

Coffs Harbour Base Hospital: Non-Acute
Mental Health Unit
Grafton Base Hospital: Emergency
Department
Manning Base Hospital: Emergency
Department, Taree

Education

Bowraville Central School: Upgrade
Coffs Harbour Education Campus TAFE
College: Automotive, Health, Sport and
Recreation
Coffs Harbour High School: Upgrade
Great Lakes TAFE College: Relocation from
Tuncurry Site
Kempsey High School: Upgrade
Kororo Public School: Demountable
Replacement
Nambucca Heads High School – Trade
School: New Metals Engineering Training
Facility
Narranga Public School: New Hall
Old Bar Public School: Upgrade
Port Macquarie TAFE College: Child Studies,
Beauty Therapy and Learner Support
Centre

Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Accommodation Reconfiguration and Fitout,
Dairyville
Accommodation Reconfiguration and Fitout,
Wauchope
Stronger Together: New Accommodation,
Grafton
Stronger Together: New Accommodation,
Kempsey

Justice

Attorney General

Court Replacement, Coffs Harbour *
Court Upgrade, Port Macquarie

Police

Coffs Harbour Police Station *
Kempsey Police Station

Transport

Roads

Oxley Highway: Upgrade from Wrights Road
to Pacific Highway
Pacific Highway: Bonville Bypass Dual
Carriageways (State and Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Bulahdelah Bypass, Dual
Carriageways (State and Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Coffs Harbour (Sapphire) to
Woolgoolga Duplication * (State and Federal
Funded)
Pacific Highway: Coffs Harbour Bypass *
(State and Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Coopernook to Moorland
Dual Carriageways (State and
Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Failford Road to
Tritton Road *
Pacific Highway: Herons Creek to Stills Road
Pacific Highway: Iluka Road to Woodburn *
Pacific Highway: Karuah to Bulahdelah
Sections 2 and 3, Dual Carriageways (State
and Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Kempsey to Eungai * (State
and Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Moorland to Herons Creek
Dual Carriageways (State and Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Oxley Highway to Kempsey *
Pacific Highway: Warrell Creek to Urunga *
(State and Federal Funded)
Pacific Highway: Wells Crossing to
Iluka Road *
Pacific Highway: Woolgoolga to Wells
Crossing *

Electricity

Transmission

Bulahdelah 132kV Substation
Coffs Harbour–Kempsey 132/66kV Line
Conversion
Hawks Nest 132kV Substation
Herons Creek Area 132kV Substation
Kempsey–Port Macquarie 132 kV Line
Nabiac 132kV Substation
Stroud to Bulahdelah 132kV Line
Taree Substation Upgrade
Tomago to Stroud 132kV Line

Distribution

Coffs Harbour South Zone Substation
Mid North Coast Sub-transmission Works:
Coffs Harbour to Kempsey

Water

Country Towns Program

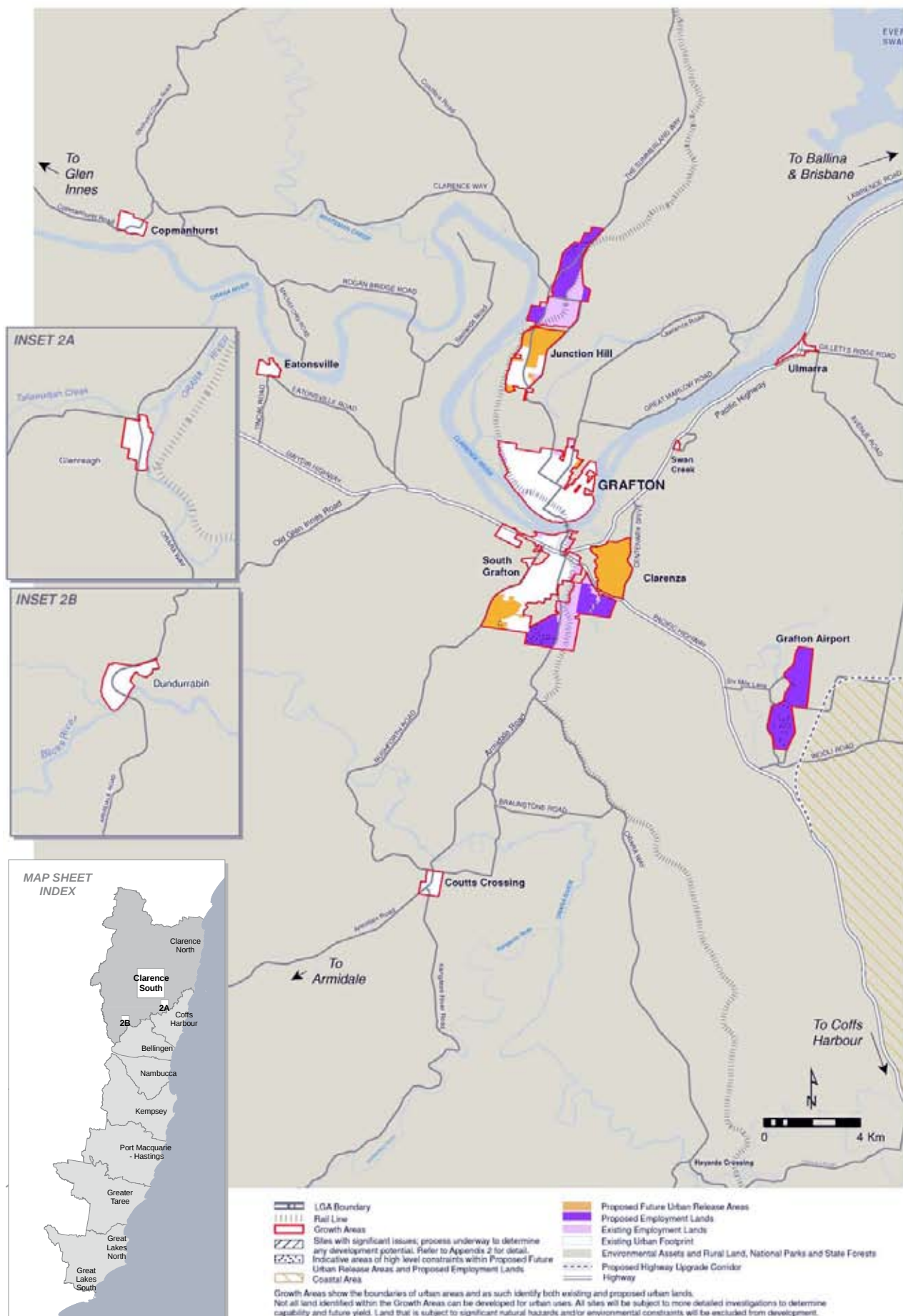
Bootawa Water Treatment Plan
Coffs Harbour Regional Sewerage: Stage 2
Priority Works
Grafton Sewerage Augmentation
Hastings District Water Supply: Southern
Pipeline
Iluka Sewerage Upgrade
Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour Regional
Water Supply: Shannon Creek Dam
Maclean/Townsend Sewerage Upgrade
Nambucca District Water Supply Upgrade:
Stage 2
Nambucca Heads Sewerage Augmentation
Stroud Sewerage Augmentation
Wooli Sewerage Upgrade
Yamba Sewerage Augmentation

Note. * These projects are not yet approved but
form part of the \$140 billion State Infrastructure
Strategy to 2017–18.

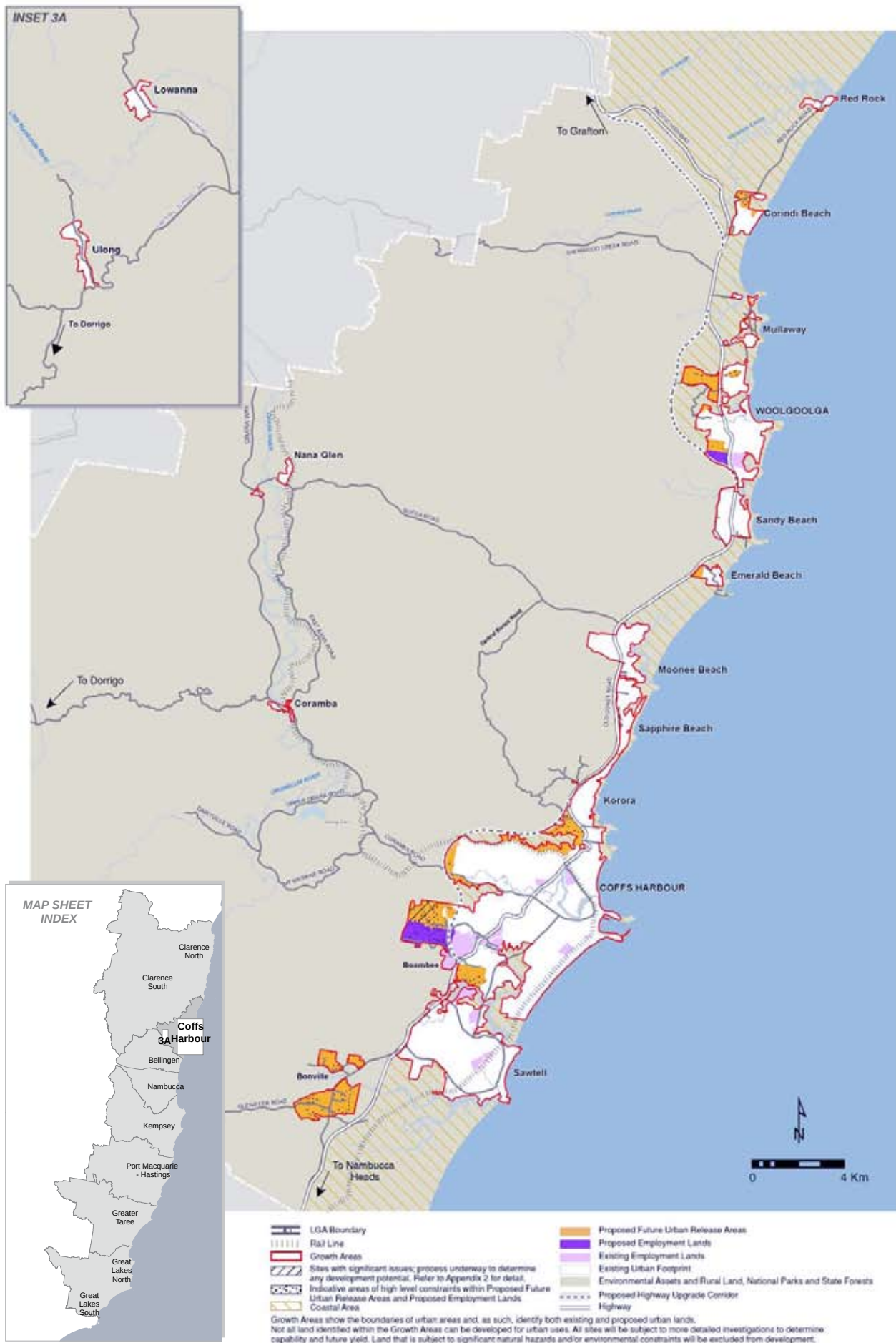
GROWTH AREAS MAP 1 – CLARENCE NORTH



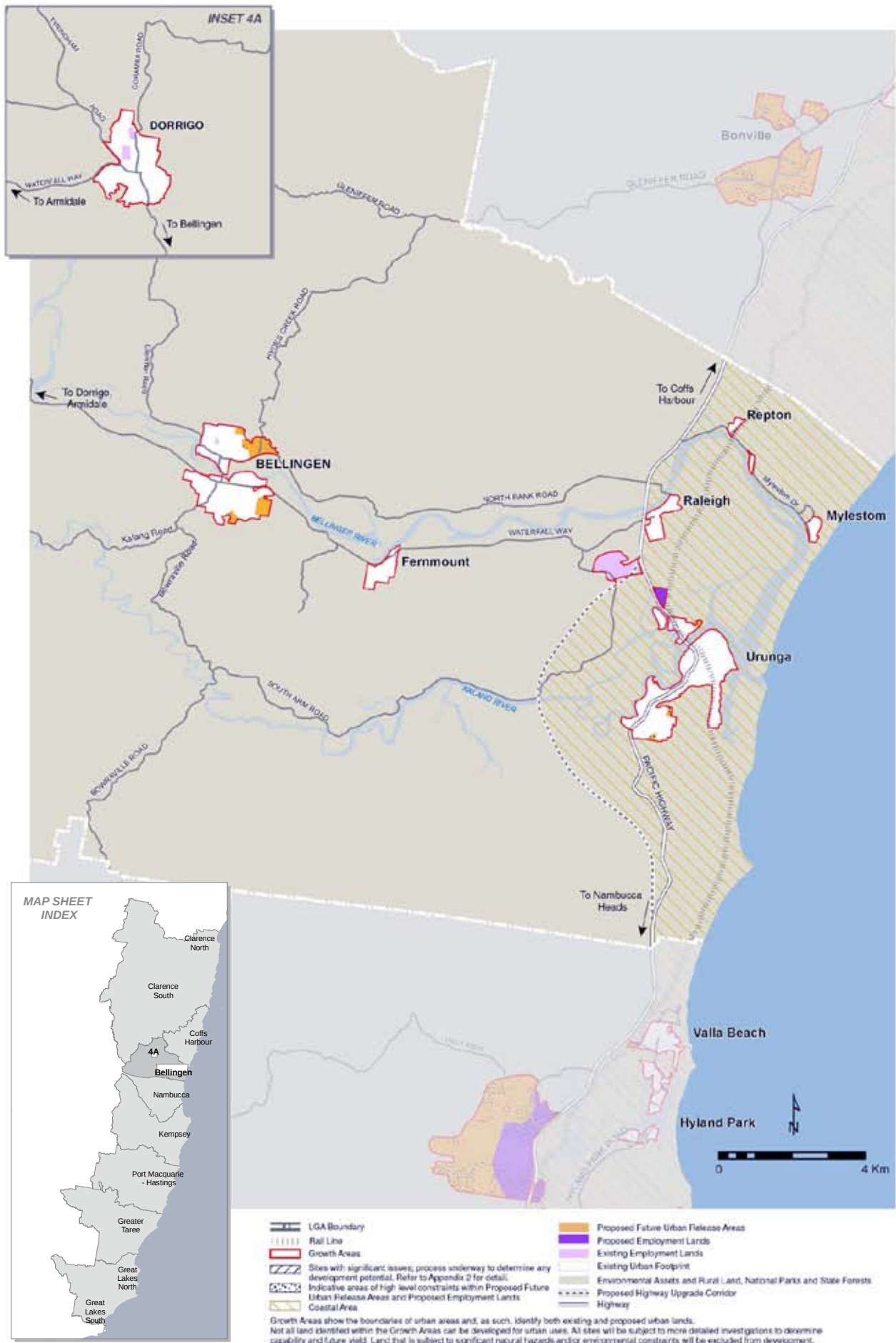
GROWTH AREAS MAP 2 – CLARENCE SOUTH



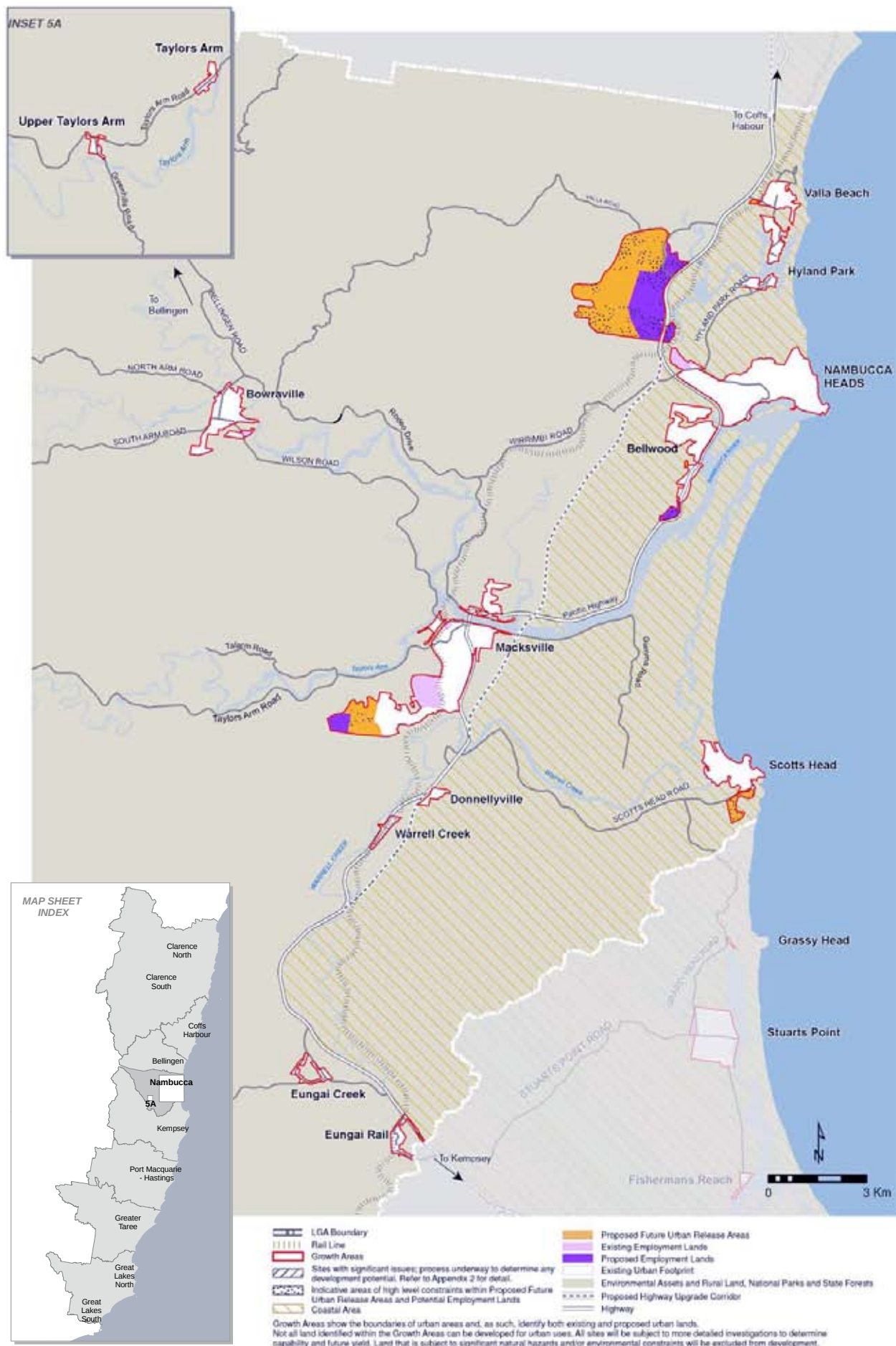
GROWTH AREAS MAP 3 – COFFS HARBOUR



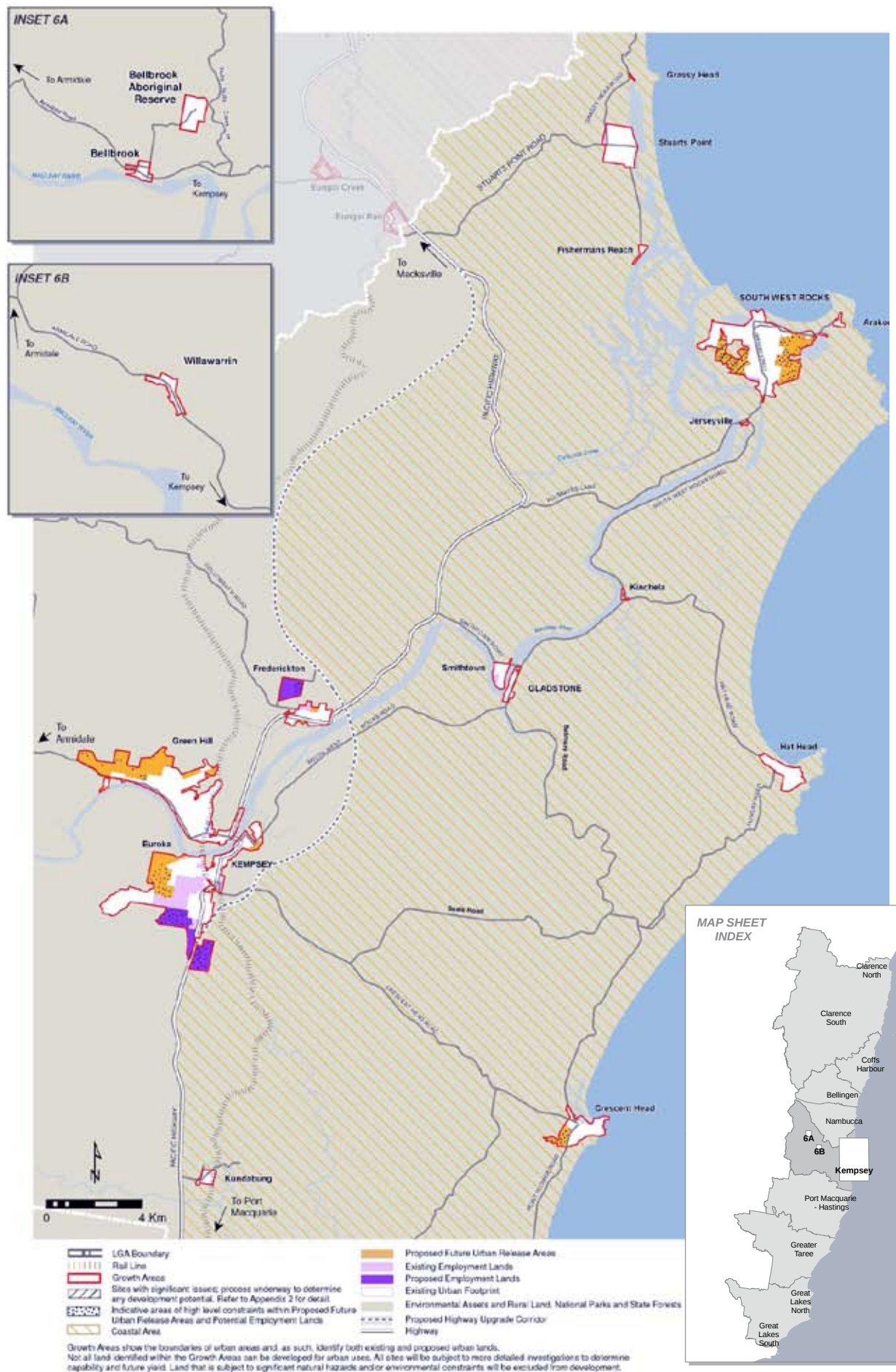
GROWTH AREAS MAP 4 – BELLINGEN



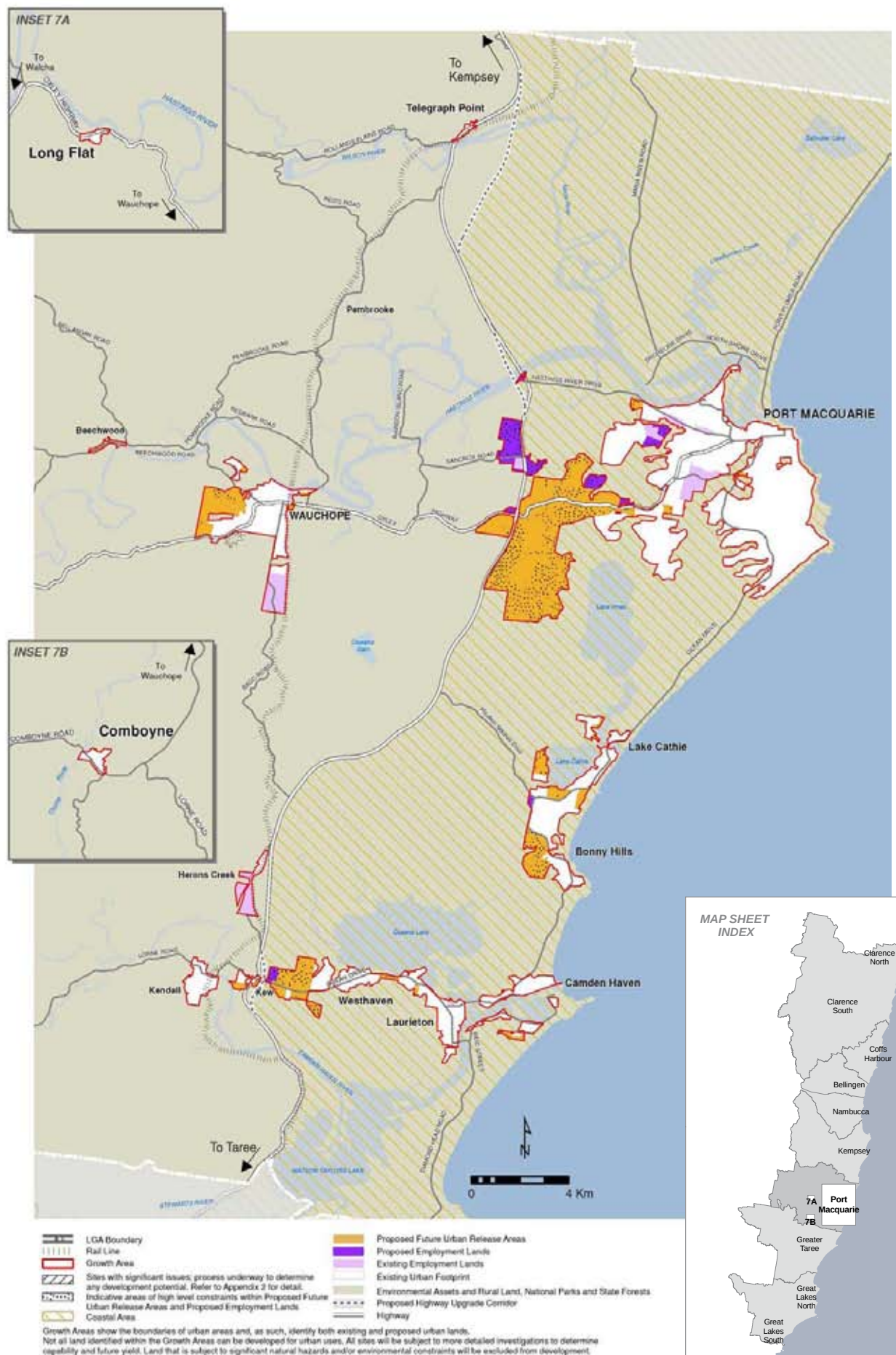
GROWTH AREAS MAP 5 – NAMBUCCA



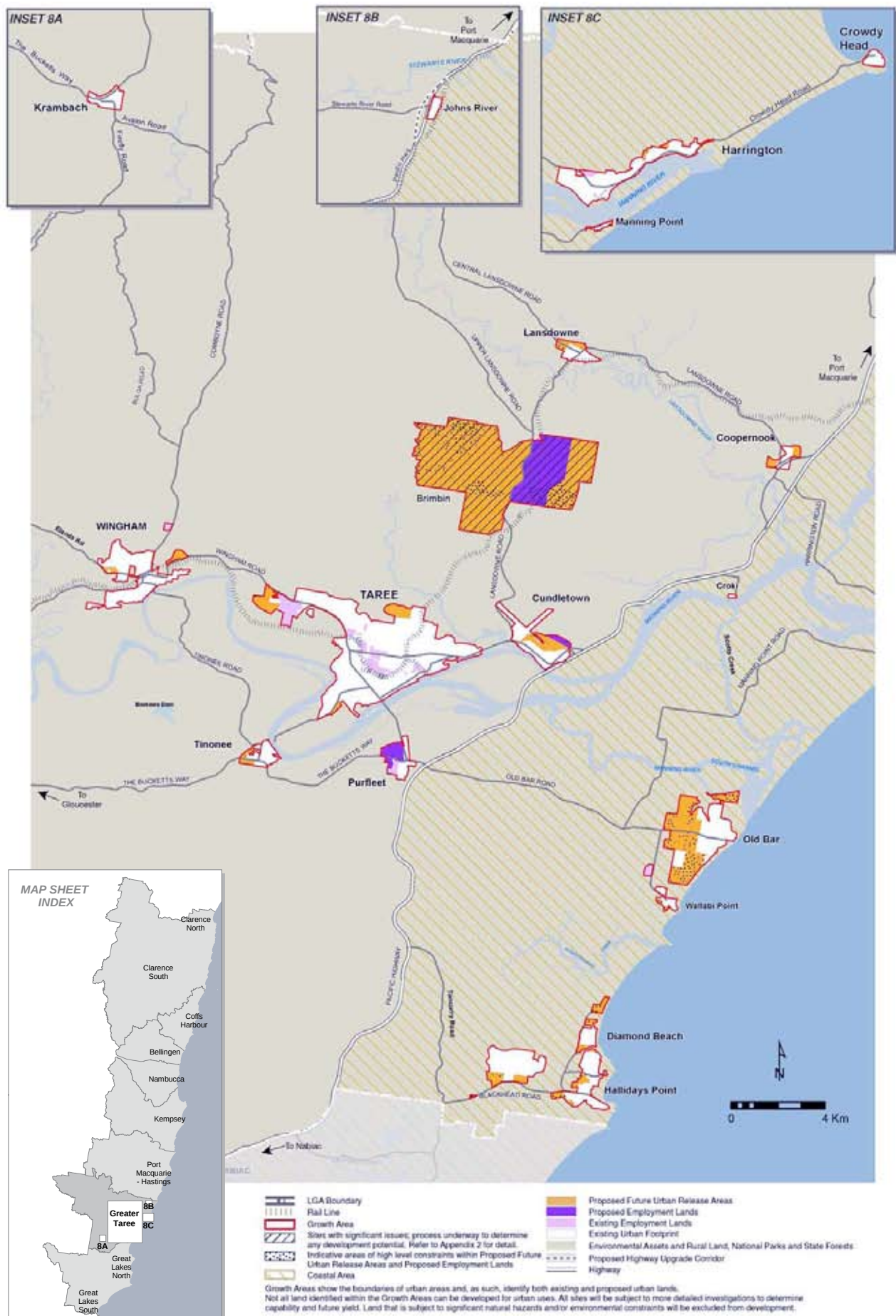
GROWTH AREAS MAP 6 – KEMPSEY



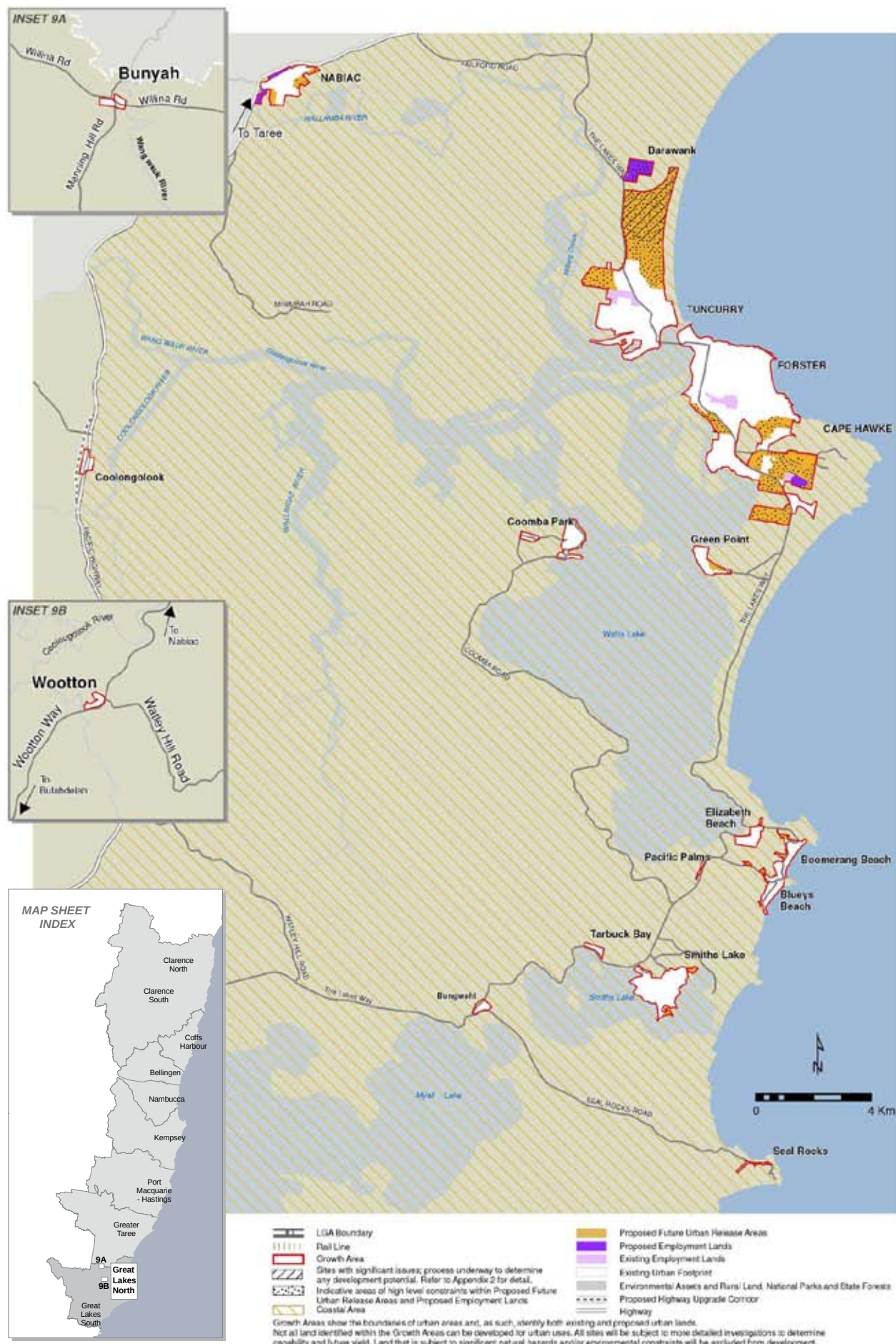
GROWTH AREAS MAP 7 – PORT MACQUARIE – HASTINGS



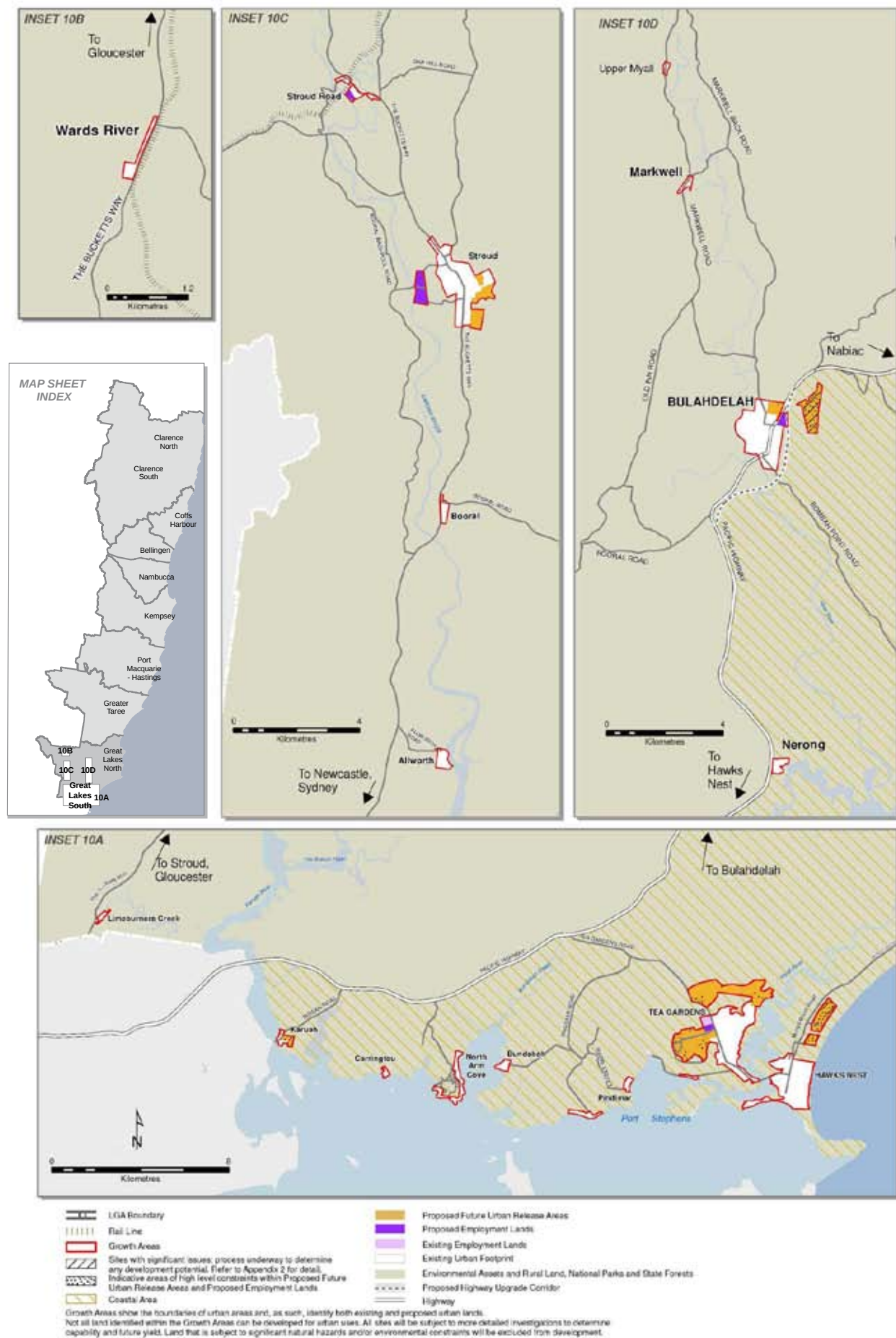
GROWTH AREAS MAP 8 – GREATER TAREE



GROWTH AREAS MAP 9 – GREAT LAKES NORTH



GROWTH AREAS MAP 10 – GREAT LAKES SOUTH



Further information

Department of Planning

Locked Bag 9022 Grafton NSW 2460

Email: northcoast@planning.nsw.gov.au

Inquiries: 02 6641 6600 or 02 4904 2700