



# **BELLINGEN SHIRE**

## LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT – 2020-2040

An aerial photograph of a river winding through a dense, vibrant green forest. The water is a deep, clear blue, contrasting with the surrounding foliage. The forest appears to be a mix of different tree species, with some taller, thinner trees and others that are shorter and denser. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, and the overall scene is peaceful and natural.

## THE GUMBAYNGGIRR VISION...

A place where there is genuine respect for the land and the original people of this country.

A place where the ancestors' way of holding country is recognised.

A place where there is respect for custodial people who carry this tradition today and for Elders and the children of the future.

A place where we all walk together, where we can all be here in harmony with the land and all life.

The land around here has a great capacity to do that, to heal... in a way that's not separating.

## DOCUMENT HISTORY AND VERSION CONTROL

Version #	Date	Brief Description	Council Minute Number
0.1	27/05/2020	Draft for Council endorsement for public exhibition	Item 14.1
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### DISCLAIMER

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information within this publication, Bellingen Shire Council disclaims any liability to any person in respect of anything done or not done as a result of the contents of the Local Strategic Planning Statement.

This Statement does not constitute legal or planning advice and should not be relied upon as such. Please seek the advice of a planning professional or speak to Council in relation to the development potential of your land.

Bellingen Shire Council would like to thank the Bellingen, Dorrigo & Urunga Chambers of Commerce for their valued input into the development of the Local Strategic Planning Statement.

Images are by Gethin Coles, unless otherwise acknowledged.

# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	6
Context .....	7
Geography.....	8
Key population trends.....	10
Social matters.....	12
Economic matters .....	13
Environmental matters .....	15
Regional Links & Relationships.....	16
Current Land Use Planning Framework in Bellingen Shire.....	19
Community Strategic Planning Framework in Bellingen Shire.....	21
20 year Vision for the Bellingen Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement.....	22
Resilient economy .....	24
Planning Priority 1 –To support a vibrant and ecologically sustainable rural economy that is transitioning towards a regenerative model of rural land use.....	25
Planning Priority 2 – To routinely identify infrastructure constraints and upgrade opportunities that will enable desired development outcomes.....	28
Planning Priority 3 – To provide meaningful opportunities for local employment, sustainable business establishment and growth. ....	29
Community wellbeing.....	32
Planning Priority 4- To provide the necessary infrastructure for people to lead physically active lives within their communities.....	33
Planning Priority 5 – To integrate Gumbayngirr cultural considerations into land use planning decision making processes .....	34
Places for People .....	36
Planning Priority 6 – To meet most of the housing needs of a wide cross section of the community through well designed infill housing .....	37
Planning Priority 7 – To ensure that the unique heritage values of the Shire are protected and promoted to residents and visitors. ....	40
Our living environment.....	42
Planning Priority 8 – Biodiversity conservation occurs at a landscape scale, using a variety of mechanisms across different land tenures. ....	43
Planning Priority 9 – That Councils policy framework for dealing with natural hazards recognises risks associated with climate change and avoids additional exposure of development to hazards.....	45
Planning Priority 10 – Implement Climate Emergency Declaration recommendations.....	49
Centres Narratives.....	51
Planning Priority 11 – Council will work with proponents, and proactively seek opportunities, to advance projects and initiatives that are consistent with the centres narratives contained within the LSPS.....	52

Bellingen.....	53
Dorrigo .....	55
Urunga.....	58
Implementation, Monitoring & Reporting.....	61
Priorities for Action Implementation .....	61
Monitoring & Reporting .....	62
References .....	63

# INTRODUCTION

Bellingen Shire, simply put, is like nowhere else. We all know why we moved here, why we stay here, and why our kids dream of returning here.

For the Gumbaynggirr people, who have nurtured this land for generations, a connection to country is instrumental to their sense of place and culture and for many of us, our own sense of place and identity also derives from the stunning natural environment that we live in, and the unique blend of communities that have formed over time in the Shire.

Notwithstanding the unique attributes of Bellingen Shire, we are all faced with the common challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century including a changing climate, and ongoing trends of decline in biodiversity. These are some of the most significant threats that we will face over the next 20 years, and we will all need to adapt our businesses, lifestyles, housing and land use practices in the face of them. Social trends such as the ageing of our population and the declining diversity and affordability of housing in the Shire are challenges that we will also need to plan around, in addition to providing sustainable local employment opportunities for our residents.

Fortunately, Bellingen Shire is blessed with a community that is resilient, creative, altruistic and entrepreneurial and possesses the ability to adapt to many of the challenges that we will face without the intervention of government. Our challenge then, as a Council, is to build upon the natural and social capital that we are already have, and to prioritise those areas where selective policy interventions, or other forms of investment in the Shire can help.

This Local Strategic Planning Statement spells out those planning priorities, and the actions that we will undertake to achieve them. It is a truly "local" statement that outlines how we, as a Council, will work with the community to harness the opportunities, and meet the challenges of the future, whilst preserving the unique sense of place that defines living in Bellingen Shire.



Councillor Dominic King

**Mayor Bellingen Shire Council**





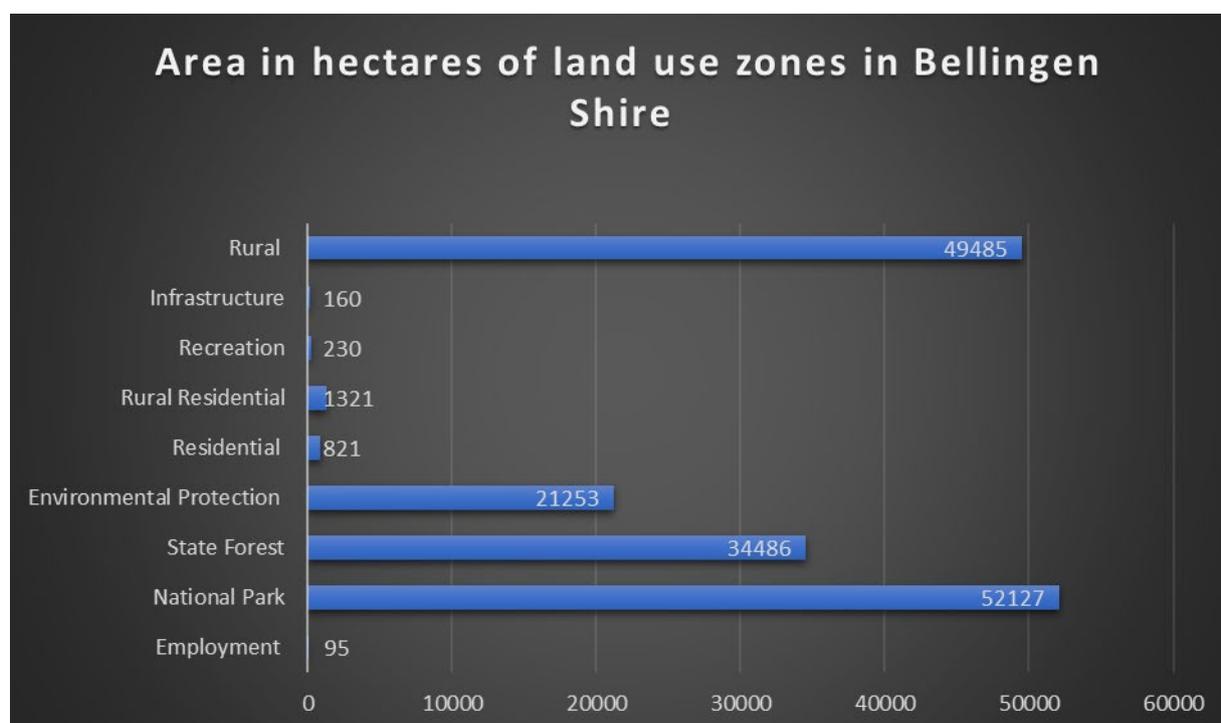
# CONTEXT

## Geography

Bellingen Shire is located on the Mid-North Coast of NSW. The Shire is commonly recognised as comprising 3 sub areas including the Seaboard area (including Urunga, Mylestom, Repton and Raleigh), the Valley area (including Bellingen, Fernmount, Kalang and Thora) and the Plateau area (including Dorrigo, North Dorrigo and other small villages).

Major landscape elements include coastal dune and beach areas, river valleys and floodplains, timbered hinterland and escarpment areas and volcanically derived soil landscapes on the Dorrigo plateau. The Shire is renowned for high levels of biodiversity, not only within the World Heritage protected areas of National Park but also on other public and private land tenures.

The Shire covers nearly 160,000ha in area, of which 54% is either classified as National Park or State Forest. The following chart depicts the breakdown in key land use zones within Bellingen Shire.

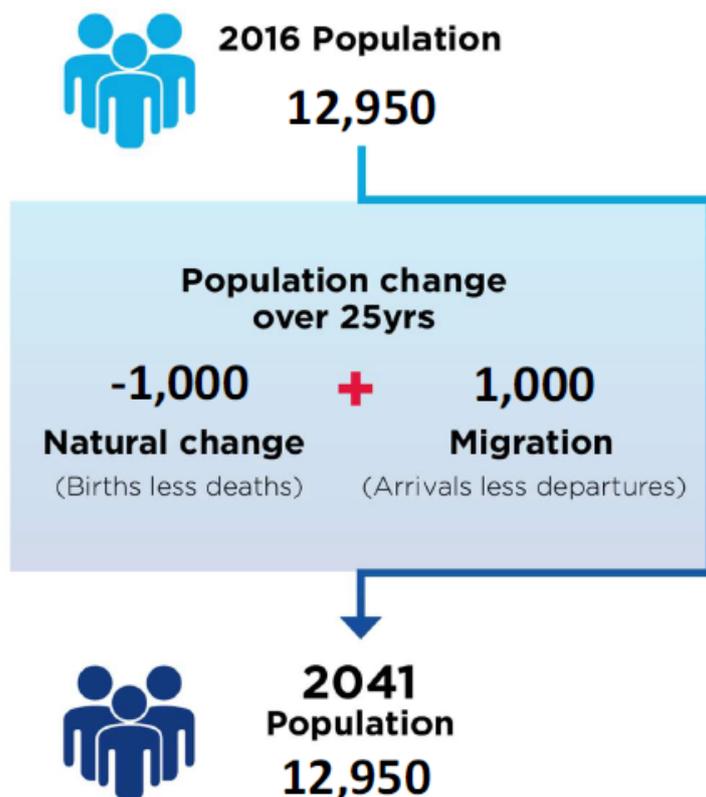


*The spatial distribution of major land zones, roads, and settlements in Bellingen Shire is shown in the following map.*



## Key population trends

2019 NSW Government Population projections for Bellingen Shire predict that the population of Bellingen Shire will remain the same as it was in 2016 in 2041<sup>1</sup>. This is depicted in the following diagram.



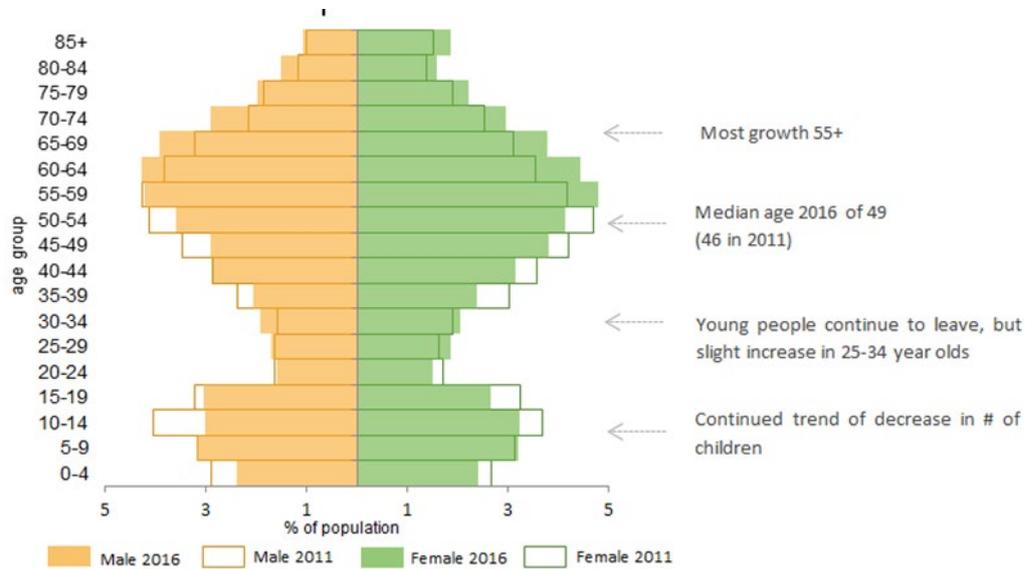
Despite the projections indicating no increase in population by 2040, they do however indicate that Bellingen Shire will need to provide an increased number of dwellings to house that population. This is shown in the table below. This is because there will be more single person or couple only households, which will reduce the average number of people living in each dwelling. This provides Council with an important policy challenge to try and encourage a greater supply of smaller dwellings to meet the changing needs or demands of its residents.

Key Indicators: Projected Population, Households and Dwellings - all data at 30th June						
	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Total Population	12,950	13,050	13,150	13,150	13,050	12,950
2016 Population Projection	13,050	13,100	13,100	13,000	12,850	
Total Households	5,550	5,700	5,800	5,900	5,900	5,900
Household Size*	2.30	2.26	2.23	2.18	2.17	2.14
Implied Dwelling Projection**	6,250	6,400	6,550	6,650	6,650	6,650

\*Average persons resident per occupied private dwelling  
\*\*Dwellings required if the population forms households in the same ways as in 2016

Key factors underlying the predicted growth rate include the ageing of the population, the relative lack of child rearing age cohorts in the Shire and the recent lack of new development and housing

opportunities. The age profile of the Shire is shown in this comparison of population between 2011 and 2016, as derived from Census figures. As can be seen, Bellingen Shire is typical of many smaller regional areas who experience an outward migration of young adults seeking education and employment opportunities in larger centres. It is apparent that this trend is also being increasingly influenced by an inability to access affordable housing opportunities in Bellingen Shire.

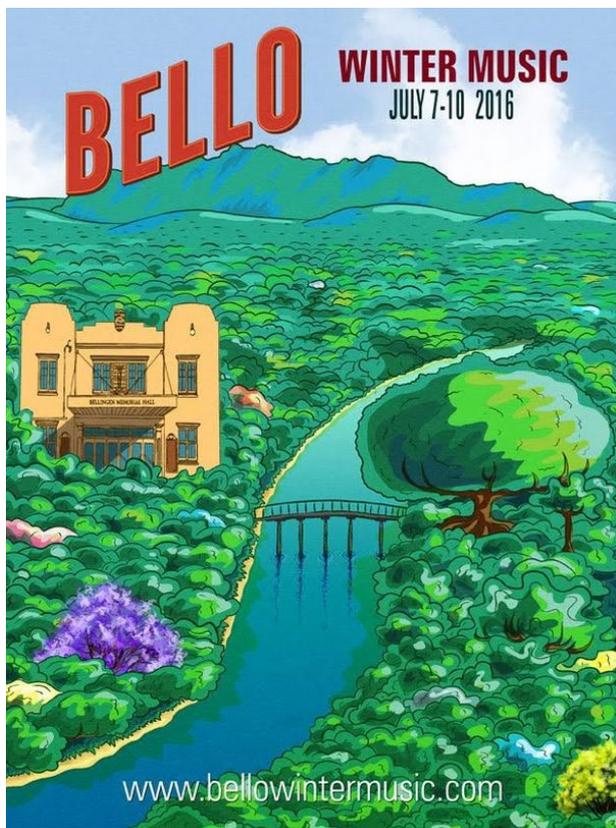


In the most recent period (5 years between 2011-2016), the population grew by 150 people, or by 1.2% (based on usual resident counts). In this period, population growth was concentrated in Bellingen (+87 people / +2.4%), whilst Urunga grew marginally by 26 people (+0.9%).

Growth occurred in some of the Shire’s rural areas and villages (excluding the Plateau) (+134 people). The population of Dorrigo fell by 77 people (-6.0%), whilst elsewhere on the Plateau remained stable (-3 people). On the Plateau, population changes have been noticed by the local community, as the area has experienced gradual population decrease (-355 people since 1996).

The 2019 NSW Government Population projections for population growth are based upon a continuation of recent trends and do not reflect aspirational targets or future potential that may be delivered by changes to planning schemes or changes in rates of development activity. In this regard, Council has recently adopted a Local Housing Strategy that aims to support greater levels of housing growth within existing town areas, to the extent that recent demographic trends of population stability or decline will possibly be reversed over the life of the LSPS.





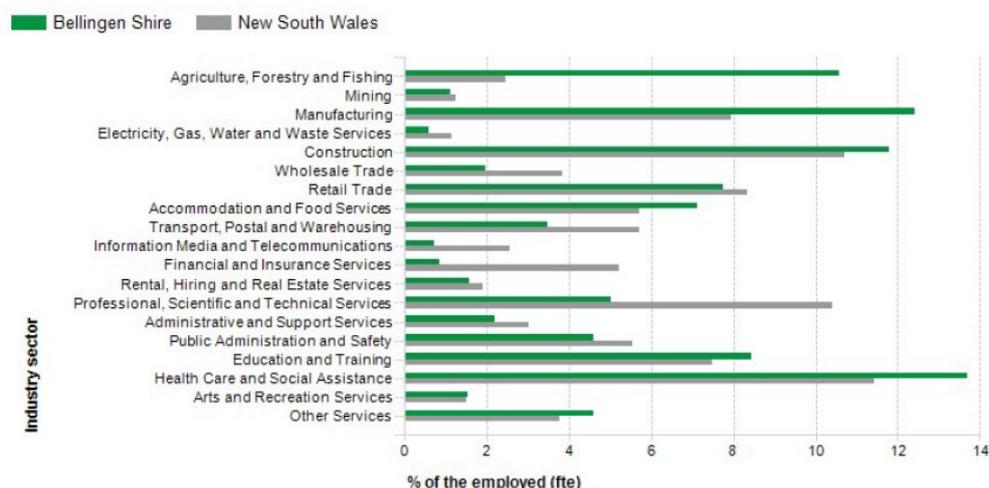
Flyers for Recurrent Music Events in Bellingen & Dorrigo

The ageing of the population will also present ongoing challenges in terms of maintaining connections with the community, supporting healthy and active lifestyles and producing smaller and accessible housing stock that is suitable for ageing in place. Issues of succession planning for ageing farmers is another matter that will require attention, with many either not wanting to leave the farm or the area, but not having appropriate housing choices to meet their needs.

## Economic matters

The major industry sectors responsible for the employment of Bellingen Shire residents are depicted in the table below.

### Employment (FTE) 2017/18

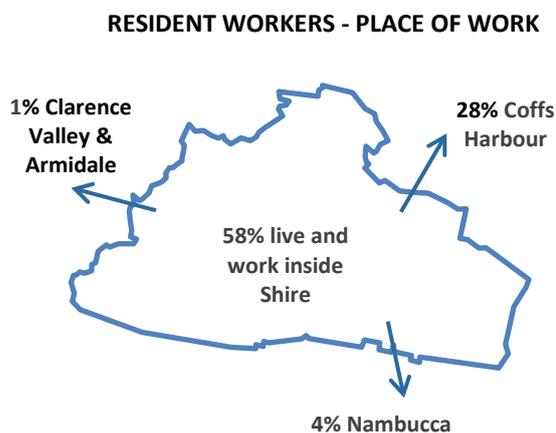


Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2018  
Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id the population experts

.id the population experts

The major differences between Bellingen Shire residents and the rest of NSW is that Bellingen employs a higher percentage of full-time workers in Agriculture Forestry & Fishing and Manufacturing, and a smaller percentage of full-time workers in Professional, Scientific & Technical Services and in the Finance and Insurance Sectors. Industry sectors that experienced the greatest levels of growth between 2013 & 2018 included Health Care & Social Assistance (+103), Manufacturing (+84) & Construction (+56), whilst the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing sector saw the greatest loss of FTE jobs (-69).

Recent community consultation undertaken by Council as part of the development of its Local Housing Strategy, and during discussions held with Chambers of Commerce as part of the development of this LSPS, suggest that more local employment opportunities are required and that this may assist in driving greater demand and supply of housing in the Shire. Notwithstanding this, it is also evident that many Bellingen Shire residents are able to find work opportunities in adjoining Local Government Areas (LGA's) whilst still residing in Bellingen Shire. This is illustrated below.



The fact that Coffs Harbour provides a source of employment to 28% of Bellingen Shires resident workers reflects its functional role as a regional centre, as recognised in the NCRP, and the ease of access to the Shire which is provided by key infrastructure such as the Pacific Highway. Coffs Harbour contains important regional infrastructure such as the Coffs Harbour Health Campus and Southern Cross University and contains several major retail complexes that provide employment opportunities.

Opportunities for significant industrial expansion are currently limited in Coffs Harbour Shire, however forthcoming infrastructure projects such as the Pacific Highway Coffs Harbour bypass may provide construction related employment opportunities in the short term. Nambucca Shire has well established industrial estates in Macksville and Nambucca Heads, and plans for a major new industrial estate in the Valla Growth Area that may result in additional employment opportunities. Industrial opportunities provided with neighbouring LGA's will influence the type of industrial product that Bellingen Shire supplies in the future and may result in more specialised offerings that provide a point of difference in the marketplace.

Key drivers of change that will influence future economic development patterns within the Shire include the digital economy, the role of "disruptive" technologies, the sharing or gig economy, and trends in tourism including the rise of grey nomads, the impending retirement of the "baby

boomer” generation, nature based tourism, inclusionary tourism that and ethical tourism that responds to positive interventions in matters of generational importance such as climate change.

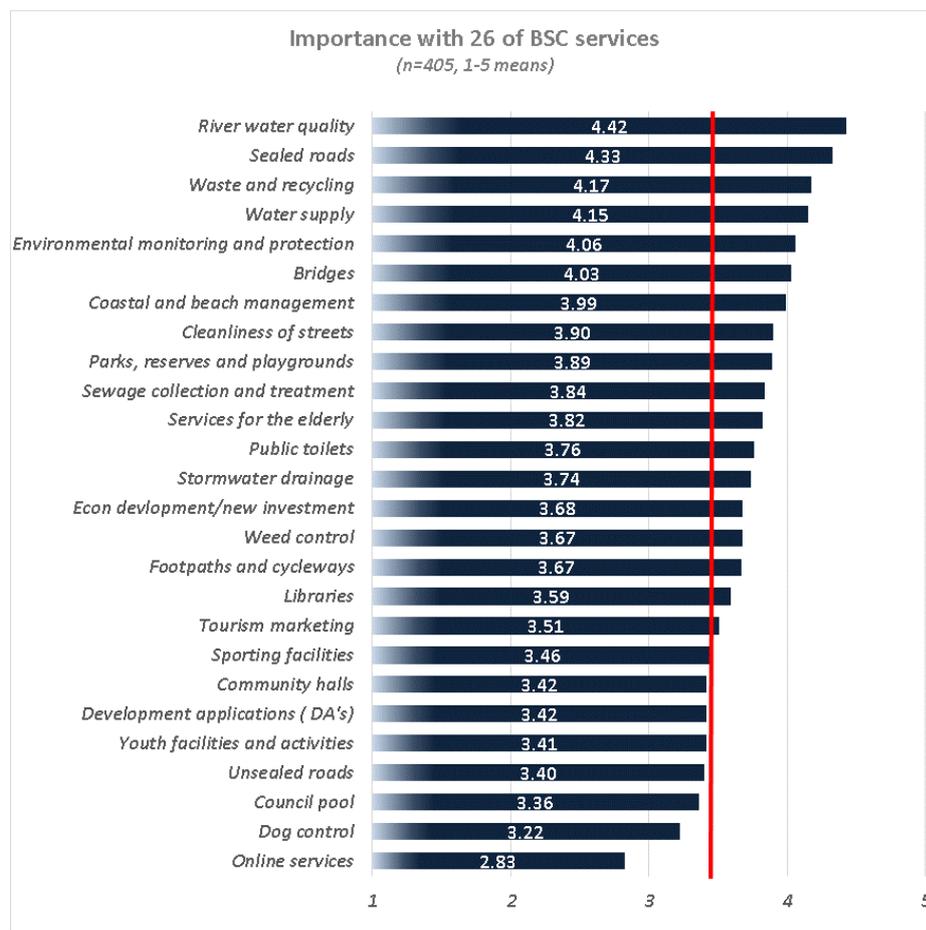
These drivers are already manifesting to some extent in Bellingen Shire, noting that there are over 300 Air B&B providers in Bellingen Shire, patterns of over-visitation in natural areas such as the Promised Land in Bellingen, conflicts around the benefits / impacts of free camping in the Shire and dis-satisfaction with the roll out of NBN services when the standard of connection to particular areas does not facilitate certain on-line business activities.

## Environmental matters

Research undertaken on behalf of Council in 2019 by the Centre for Local Government at the University of Technology observes that Bellingen Shire residents;

*“ Derive their connection to place from the environment. They find Bellingen Shire reflects their strong environmental values and this makes them feel at home here”.*

Previous customer research undertaken by Council in 2016 <sup>iii</sup> also confirms the importance of sound environmental management to the community, when compared with other functions of Council, as depicted in the graphic below.



Despite the rich biodiversity that is protected within National Park Estate in Bellingen Shire, there are important areas of habitat on other public and private land tenures within the Shire that also

accommodate threatened species of flora and fauna, and that serve important functions as linkage areas to allow movement of wildlife across the landscape. The quality of water within our rivers and streams also supports a range of important domestic, economic, and environmental functions.



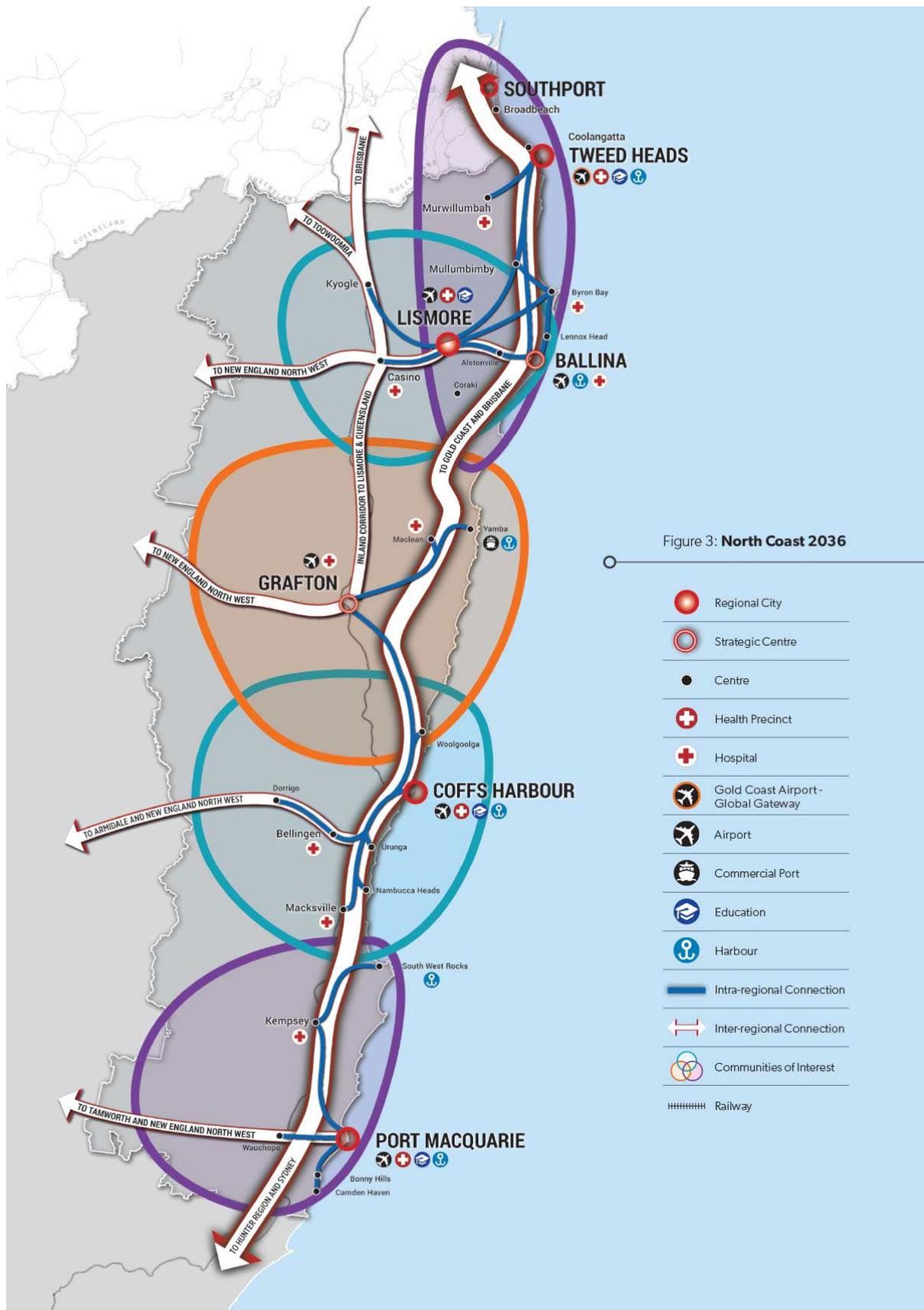
Key drivers of change that will influence the natural environment in Bellingen Shire include climate change and habitat removal. There will be a continued need for the adoption and implementation of key planning documents such as the Bellingen Shire Council Coastal Area Koala Management Strategy that will help to meet the community's expectations for responsible stewardship of natural systems, and a landscape scale approach to biodiversity management.

## Regional Links & Relationships

### **NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN 2036**

Bellingen Shire is part of the North Coast region of NSW, as defined by the North Coast Regional Plan 2036 (NCRP). Key communities of interests and inter-regional and intra-regional connections are depicted in the following extract from the Regional Plan. The Plan identifies that Bellingen Shire is well positioned within the region to leverage off opportunities provided by the regional centre of Coffs Harbour (including the airport, Southern Cross University and the Coffs Harbour Health Campus), and is at the junction of two major roads (Waterfall Way & Pacific Highway). The Plan attributes a minor role to Bellingen Shire in terms of the provision of new housing opportunities in the region, predicting that a minimum of 200 additional dwellings will be required to meet future growth projections, compared to an additional 8950 in Coffs Harbour Shire, for example.

Council needs to align its land use planning functions with the overall ambitions of the NCRP and the way in which the LSPS demonstrates consistency with the NCRP is explained throughout the document. The "North Coast Settlement Planning Guidelines" have also been developed by the NSW Government to assist Councils in meeting the strategic intent of the NCRP and these will be relevant to any future growth management strategies undertaken by Council.



## MID NORTH COAST JOINT ORGANISATION

The Mid North Coast Joint Organisation includes Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, Bellingen Shire Council and Kempsey Shire Council. The MNCJO provides a new opportunity for its member Councils to work together for the benefit of the region and was proclaimed on 9 May 2018. The MNCJO has developed a set of strategic priorities<sup>iv</sup> with core functions including;

- Strategic planning & priority setting
- Intergovernmental collaboration
- Regional leadership & advocacy
- Building efficient and effective councils.

The existence of the MNCJO may provide previously unavailable opportunities for Council to benefit from collaborative planning work and access to funding opportunities that may help advance the planning priorities contained within the LSPS.

## DESTINATION COFFS COAST & COFFS COAST REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Council has had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Coffs Harbour City Council for the last 10 years for tourism marketing purposes, whereby Bellingen Shire destinations are included in marketing initiatives undertaken by Destination Coffs Coast. This relationship is proposed to continue and will influence the degree to which, for example, Council is successfully able to promote environmentally responsible tourism initiatives as an economic development strategy.

In pursuing opportunities for economic development, Council will be guided by the [Coffs Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2020](#), which looks to facilitate long-term economic growth opportunities across the region by leveraging upon its relative strengths. The 4 key elements of the strategy are reprinted below.

- *Grow the year-round visitor economy by further diversifying offerings and connecting businesses in the sector.*
- *Enhance and support the Health Care and Social Assistance, tourism and professional and creative service industries by implementing skills development and attraction initiatives.*
- *Assist development of key agri-business by building on the Region's clean and green image.*
- *Enhance and grow the Health Care and Social Assistance; Education and Training and Manufacturing industries by the development and implementation of a Regional Precincts and Activity Centres Masterplan.*

## BIODIVERSITY



*“Wompoo Fruit Doves 1” – A threatened species that lives in Bellingen Shire. Image – Birdy b-p*

Bellingen Shire is part of the NSW North Coast Bioregion and is one of the most biodiverse regions in Australia. Most of the LGA borders areas of native vegetation in other LGA's, to the extent that movement corridors for wildlife exist, and need to be provided for, at a larger landscape scale than that defined by LGA boundaries. Proposals such as the Great Koala National Park (GKNP), are indicative of a landscape scale approach to protection of biodiversity that covers multiple LGA areas, and for which Bellingen Shire Council, Coffs Harbour City Council and Destination NSW have all resolved to allocate \$25,000 of funding each towards the preparation of detailed economic analysis of the costs and benefits of the GKNP proposal.

Irrespective of whether this proposal receives the support of government, there are still significant collaborations that Councils and State Government Agencies could form to secure greater habitat connectivity across the landscape in general, and in particular, to link coastal, escarpment and plateau landscapes to provide potential adaptation pathways for biodiversity in response to climate change predictions.

## Current Land Use Planning Framework in Bellingen Shire

### **BELLINGEN SHIRE GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (GMS) 2007**

Most recommendation of the 2007 GMS were implemented with the gazettal of the Bellingen Local Environmental Plan 2010 (BLEP 2010), including the zoning of new greenfield areas of residential land, and selective back zonings of land to environmental protection or rural in response to constraint analysis. Much of the predicted growth that was expected to result from new greenfield

development has not occurred, however rural residential development has continued particularly around Bellingen.

The Bellingen Shire Employment Lands Strategy was adopted as an addendum to the GMS in 2013. With the exception of a small addition to the B2 Business Zone in Bellingen, the recommendations of the ELS regarding additional industrial zonings have not yet been implemented, despite being included in the North Coast Regional Plan, because of a lack of interest from relevant landowners in pursuing the enabling provisions of the ELS. The ELS requires review, in the context of lack of interest of affected landowners, potential additional sewerage opportunities in the Raleigh area, and to more broadly consider the desired employment profile for the Shire beyond conventional industrial and commercial development opportunities.

The ELS process will allow Council to identify where an adequate supply of certain industrial land may already exist within the region, and to refine its own approach to additional supply in this context.

### **BELLINGEN SHIRE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY (LHS) 2020-2040**

The LHS was adopted by Council in January 2020. It supersedes those parts of the 2007 GMS that are concerned with housing opportunities within residential zones. It identifies recent trends of reducing affordability, diversity and supply of new housing and proposes over 60 actions to encourage greater supply of infill housing within the Shire to address the identified housing challenges.

### **BELLINGEN LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2010**

Since the adoption of LEP in 2010, Council has undertaken 9 relatively minor amendments to the LEP to facilitate development, improve functionality or implement strategies. The LEP has a comprehensive suite of provisions covering matters such as heritage, environmental protection and land development. The LEP will be subject to forthcoming amendments arising from the adoption of the LHS and a more comprehensive review will need to be undertaken to give effect to the recently introduced requirements for ongoing review of environmental planning instruments contained within Section 3.21 of the NSW Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979.

### **BELLINGEN DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN (DCP) 2017**

The DCP was originally adopted in 2010, to accompany the implementation of BLEP 2010. The DCP underwent a process of review in 2017 to ensure consistency with legislation that may have changed, remove redundant provisions and to introduce new provisions in response to legislative change or policy development. The DCP has 17 chapters covering a wide range of planning matters and will be subject to a significant process of review as part of implementing the LHS and introducing new development controls to help facilitate infill development in the Shire.

## Community Strategic Planning Framework in Bellingen Shire.

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) for Bellingen Shire was adopted in June 2017. The Plan is referred to as follows - *Shire of Bellingen 2027, Our Community Vision, Connected, Sustainable, Creative.*

The vision for the Shire is summarised as follows.

*Our vision for the future must encompass all aspects of living and working in our shire, as well as ways in which we are connected beyond our borders - regionally, nationally and globally. Our vision is about protecting the pristine natural beauty of our environment and enhancing our prosperous and safe community where inclusiveness and sustainable living are embraced, so that creativity and cultural activity can flourish.*

The key three aspirations for our community are that we are connected, sustainable and creative.

**CONNECTED** *We are a community that is inclusive, connected to each other in our shire, and with connections beyond -regionally, nationally, and globally.*

**SUSTAINABLE** *We strive to live sustainably to ensure that we have enough for all, forever.*

**CREATIVE** *We are a community that is creatively and culturally dynamic. We are ingenious and inventive in finding innovative solutions to problems and challenges.*

In order to move towards the realisation of the community vision, the Plan develops a series of aspirations and strategic directions that Council will pursue over the life of the plan, organised into 5 key themes.

- *Resilient economy*
- *Community wellbeing*
- *Places for people*
- *Our Living environment*
- *Civic leadership*

The CSP aspirations are broadly similar to the 4 key goals contained within the North Coast Regional Plan 2036.

- *The most stunning environment in NSW*
- *A thriving, interconnected economy*
- *Vibrant and engaging communities*
- *Great housing choice and lifestyle options*

A Local Strategic Planning Statement is required to demonstrate consistency with any CSP applying to the area as well as the provisions of any Regional Plan applying to the land. In this regard, it is intended that consistency will be demonstrated through use of the same key themes specified in the CSP (with the exception of Civic Leadership), with additional context and guidance provided via an introductory statement addressing key directions contained within the CSP & NCRP.

# 20 YEAR VISION FOR THE BELLINGEN SHIRE LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT

To provide agile, innovative and pragmatic land use planning policies that deliver sustainable business, employment and housing opportunities, respond to the challenges of a changing climate, and preserve the natural environment and social diversity that underpins the sense of place that is valued by residents of Bellingen Shire.







# RESILIENT ECONOMY

## KEY DIRECTIONS - BELLINGEN SHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN & NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN 2036

The Bellingen Shire Community Strategic Plan aspires to have meaningful and vibrant businesses within Bellingen Shire. Tourism is balanced and sustainable and we have a sustainable local farming sector that provides us with healthy fresh food. Public infrastructure exists to support business activity and whilst agriculture is recognised as a valued part of our economy, alternative and environmentally sustainable farming practices are encouraged.

The North Coast Regional Plan aims for a regional approach to the supply of employment land and housing and the protection of the role of centres through place making focused planning strategies. The North Coast Settlement Planning Guidelines will be relied upon when developing land use strategies. An adequate supply of employment land is to be provided to support jobs growth, with opportunities to facilitate tourism and visitor accommodation explored along with the potential offered by inter-regional transport connections. The agricultural sector is to be supported through reducing the potential for land use conflict with other land uses, protecting important farmland and identifying new opportunities for both primary production, and ancillary activities that support primary production.



A vibrant, multi-colored bus with intricate patterns and designs. The bus is primarily green and blue, with large, stylized floral and geometric motifs in yellow, red, and white. A white rectangular text box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing text. The bus's license plate is partially visible at the bottom left, showing 'W-5430'.

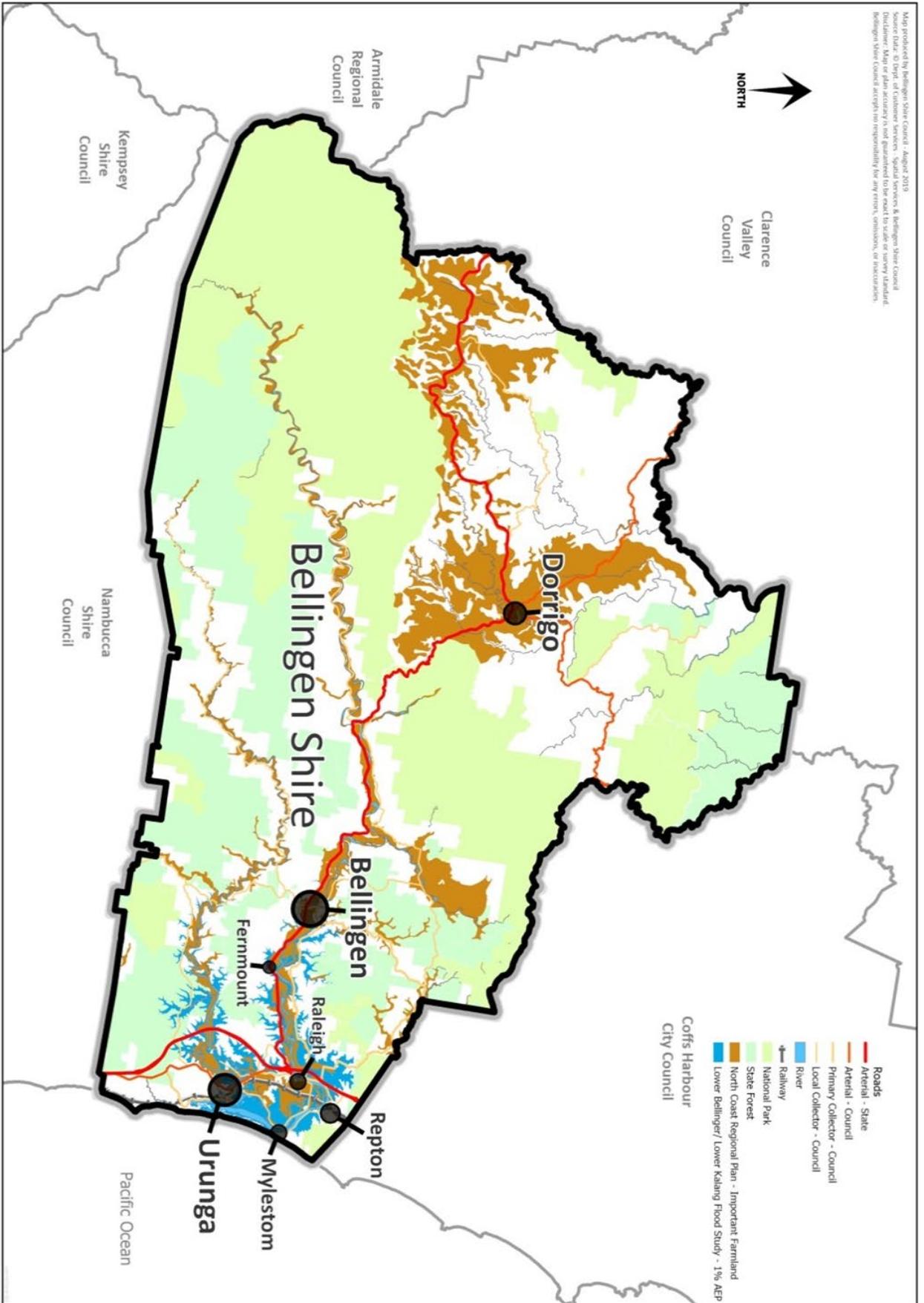
## Planning Priority 1 –To support a vibrant and ecologically sustainable rural economy that is transitioning towards a regenerative model of rural land use

### **RATIONALE**

Bellingen Shire has relied for many years upon the benefits delivered by its natural endowments and climatic suitability for primary production. The rich red soils of the Dorrigo Plateau have historically supported potato growing and dairying activities, and the alluvial floodplains of the Bellinger & Kalang river valleys have also seen extensive agricultural activities including dairying and horticulture. Most of these areas are recognised as having “Regionally Significant Farmland” within the NCRP, and the ongoing protection of this asset is a key policy concern of the NSW Government. A map of Regionally Significant Farmland in Bellingen Shire is included herein. Significant forestry activities have historically occurred on both public land and private land, underpinned by the area’s natural suitability for timber production.

The contribution of agriculture to the economy of Bellingen Shire remains significant, with nearly 1/3 of the shires total area being within a rural zone, and the agricultural sector responsible for 8.2% of employment in the Shire in 2018. The contribution of the forestry and logging sector is diminishing, directly employing only 23 people in 2018 and comprising 0.5 of total employment.

The historical approach to rural land use planning in Bellingen Shire has largely been defined by the circumstances in which we allow people to build additional dwellings in rural areas or to subdivide land. Former planning controls enabled a proliferation of small “concessional” allotments throughout the rural fabric that were not required to be viable as agricultural holdings, whilst other models for subdivision were based upon achieving a minimum lot size that was seen as a proxy for a viable holding in its own right. In an attempt to limit the fragmentation of large landholdings and to limit the numbers of dwellings in remote rural areas, Council has also implemented “dwelling entitlement’ provisions that limit when dwellings can be approved. Typical extensive agricultural operations such as cattle grazing and horticulture have been permissible without development consent from Council, as has private native forestry in most rural areas.



Former assumptions underpinning notions of viability have changed, and this will continue to change as the Shire adapts to a changing climate and changing market conditions. The land use planning system can be used as a mechanism to influence the way in which we use our natural resource base and adapt to change, however whether this should actually occur is a matter of significant dispute. For example, imposing restrictions upon rural land uses can, arguably help to mitigate against some of the impacts arising from certain production methods that adversely impact upon natural systems however this can also limit the flexibility of landowners to adapt and respond to change. The land use planning system can also be used to protect the natural resource base (such as significant farmland or important extractive resources) from competition from other land uses by preventing further subdivision and the establishment of lifestyle residential land uses..

The principles of “regenerative agriculture” also offer potential guidance for the design of future agricultural systems, may help with adaptation to changing climatic conditions, and are consistent with many of the aspirations for local food production contained within the existing CSP. In addition to this, strategic analyses of how food and agriculture systems might adapt to climate change are included in documents such as the "North Coast Enabling Regional Adaptation 2019" report.

The issues discussed above all require careful consideration and the appropriate way in which to do this is by completing a Rural Lands Strategy for the Shire.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
1.1	<b>Rural Lands Strategy</b>	<p>A Rural Lands Strategy will be completed for Bellingen Shire that reviews the suitability of existing planning controls for all rural land within the Shire (including E zones &amp; the R5 zone) considers trends and drivers for change, and recommends future potential actions that Council can pursue to support a viable and ecologically sustainable rural economy. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the protection and productive utilisation of regionally significant farmland, and measures that address and promote resilience and self-reliance in the local food system will also be considered.</p> <p>Consistent with actions within the Bellingen Shire Local Housing Strategy 2020-2040, the Rural Lands Strategy will also review the suitability of <u>existing land</u> within the R5 -Large Lot Residential Zone for either agricultural use, or subdivision into smaller lots to meet the demand for larger lifestyle lots whilst protecting the further incursion of lifestyle lots into productive agricultural areas.</p>

## ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- *“We have a sustainable local farming sector that provides us with healthy fresh food”*
- *“Local food growing, sharing and education initiatives are supported and developed”*
- *“Alternative farming systems are employed with examples including cooperative farming and Landshare”*
- *“Farming practices are financially and environmentally sustainable”*
- *“Agriculture is a valued part of our economy” (CSP)*
- *“Direction 11 – Protect and enhance productive agricultural lands” (NCRP)*

## Planning Priority 2 – To routinely identify infrastructure constraints and upgrade opportunities that will enable desired development outcomes

### RATIONALE

One of the most important factors to consider when planning for growth is whether adequate infrastructure exists to support that growth. On occasion, it may also be the case that existing infrastructure does not meet the performance expectations of the community and needs upgrading regardless of any potential growth.

Infrastructure upgrades can cost significant amounts of money and Council has traditionally not supported forward funding infrastructure that might enable future growth. This kind of approach relies upon the development sector to construct the necessary infrastructure. Small scale and iterative upgrades to infrastructure, where the costs are solely borne by individual developers, are generally less cost effective due to economies of scale and will more often act as a disincentive to undertaking any development at all, particularly for smaller scale “mum and dad” developers.

As we move towards 2040 it will become increasingly important to ensure that not only is growth effectively coupled to investments in infrastructure, but also that development opportunities are not significantly impeded by a lack of investment in key infrastructure. Pro-actively, and routinely identifying where and when infrastructure is preventing the realisation of growth strategies will be essential so that Council can appropriately invest in upgrades and advocate for co-investment by other tiers of government where appropriate.

There will be instances where Council does not have a direct role in the supply of certain infrastructure, such as the supply of telecommunications infrastructure. The importance of access to high quality telecommunications infrastructure (such as Internet services and mobile phone coverage) has been identified as a significant issue of concern to the community. Access to these services provides important opportunities for local employment as well as critical lines of communication during natural hazards such as flooding and bushfire. Accordingly, Council will also actively advocate for improved levels of telecommunications infrastructure.

### ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
2.1	<b>Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan</b>	A revised Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan will be completed that factors in future potential growth patterns & ensures that adequate reticulated water and sewer capacity will exist for future development, having regard to future climate predictions and variability.
2.2	<b>Coastal Villages Sewering Project</b>	Council will act to provide reticulated sewerage to high risk properties at Mylestom, Repton and Raleigh and will provide additional sewer connection opportunities for existing and future industrial land at Raleigh.
2.3	<b>Local Housing Strategy Infrastructure Projects</b>	Council will complete Infrastructure Planning and Studies and Laneway Housing Investigations pursuant to Actions 2.3 & 2.6 of Local Housing Strategy and allocate funding towards targeted infrastructure upgrades arising from those investigations.

## **ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP**

- *“We have the public infrastructure to support business activity”*
- *“We use our water and wastewater using best management practices”*
- *“We have the programs, services and infrastructure to ensure a safe and healthy community”*
- *“We have a system of safe, well-maintained roads including car calming infrastructure” (CSP)*
- *“Direction 21 – Coordinate local infrastructure delivery” (NCRP)*

## **Planning Priority 3 – To provide meaningful opportunities for local employment, sustainable business establishment and growth.**

### **RATIONALE**

The traditional land use planning approach towards encouraging local employment opportunities has been to identify and zone land that can be used for industrial development. Whilst this will remain an important matter to consider in terms of future employment, it is only a small part of the overall employment profile for the Shire and will not necessarily generate the types of employment opportunities sought after by many residents of the Shire. For example, the Health Care & Social Assistance Sector is a major generator of employment in the region and figures prominently in the Coffs Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy 2021-2026, however would not typically be associated with the development of an Employment Lands Strategy.

As we move towards 2040, Council will seek to broaden the scope of matters addressed by land use planning strategies that address local employment opportunities. These strategies will consider key drivers of change such as the digital economy, the role of “disruptive” technologies and the sharing economy, climate change and emerging trends in tourism.

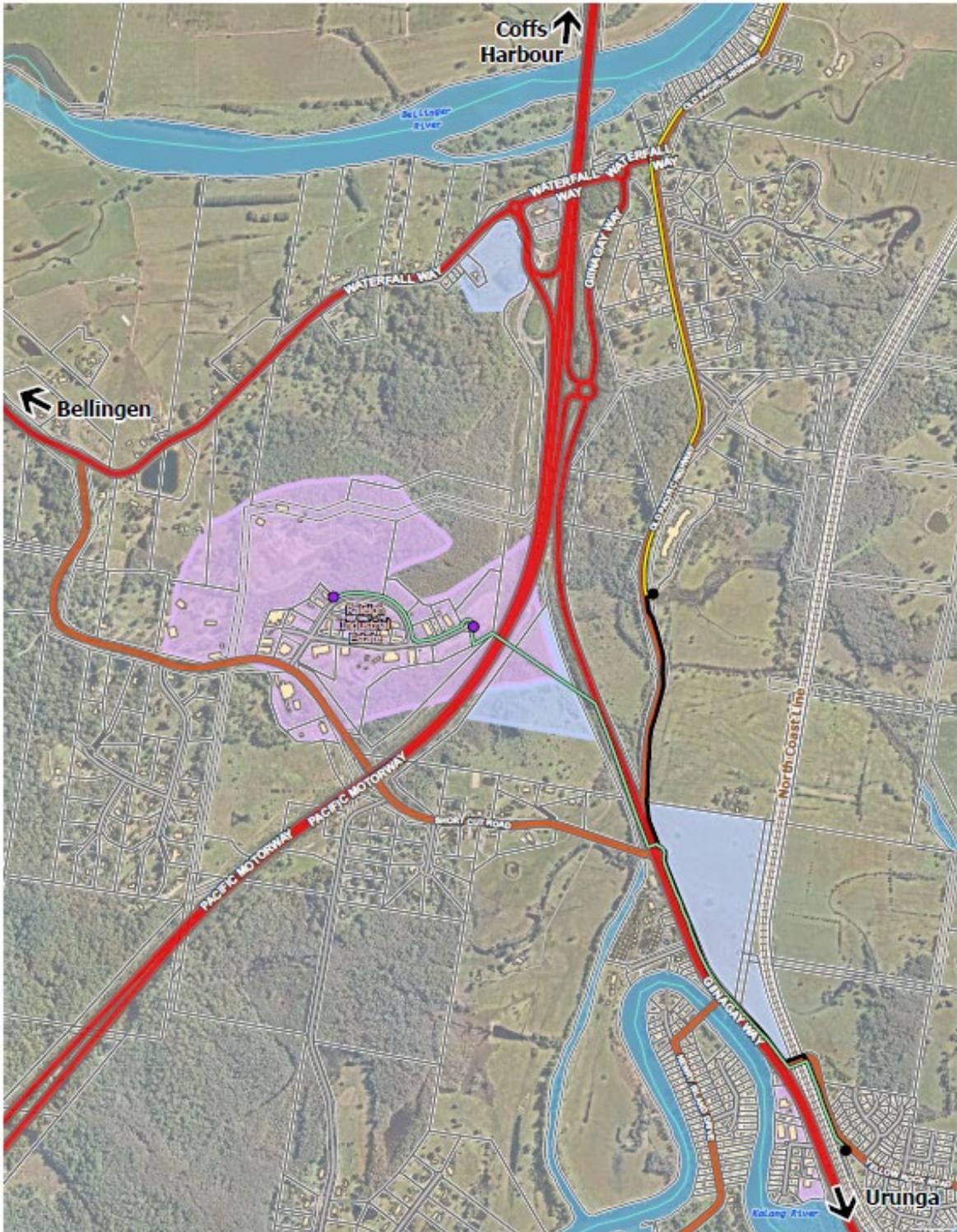
Council will aspire towards an employment profile that provides meaningful opportunities for employment in a wide range of industries, for people at different stages of life. Council will seek to encourage new businesses that harness the opportunities presented by climate change adaptation and that preserve the natural resource base by building new opportunities for nature-based tourism that could arise from opportunities such as the establishment of the Great Koala National Park.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
3.1	<b>Employment Lands Strategy</b>	<p>Council will complete a new Employment Lands Strategy that reviews the suitability of existing land proposed for industrial development at Raleigh and Urunga following the completion of the coastal village sewerage project, and that considers future employment opportunities for the Shire beyond those typically provided by commercial and industrial zones, such as those provided by health care and social assistance, tourism, the events economy and home based industries harnessing the opportunities provided by improved internet access. The ELS will also consider the employment opportunities that may arise from circular economies and industries that harness or develop renewable energy technologies and will aspire towards an employment profile that displays a level of economic self-reliance, and resilience to external forces.</p> <p>The location of the Raleigh Industrial Estate, its relationship to existing and proposed infrastructure and the location of current investigation areas contained within the current ELS and the NCRP are depicted in the following map.</p>

### ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- *“We have meaningful work and vibrant businesses within our community”*
- *“Our community has a diversity of businesses and new industries”*
- *“Businesses within our shire are ethical and sustainable”*
- *“We have balanced sustainable tourism”*
- *“Our Shire offers a broad range of experience for visitor’s*
- *“Our regional tourism assets are enhanced”*
- *“Our tourism providers strive for sustainable operation”*
- *“Our creative communities including craftspeople, writers and musicians are promoted and encouraged” (CSP)*
- *“Action 6.6 - Deliver an adequate supply of employment land through local growth management strategies and local environmental plans to support jobs growth.” (NC*



**Existing Employment Land Investigation Areas**

- North Coast Regional Plan 2036 & Bellingen Shire Employment Lands Strategy 2013

**Bellingen LEP2010 - LZN**

- IN1 - General Industrial (Existing Industrial Zoned Land)

**Cadastre**

- Lot Boundary

**Transport**

- Arterial Road
- Collector Road
- Local Access Road
- Railway

**Coastal Sewer Extension**

- Proposed Pressure Main
- Proposed Rising Main
- Existing Rising Main
- Proposed Pump Station
- Existing Pump Station

(Overriding Coastal Villages Project - Preliminary Concept Design only. Subject to change following the completion of on ground survey, geotechnical investigations and a Review of Environment Factors. This may mean that the location of the infrastructure as shown is changed or additional infrastructure is required.)





# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## KEY DIRECTIONS - BELLINGEN SHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN & NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN 2036

The Bellingen Shire Community Strategic Plan aspires for a community that is connected, creative, healthy and supportive of all members, including children, youth and seniors. Gumbaynggirr culture and heritage is actively supported.

The North Coast Regional Plan aims for socially inclusive communities and the development of partnerships with aboriginal communities to protect heritage and provide opportunities for economic advancement.



## Planning Priority 4- To provide the necessary infrastructure for people to lead physically active lives within their communities

### RATIONALE

Bellingen Shire is a beautiful place to live. Residents of the Shire love to get outdoors and enjoy the beaches, rivers, parks and reserves that are on offer. Whilst it is important to provide opportunities for intentional physical activity, it is also very important to provide opportunities for people to undertake incidental physical activity, which happens as people go about the day to day business of life such as walking to school, work, the shops or other appointments.

The decision to walk or cycle is influenced by the ease and safety of doing this, which depends upon things like good obstacle free pathways and linkages. Although leading an active lifestyle is important at all stages of life, Bellingen Shire is also predicted to house an ageing population, for whom the benefits of regular physical activity are particularly important.

As we move towards 2040, Bellingen Shire will aspire to improve the ability of people to move through existing neighbourhoods and towns through ongoing investment in new pathway construction or upgrades. The strategic emphasis that has been placed upon infill development in the Local Housing Strategy will deliver the opportunity to progressively upgrade pathway networks as development occurs through mechanisms such as Developer Contribution Plans.

### ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
4.1	<b>Developer Contribution Plan Review</b>	Complete initial review of Developer Contribution Plans to identify opportunities for expenditure of historic developer contributions on key pedestrian linkages and to identify priority areas for levying of new developer contributions.

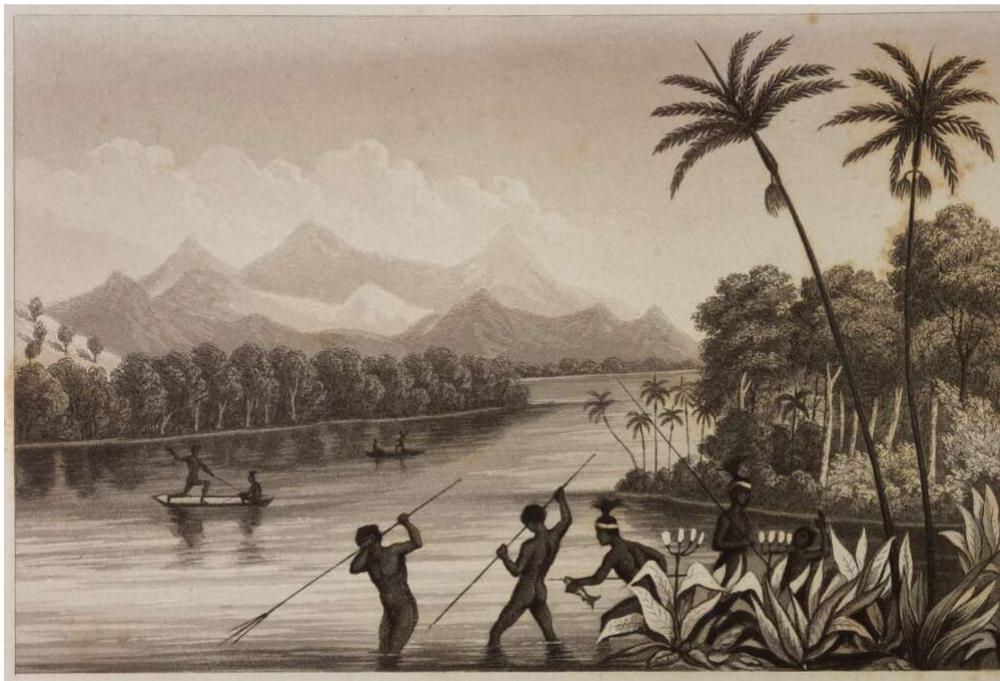
### ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- *“We are connected and able to move around in a safe, accessible, affordable, healthy and environmentally friendly way”*
- *“We have a network of cycleways, footpaths and walking trails, supported by maps and signage which encourage active transport and reduce car dependency”*
- *“We have a variety of passive recreation spaces including riversides, parks and reserves”*
- *“We have a variety of active recreation spaces including playgrounds, sporting fields and multipurpose centres.”*
- *“We have a variety of shared community spaces including meeting spaces accommodating public art, cultural and environmental amenity” (CSP)*
- *“Direction 15 - Develop healthy, safe, socially engaged and well-connected communities” (NCRP)*

## Planning Priority 5 – To integrate Gumbayngirr cultural considerations into land use planning decision making processes

### RATIONALE

The Gumbayngirr people have been in Bellingen Shire for over 40,000 years. Their stewardship of the land nurtured the rich biological diversity that was present at the time of European settlement and Gumbayngirr connections to country continue to be expressed through the important sites, stories and objects that comprise their collective cultural heritage.



"Natives spearing fish on the Bellengen River", Surveyor Clement Hodgkinson, approximately 1818-1893

Whilst respecting the rights of traditional owners to be the custodians of their own cultural knowledge, Council can also seek to work with traditional owners to determine whether there are additional land use planning measures that could be put in place to give protection to significant sites or landscapes.

For other local government areas, this process has taken the form of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study for the Shire. Such a study typically commences with a mapping project that aims to document the locations of sites or landscapes that are of significance and may also involve the compilation of relevant historical information regarding pre and post contact. Having established areas of significance, the second component of the Study determines the land use planning tools that could be employed to provide appropriate levels of protection. The completion of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study could cost in the order of \$100,000 depending upon final scope, with no current or specific grant opportunities provided by other tiers of government to assist with meeting these costs. This may however change over time.

Bellingen Shire aspires to support Gumbayngirr culture and heritage across all aspects of its operations. Although the potential for actual disturbance of aboriginal cultural heritage is considered relatively low in Bellingen Shire, there are broader merits in Council commencing an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study for the Shire. This can act as an investment in goodwill and relationship building with traditional owners and provide a resource base for the protection of, and dissemination of appropriate knowledge regarding the indigenous history of the Bellingen Shire.

Council has historically invested in Shire wide Heritage Studies that were focused upon European heritage, however development has been permitted to occur for decades without the benefit of a considered Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study for the Shire. It is now time for Council to commence discussion with representatives of the local aboriginal community to determine their interest in embarking upon this process in conjunction with Council and other key stakeholders such as the NSW Government.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
5.1	<b>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study</b>	Subject to the outcome of preliminary discussions with the local aboriginal community, Council will complete an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study for the Shire that will provide a framework for the consistent assessment and protection of cultural heritage values through the land use planning system and will build relationships with traditional owners. Council will seek funding support from the NSW Government to complete this project and be prepared to allocate its own funding and resources to assist with completion of this project upon co-funding opportunities presenting.

## ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- *“We value, honour and actively acknowledge our Gumbaynggirr culture and heritage.”*
- *“We actively engage with and include the perspectives and knowledge of Aboriginal people”*
- *“Opportunities exist to learn about our Aboriginal language, history and culture”*
- *Gumbaynggirr place and language is acknowledged through signage and other mechanisms (CSP)*
- *“Action 18.3 – Develop local heritage studies in consultation with the local Aboriginal community and adopt appropriate measures in planning strategies and local plans to protect Aboriginal heritage.” (NCRP)*



## PLACES FOR PEOPLE

### KEY DIRECTIONS - BELLINGEN SHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN & NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN 2036

The Bellingen Shire Community Strategic Plan aspires to have a diversity of beautiful spaces, facilities and services to be a healthy, happy and active community. We are well connected to these spaces and able to move around the community in safe and sustainable ways. We have a mixture of affordable and sustainable housing options for all in our community.

The North Coast Regional Plan aims to encourage recreational walking and cycling, and to create safe public spaces. The preservation of local heritage is an important factor to consider in retention of local character. Local growth management strategies will facilitate increased diversity in housing types in the region, in response to key demographic trends, and will consider opportunities for affordable housing. Rural residential development will be carefully planned for in growth strategies.



## Planning Priority 6 – To meet most of the housing needs of a wide cross section of the community through well designed infill housing

### RATIONALE

Council has undertaken a significant process of community consultation to develop the Bellingen Shire Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The LHS has merged an analysis of key demographic and housing trends within Bellingen Shire, with the community's aspirations for how it wants to grow and presents a detailed roadmap for the future housing needs of the Shire. The top 10 themes that emerged as result of community consultation regarding the Draft LHS are reprinted below.

1. *Support infill housing*
2. *Protect local character*
3. *Manage risks of overdevelopment*
4. *Increase housing choice*
5. *Encourage sustainable building design*
6. *Need more affordable housing*
7. *Improve design of new houses*
8. *Improve Council processes*
9. *Infrastructure concerns*
10. *Protect natural environment*

Responding to the concerns of the community, the LHS includes a wide range of measures to encourage a greater supply and variety of housing types within existing residential areas, measures to address housing affordability, and measures to ensure high quality design that preserves the character of the Shire. The LHS documents 65 Actions that will need to be implemented over the 20yr lifespan of the Strategy, a selection of which are reprinted below.

*Action 1.2 – Enable more housing types by changing planning controls*

*Action 1.4 – Encourage smaller homes.*

*Action 1.7 – Encourage a variety of tenure types*

*Action 2.2 – A guide to best-practice infill examples*

*Action 2.3 – Infrastructure planning and studies*

*Action 2.6 – Laneway housing investigations*

*Action 4.1 – Provide affordable housing on government owned sites*

*Action 4.7 – Advocacy & partnerships*

*Action 6-1 – Character statements*

*Action 7.1 – Planning for long term water security*

*Action 8.4 – Eco-village Pilot Project*

Whilst many of these actions can be implemented as part of Council’s “business as usual” operations, there are several that will require a separate and deliberate investment of resources by Council to ensure the ultimate success of the Strategy. In particular, there will need to be an investment of resources in upgrading infrastructure to support the infill focus of the LHS and this will require a conscious shift from historic policy positions that have avoided forward funding of infrastructure to support growth. This could be reflected, for example, in the development of a rolling annual works program that targets specific localities for laneway upgrades and infrastructure provision to stimulate private investment in infill housing in those areas.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
6.1	<b>Implement the Bellingen Shire Local Housing Strategy</b>	Council will implement the Action Plan contained within the LHS. The Action Plan proposes a wide range of measures to stimulate further housing supply, including partnerships, advocacy, educational materials, further studies, infrastructure upgrades and changes to planning controls. Council will allocate funding and resources to progressively implement the Plan, as part of the annual setting of priorities in the Operational Plan process.

## ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- *“We have a mixture of affordable sustainable housing options for all in our community”*
- *“There are affordable housing options for all through a diversity of mechanisms including increased public and community housing” (CSP)*
- *“Direction 1 – Deliver environmentally sustainable growth” (NCRP)*
- *“Direction 23 – Increase housing diversity and choice” (NCRP)*
- *“Direction 25 – Deliver more opportunities for affordable housing” (NCRP)*



Examples of diverse housing types for infill development <sup>v</sup>



Example of infill development in Bellingen in laneway

## Planning Priority 7 – To ensure that the unique heritage values of the Shire are protected and promoted to residents and visitors.

### RATIONALE

Bellingen Shire is endowed with a rich and diverse record of built and natural heritage. This record not only helps us to understand and interpret historical events and settlement patterns, but also influences the look and feel of the Shire. Iconic buildings such as the Ocean View Hotel in Urunga, The Dorrigo Heritage Hotel and Motel and the Hammond & Wheatley Building in Bellingin all help to impart an unmistakeable sense of place that is valued by residents and visitors alike.



The identification and protection of heritage will continue to be an important part of Council's planning functions. Council has already identified 269 heritage items, 1 Heritage Conservation Area in Bellingin, and 84 Archaeological Sites for protection in its Local Environmental Plan, however, will also periodically review its heritage schedule to determine whether new listings are warranted as evidence comes to hand, or whether existing listings need amendment.

In addition to statutory measures to protect heritage, it will also be important for Council to continue to provide assistance to owners of properties with heritage items in the way of pragmatic advice, and financial assistance, to help them maintain those heritage items and ensure ongoing occupancy. In broad terms, heritage conservation activities also capitalise on the embodied energy that is inherent in existing building stock, thereby reducing demand for new building materials and impacts on the environment.

Council will also look to capitalise on the interest that exists in local heritage through the development of improved means of engagement with the people, stories, events and locations that collectively comprise the heritage of Bellingin Shire. This could be through the development of heritage trails, apps and street installations that people can access when they visit areas of historical interest in the Shire.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
7.1	<b>Maintain funding programs for heritage conservation</b>	Council will continue to fund the annual Heritage Grants program (that provides funding opportunities for maintenance of heritage items) and the Heritage Advisor program (that provides expert advice on heritage related matters).
7.2	<b>Maintain currency &amp; accuracy of heritage information</b>	Council will periodically review the heritage schedule in BLEP 2010 to include additional items where these are identified by Council.
7.3	<b>Improve promotion of local heritage</b>	Council will support proposals and Investigate opportunities for heritage trails and public works that document key buildings and stories in the Shire.

### ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- *“Our Shire offers a broad range of experience for visitors” (CSP)*
- *“Heritage buildings and sites are protected.” (CSP)*
- *“Direction 19 – Protect historic heritage.” (NCRP)*



*Example of Heritage Maintenance work approved through 2018-2019 Heritage Grant Program – Old Police Stables, Bellingin*



## OUR LIVING ENVIRONMENT

### KEY DIRECTIONS - BELLINGEN SHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN & NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN 2036

The Bellingen Shire Community Strategic Plan aspires to a clean environment and water supply, with a community that lives sustainably. Our ecological footprint is reduced and our contribution to climate change is minimised. We work together to protect and enhance our biodiversity and environment.

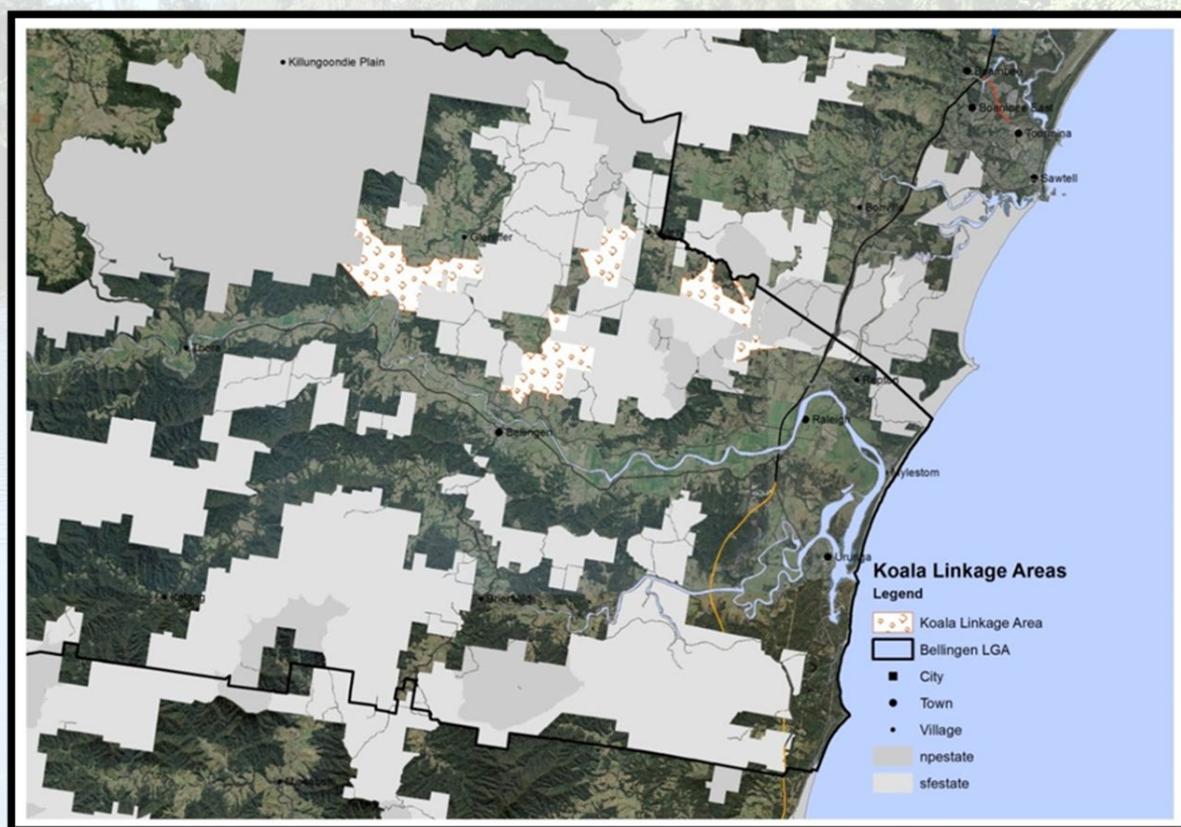
The North Coast Regional Plan aims to maintain the most stunning environment in NSW by focusing development to areas of least biodiversity sensitivity and existing urban growth areas. Susceptibility to natural hazards and the impacts of climate change are mitigated by properly understanding impacts and planning to minimise exposure.



## Planning Priority 8 – Biodiversity conservation occurs at a landscape scale, using a variety of mechanisms across different land tenures.

### RATIONALE

Biodiversity conservation measures are best contemplated at a landscape, rather than an individual property scale. For example, wildlife corridors allow species to move across large areas of land to access genetically different breeding populations, or to move away in response to threats that may arise where they currently live. Council's Koala Management Strategy is one example of where linkage areas and core koala habitat have been identified at a landscape scale, in order to allow koalas to move between large areas of suitable habitat.



Other landscape elements that provide important biodiversity functions are the Shires waterways and riparian zones. Bellingen Shire residents place a high value upon the importance of water quality for a range of ecological, recreational and employment functions, and Landcare Groups across the Shire have worked progressively over many years to improve the biodiversity value of linear riparian corridors through stabilisation and revegetation projects.

Council will continue to work towards biodiversity protection at a landscape scale. Council will adopt and implement a Biodiversity Strategy that coordinates its approach to biodiversity management in the Shire and as areas with biodiversity value are progressively identified or created, Council will use the land use planning system to appropriately zone land to reflect its biodiversity value.



Council will be proactive in advocating for improved levels of protection for biodiversity across all land tenures and will aim to improve the knowledge base regarding locations of threatened ecological communities and species across the Shire. In recognition of declining rates of biodiversity and the ongoing threats caused by land use practices, climate change and bushfire, Council will seek to show leadership by elevating the importance of biodiversity retention in decision-making processes.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
8.1	<b>Implement Biodiversity Strategy</b>	Council will implement the Biodiversity Strategy for Bellingen Shire that co-ordinates, and focuses, Council efforts to conserve biodiversity across the Shire, and will implement any necessary changes to land use planning documents that assist with implementation of the Strategy.

## ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

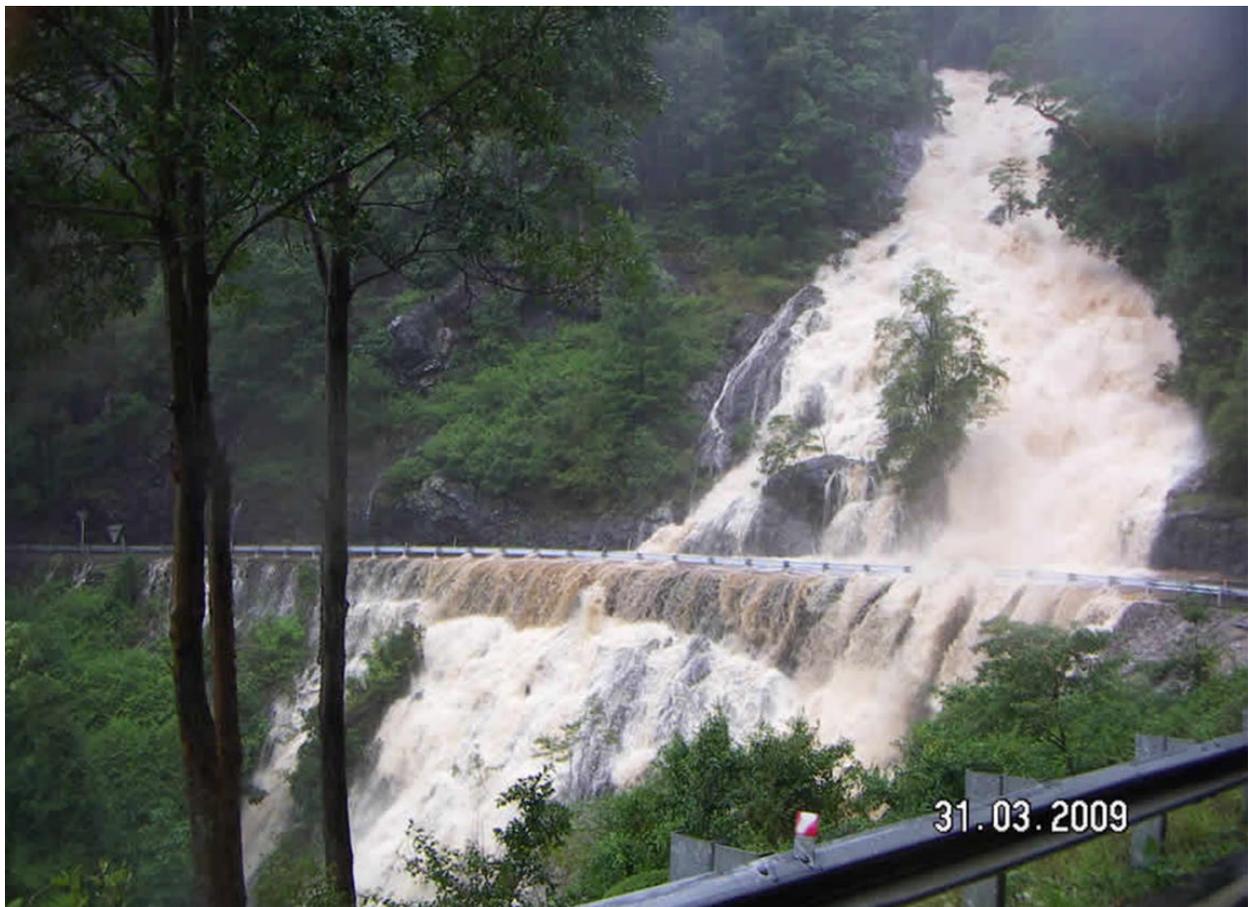
- *“We protect and enhance our biodiversity.”*
- *“Biodiversity is managed and protected for future generations.”*
- *“Threats to biodiversity are identified and mitigated.”*
- *“Our waterways and wetlands are valued, protected and enhanced”*
- *“We work together to protect and enhance our environment.”*
- *“Our natural environment is valued, protected and enhanced” (CSP)*
- *“Direction 2 – Enhance biodiversity, coastal and aquatic habitats, and water catchments.” (NCRP)*

**Planning Priority 9 – That Councils policy framework for dealing with natural hazards recognises risks associated with climate change and avoids additional exposure of development to hazards.**

### **RATIONALE**

The geography of Bellingen Shire has meant that it has always been exposed to the impacts of natural hazards. The fertile growing conditions in Bellingen Shire mean that much of the area is covered in vegetation. This vegetation gives rise to potential bushfire hazards that influence where development can occur and what the impacts of that development will be.

The dramatic rise of the escarpment from the coastal floodplains and up to the Dorrigo plateau is also instrumental in the exposure of residents to flooding, which is perhaps the most recognised natural hazard that exists in Bellingen Shire.



*Flooding over Waterfall Way – Dorrigo Mountain*



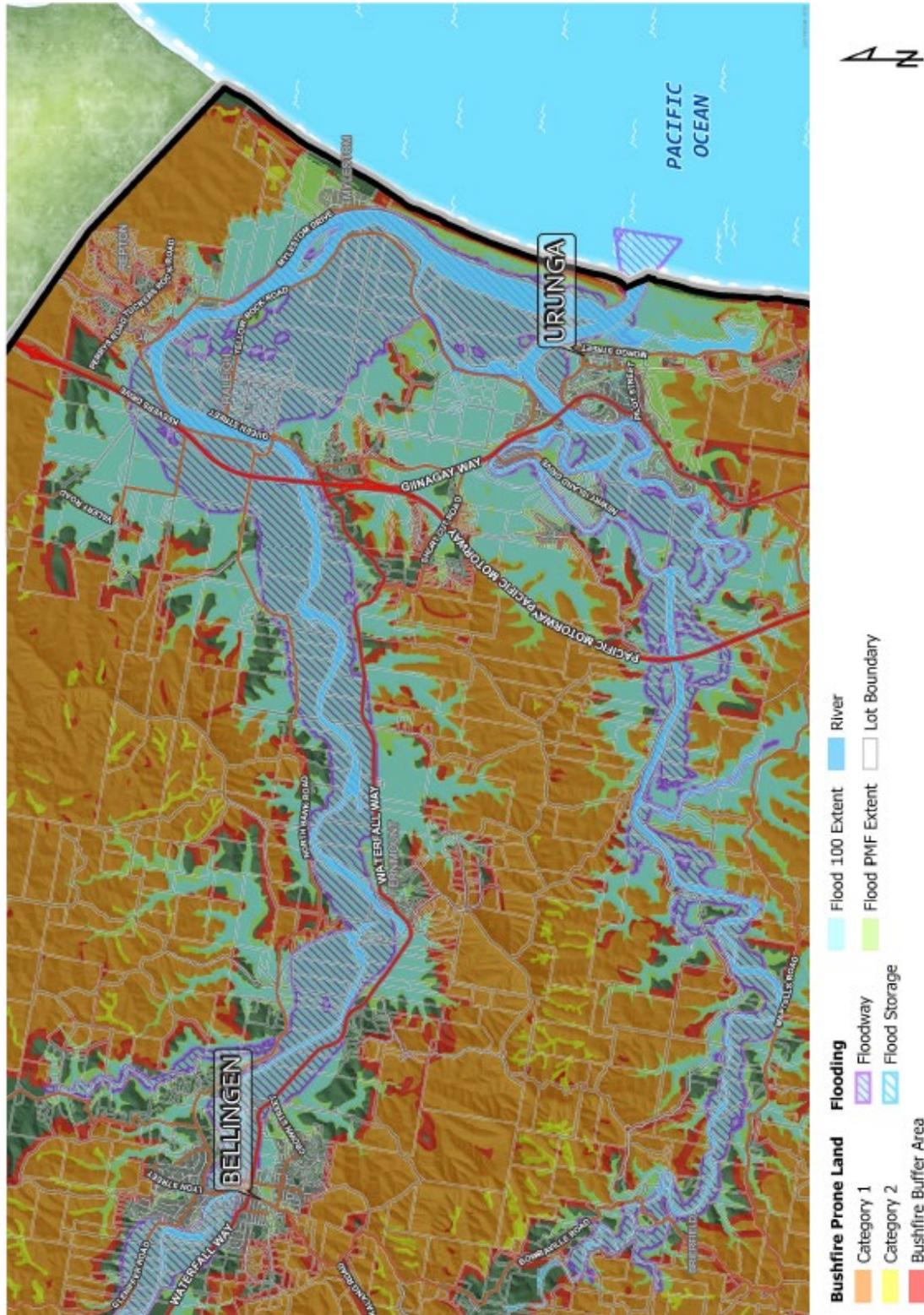
**CENTRAL URUNGA – APRIL 2009**

*Flooding in central Urunga*

The predicted effects of climate change will exacerbate the severity of existing natural hazards in Bellingen Shire, as documented in the NSW Government Integrated Vulnerability Assessment for the North Coast of NSW and depicted in the table below<sup>vi</sup>.

Expected physical responses to Climate Change		
Physical response	Trend	Projection
Sea level	Rising	This study assumed a sea level rise of 0.4m above 1990 mean sea level by 2050 and a 0.9m rise by 2100
Evaporation	Increase	Likely increase across all seasons
Soil moisture	Decrease	Despite projected increase in rainfall in summer and autumn, soil conditions are likely to be drier for most of the year, particularly spring and winter.
Drought	Variable	Short-duration droughts are likely to become more severe, while medium and long-term droughts will be about as likely as not to remain similar to current conditions.
Runoff	Varies seasonally	Substantial increases in run-off depths and the magnitude of high flows are very likely in summer. A moderate decrease in runoff depths is likely in spring.
Flood	Increase	The combination of rising sea levels and catchment-driven flooding is likely to increase flood frequency, height and extent in the lower portions of coastal floodplains.
Fire	Increase	Higher temperatures and changes to rainfall patterns will more likely than not lead to increased fire frequency. Very high to extreme fire danger days are projected to increase by 10-15%, currently 10-15 a year inland and fewer than 10 a year in coastal and higher mountain areas.

Even before the projected impacts of climate change are considered, there is a mosaic of land use constraints that already exist in many areas of Bellinghen Shire. The map below shows the intersection of flooding and bushfire hazards in the lower Bellinghen area, and illustrates a fundamental reality of land use planning in Bellinghen Shire, whereby options for new development areas are often highly limited because of the natural hazards that render many areas unsuitable for development.



In view of the large areas of land already subject to natural hazards Council will act to ensure that it has access to the most accurate information to hand regarding the likely physical impacts of climate change in the shire. Council will seek to work with NSW Government Agencies such as the Rural Fire Service and the DPIE – Environment, Energy & Science Division to obtain this information, including the provision of necessary technical support and funding. Upon obtaining this information, Council will make appropriate decisions regarding the restriction of development in areas subject to hazards, to ensure that the existing burden on emergency services attributable to historic development patterns is not added to by new development.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
9.1	<b>Update Shire wide Floodplain Risk Management Plan</b>	Council will prepare an updated Shire wide Floodplain Risk Management Study Plan that outlines the strategic approach that Council takes to the management of flood risk across the Shire. The updated Plan will act to synthesise the recommendations of multiple flood studies and plans that have been prepared over time, and will highlight additional matters that Council should pursue to improve the management of flood risks in the Shire, including any necessary changes to Councils LEP or DCP.
9.1a	<b>Commission updated flood mapping for the Upper Bellinger, Upper Kalang and Dorrigo areas</b>	Council, as part of the completion of the Lower Bellinger Kalang Rivers Floodplain Risk Management Study, has obtained mapping that uses recently acquired LIDAR data, and updated flood modelling techniques, to produce updated flooding maps for these areas. An accurate flood map helps to implement appropriate planning controls that minimise risk, and avoids Council having to adopt unnecessarily conservative policy positions that restrict development or require landowners to commission expensive flood studies to justify often minor developments. Council will commission updated flood mapping for the Upper Bellinger, Upper Kalang and Dorrigo areas that utilises the same methodology that was employed for the lower Bellinger & Kalang Rivers, and that will enable the stitching together of flood mapping for the lower and upper reaches of the rivers.
9.2	<b>Finalise &amp; implement the Bellinger Shire Coastal Management Program</b>	Council is currently within the process of preparing a Coastal Management Program (CMP) for the Shire. Work to date has revealed that there is a complexity of governance arrangements within the coastal areas of the Shire, which is subject to numerous management plans and studies. A CMP will be prepared that simplifies and consolidates governance arrangements within the coastal zone, and clearly specifies the roles and responsibilities of Council and other agencies. The CMP will also provide the strategic justification for the funding of key management actions within the coastal zone and will confirm appropriate policy responses to key planning issues such as climate change and the impacts of sea level rise within the coastal area.
9.3	<b>Review Bushfire Prone Lands Mapping</b>	Council will review Bushfire Prone Lands Mapping for Shire, in consultation with the NSW RFS, and adopt a new regulatory map as necessary to ensure that new development is suitably protected from bushfire impacts.

## ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- “We are a disaster resilient community”
- “We have the programs, services and infrastructure to ensure a safe and healthy community” (CSP)
- “Direction 3 – Manage natural hazards and climate change.” (NCRP)

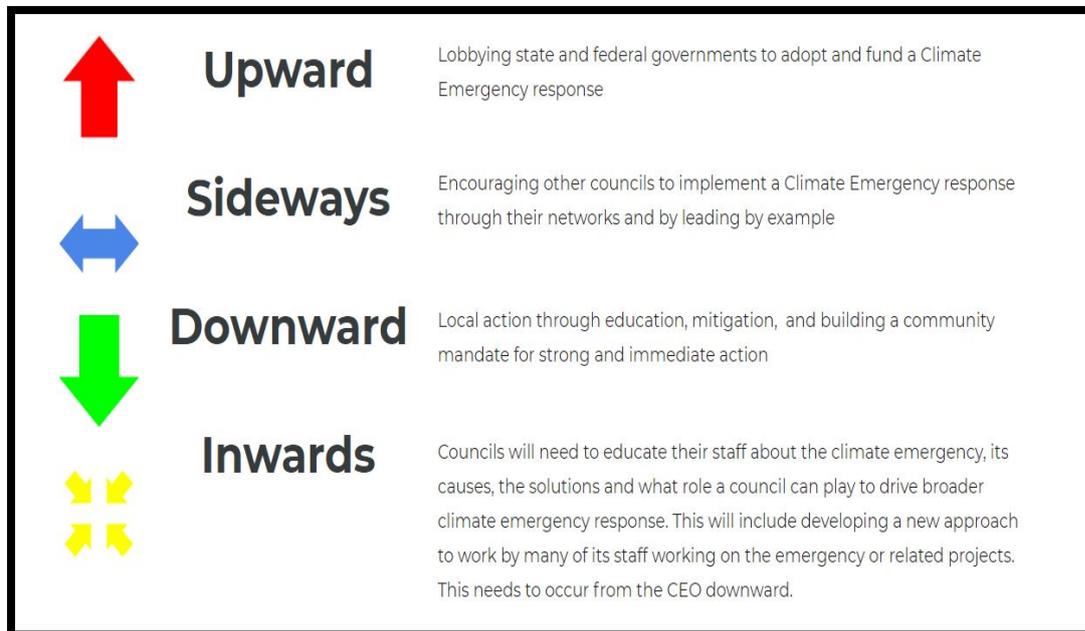
## Planning Priority 10 – Implement Climate Emergency Declaration recommendations

### RATIONALE

Council made the following declaration in March 2019.

*“BSC declares that we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government”*

The resolution of Council required further investigations to examine how our CSP, works program and planning documents can address the climate emergency and to produce a series of options available to council to operationalise this emergency declaration. Some of the ways that the adoption of an Emergency Declaration can manifest in Councils functions and relationships is shown below.



Council has already prepared a Corporate Carbon Plan 2020 – 2030, as the first significant action to arise from the declaration, which sets out the principle things that Council will do to reduce carbon emissions associated with the daily conduct of Council business. The Council Corporate Carbon Plan is one of a suite of documents that will be developed as part of an over-arching Climate Emergency Response Framework, with other documents to include a Community Carbon Plan and the Adaptation Plan.

There is significant potential for the land use planning system to develop policies that are cognisant of climate change, reduce carbon emissions and can help with adaptation. Councils Local Housing Strategy, for example, includes many actions that are directed towards environmentally sustainable urban landscapes and built form, and Planning Priority 9 looks to reduce future exposure to natural hazards that will be influenced by climate variability.

Council will progressively incorporate additional recommendations arising from the climate emergency suite of documents into the land use planning system.

## ACTIONS

Code	Action	Description
10.1	<b>Finalise Climate Emergency response</b>	Council will complete the remaining components of its overall response to the Climate Emergency declaration and incorporate relevant recommendations within Councils land use planning framework.

### ACTION ALIGNMENT – NCRP & CSP

- *“We live sustainably and reduce our ecological footprint and contribution to climate change.”*
- *“The consumption of resources is minimised”*
- *“We reduce, reuse and recycle our waste”*
- *“Our community has access to convenient recycling facilities and services” (CSP)*
- *“Direction 3 – Manage natural hazards and climate change.” (NCRP)*



*Example of Corporate Carbon Plan initiatives - Installation of solar panels on Council Administrative Centre & associated buildings in Bellingen*

The background image shows an outdoor cafe setting. In the foreground, there are several people sitting at tables. A tall, dark lamp post stands on the right side. The ground is paved with light-colored tiles. There are trees and a building in the background. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

## CENTRES NARRATIVES

Council has consulted with Chambers of Commerce to assist in establishing summary narratives for the future development of each of the main population centres in the Shire. Additional context has been provided via recent consultation undertaken by Council as part of the development of the Local Housing Strategy, and further refinement will take place as Council implements the strategy and undertakes additional planning exercises, such as an Employment Lands Strategy, that will shape the future of these areas.

**Planning Priority 11 – Council will work with proponents, and proactively seek opportunities, to advance projects and initiatives that are consistent with the centres narratives contained within the LSPS.**

**ACTIONS**

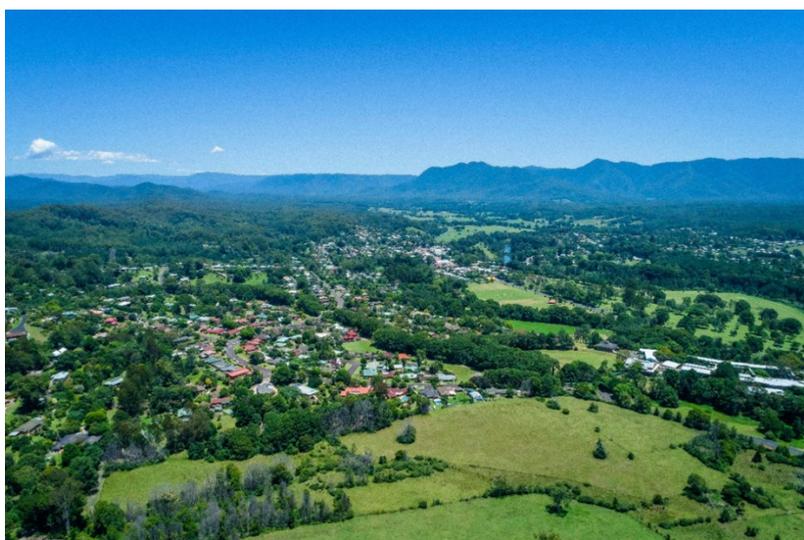
<b>Code</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>11.1</b>	<b>Support projects consistent with Centres narratives</b>	<p>Council will work with relevant Chambers of Commerce, development proponents and other tiers of government to advance projects and initiatives discussed in the LSPS. The framing of this action deliberately avoids committing Council to the completion of specific projects within specific timeframes, however does seek to provide an additional level of context for considering the merit of new projects that may arise, and to help to advocate for the funding of some of the potential projects foreshadowed in the narratives. t</p> <p>Council will, as part of the annual reporting framework for the LSPS, annually report on any projects that have been supported or pursued in respect of this action, and will update the LSPS following the completion of any projects that add to the Centres narratives, to ensure these remain relevant and current.</p> <p>For example, the completion of a master planning exercise for Urunga will assist in establishing a narrative for the future development of Urunga, and the completion of Local Character Statements as part of the implementation of the Local Housing Strategy would also provide valuable information to be reflected in the centres narratives.</p>
<b>11.2</b>	<b>Implement the Town Centre Parking Strategy</b>	<p>The availability of parking within town centres influences the way that CBD areas function, and the experience that both locals and visitors have when visiting these areas. The “Town Centre Parking Strategy – Bellingen Shire Council Parking Strategy - August 2018” was adopted by Council in February 2019, in recognition of the need for Council to strategically manage parking within the main centres of the Shire.</p> <p>The Strategy involved an analysis of parking patterns within the town centres of Bellingen, Dorrigo &amp; Urunga and outlines the key actions and initiatives required to manage car parking within these centres. The Strategy involves a mixture of physical works and policy interventions and referencing the Strategy within the LSPS is important to signal Councils commitment to implementing the Strategy, and further justify potential funding avenues that may become available to implement the actions.</p>
<b>11.3</b>	<b>Obtain standard development consent for conduct of events within each town centre</b>	<p>The conduct of special events within the town centres often adds an extra element of vitality to these areas and can provide a valuable economic stimulus to the local economy. These events often require Development Consent from Council, which can prove a challenging process for both event organisers, and Council as a consent authority, where important information is difficult or expensive to access and timeframes to obtain the necessary approvals are tight.</p> <p>To provide a simplified pathway for event organisers, Councils Manager Economic Development &amp; Tourism will liaise with each of the Chambers of Commerce, and other key stakeholders, to prepare a Development Application for each town centre that allows for the conduct of events. The existence of a consent for a standard type event will mean that prospective event organisers can use this approval if they conform to its scope, any conditions of consent, and obtain the more minor ancillary approvals that may be required in each instance.</p> <p>This action would require Council to allocate a specific budget to engage a planning consultant to prepare the relevant DA’s, including the commissioning of any necessary supporting information, such as a Traffic Management Plan prepared by an appropriately qualified practitioner.</p>

## Bellingen

Bellingen is the main administrative centre of Bellingen Shire, accommodating the Council Offices and Bellingen River District Hospital. It supports a vibrant central business area that has retained much of its heritage character and provides a wide range of entertainment and dining options.

Industrial opportunities are limited in Bellingen, with local servicing opportunities still provided in the town centre, as was traditionally the case in country villages. The one industrial zone that is in Bellingen houses Planet Lighting, which is a world leader in its field and is illustrative of the creative spirit of Bellingen residents.

The artistic and volunteering characteristics of the Bellingen community underlie much of the sense of place, and events culture, that people recognise as being uniquely Bellingen. Rising costs of housing threaten the social fabric that has been responsible for creating the character of Bellingen, as certain income categories are forced to move out of the town or Shire. This has been identified as a matter of importance on Councils recently adopted Local Housing Strategy, which identifies the need to plan for more affordable infill forms of housing as we move towards 2040. Projects that deliver upon the key objectives of the Housing Strategy will be actively supported by Council.

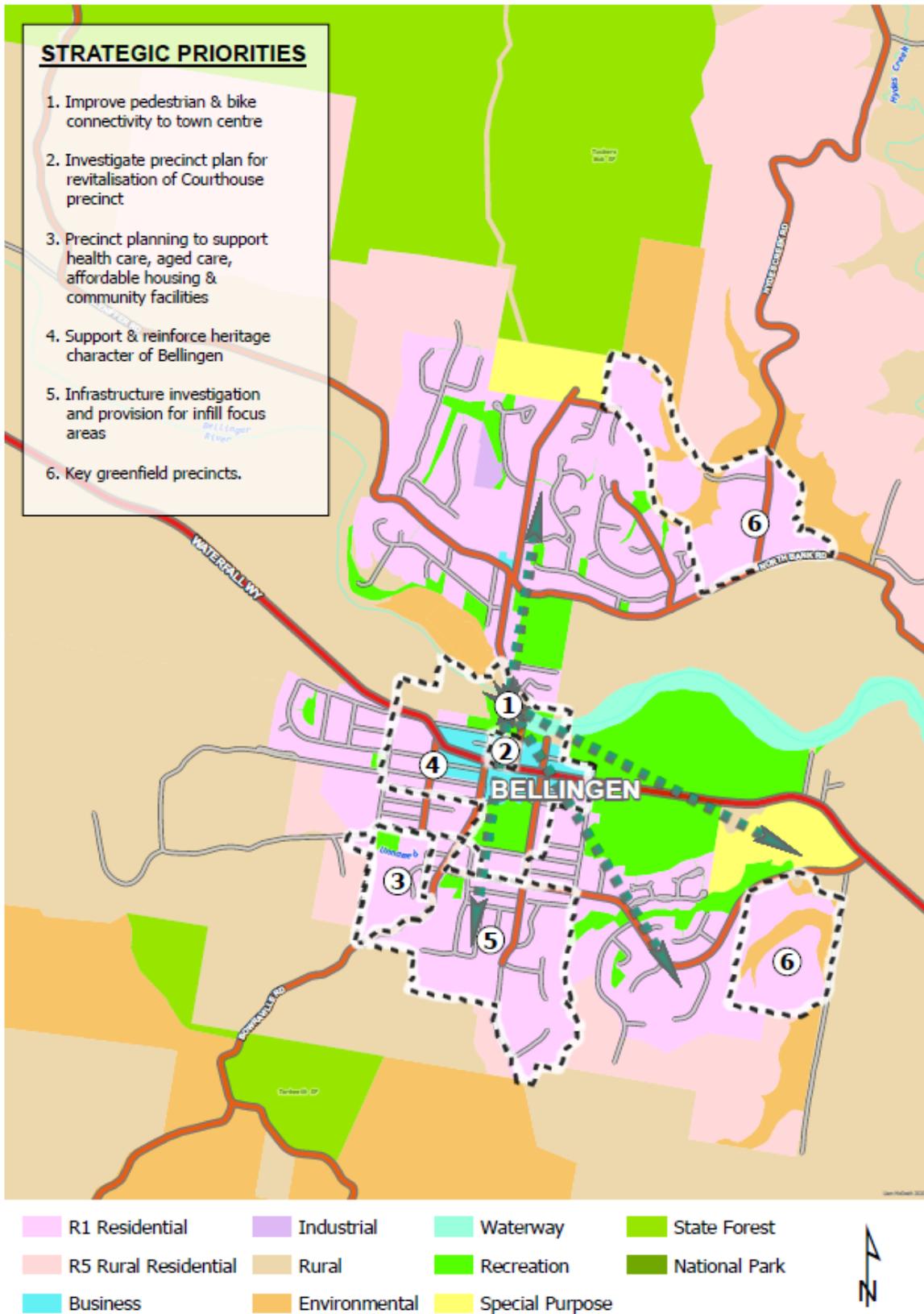


Bellingen residents are particularly concerned with matters of environmental and social sustainability and envisage a future for the town that embraces the challenges of a changing climate and the need to develop local solutions and adaptations. Key community assets such as the Youth Hub and the Memorial Hall will continue to deliver valued social outcomes and the built and landscaped form of the town will evolve to provide environmentally sustainable living opportunities and a network of well-connected open space areas that serve recreational, environmental and food production purposes.

Specific projects that may be pursued for Bellingen, subject to funding and other opportunities, include;

- Precinct planning for improved activation of land between North Church Street and Bridge Street, to consider opportunities for adaptive re-use of unoccupied Court House and other under-utilised land in this area.

- Precinct planning for the Bellingen Hospital, Bellorana and former Bowling Club precinct to further support use of land for aged care, affordable housing and other community facilities.



## Dorrigo

Dorrigo is a unique part of Bellingen Shire, retaining the charm of a country village whilst serving an important support function to its productive rural hinterland. The elevation of Dorrigo gives rise to climatic conditions that deliver beautiful seasonal displays of colour, striking contrasts between the red volcanic soil and lush green grass, and world significant areas of remnant rainforest that attract in the order of 120,000 visitors annually to the acclaimed Rainforest Centre.

Growth rates in Dorrigo have been low, and the plateau area has seen a gradual reduction in population of 355 people between 1996 & 2016. The Dorrigo plateau area also has a higher proportion of people aged over 65 than other areas of Bellingen Shire, with a lack of suitable housing in Dorrigo to support the transition into town from the farming hinterland, or from other larger houses, an issue of significant concern to the community.

Whilst agriculture remains the dominant industry of employment on the plateau, this is also declining. Dorrigo has significant areas of land zoned for industrial development; however, these areas have not attracted new investment in employment opportunities in these areas. The lack of local employment opportunities has been identified as a key contributor to population decline and investor confidence, and the contribution of the rural economy to the town of Dorrigo is acknowledged as a significant factor for its ongoing vitality.



*“Greener Pastures” - Ruth Holmes*

Notwithstanding these trends, there are a range of potential opportunities and drivers for growth in Dorrigo that could positively influence the economic and housing future of the plateau. The fact that 120,000 people visit the Rainforest Centre each year, and up to 90,000 visit Dangar Falls, provides significant opportunity to capture additional retail spend if visitors also visit the town centre. Providing improved linkages between these areas and the town centre will assist in this regard, and the Dorrigo Rail Museum remains a significant potential drawcard for tourist visitation if it proceeded towards a public opening.

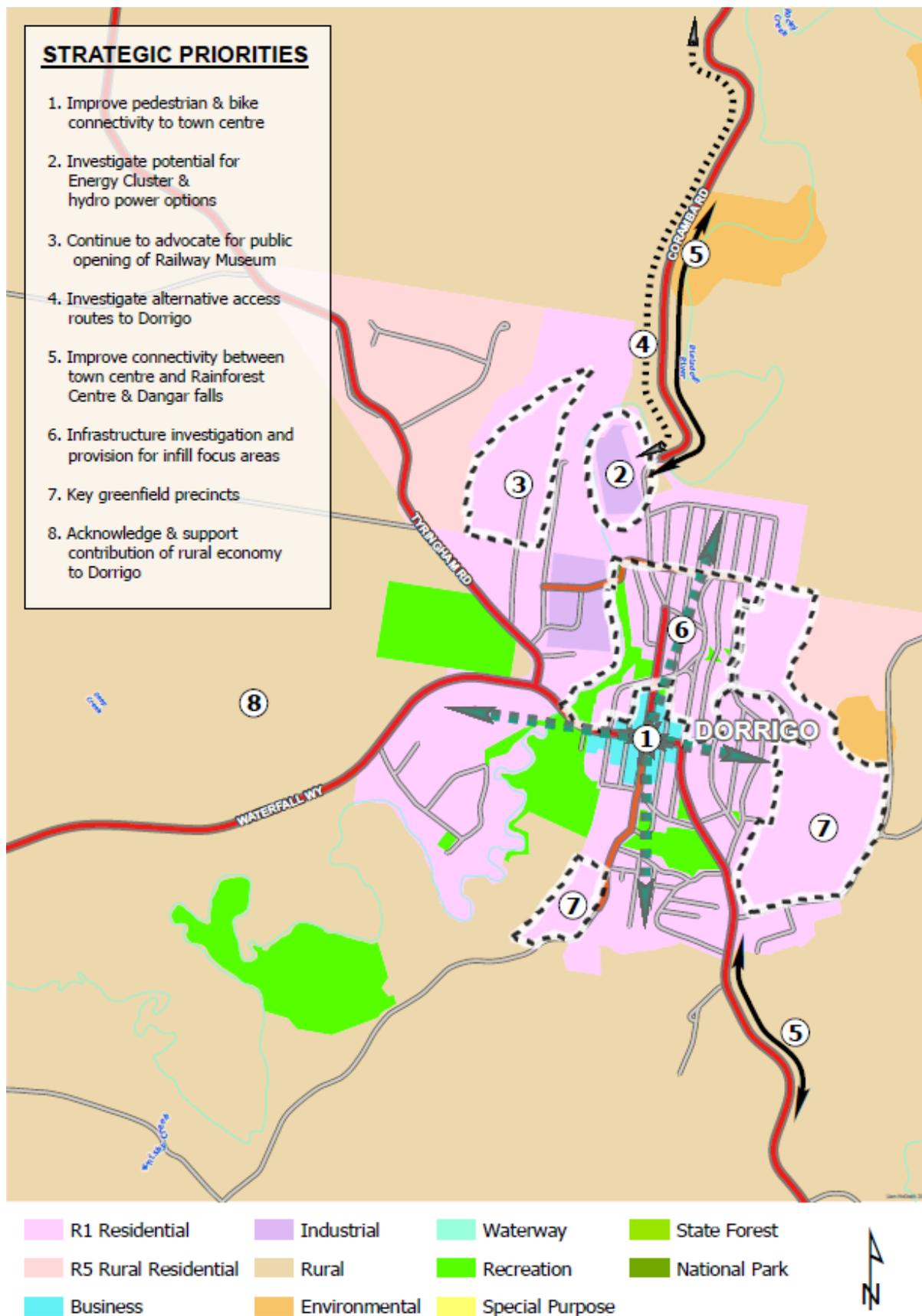
Value adding industries that draw upon the natural endowments of the region may provide a focus for future development opportunities, and this could range from nature based tourism, through to artisan producers using the agricultural outputs of the plateau, or new sustainable industries that utilise hydro-electric power generated by the plateaus many flowing streams. Dorrigo was one of the first areas to establish a hydro-electric scheme to power the town and retains heritage listings that commemorate this legacy.



*"Drone Shot of Dorrigo" – Tom Colquhoun*

Specific projects that may be pursued for Dorrigo, subject to funding and other opportunities, include;

- An Energy Centre that draws upon the hydro power legacy within the town, and that demonstrates the respective merits of a wide range of energy sources, in the context of a changing climate and changing resource availability.
- Projects that may not be permissible in a certain area but would deliver significant benefits for Dorrigo will be considered on merit by Council, noting the relative lack of opportunities for economic stimulus that present in Dorrigo.



## Urunga

Urunga is a much-loved coastal playground for residents of Bellingen Shire, famous for its boardwalk and riverside recreational areas. Residents of Urunga value the laid back, coastal vibe and aesthetic of the town and whilst generally supportive of the planned residential growth in areas like South Urunga, are concerned that the character of Urunga may change with growth and that facilities within the town centre, such as carparking, may not be capable of accommodating growth.



Urunga is serviced by a small and fully occupied Industrial Estate on its northern edge, whilst Raleigh Industrial Estate is also in close proximity to the town. Industrial Zones typically provide small scale local service functions to the Urunga community, however potential exists for the establishment of larger scale industries upon the extension of reticulated sewer to the Raleigh Industrial Estate, and the potential rezoning of additional land identified in Councils existing Employment Lands Strategy, and the North Coast Regional Plan. The recent bypassing of Urunga by the Pacific Highway upgrade project presents new opportunities for investment and renewal, whilst still facilitating ease of access to the town with both a northern and southern interchange

Many of the residential neighbourhoods that collectively comprise Urunga are relatively distant from the town centre, and potential exists for significant improvements in terms of pedestrian and bike connectivity between these areas and town. The existing CBD area is recognised as an important economic base for Urunga, and the establishment of significant new retail opportunities in locations outside of the CBD area is not supported.

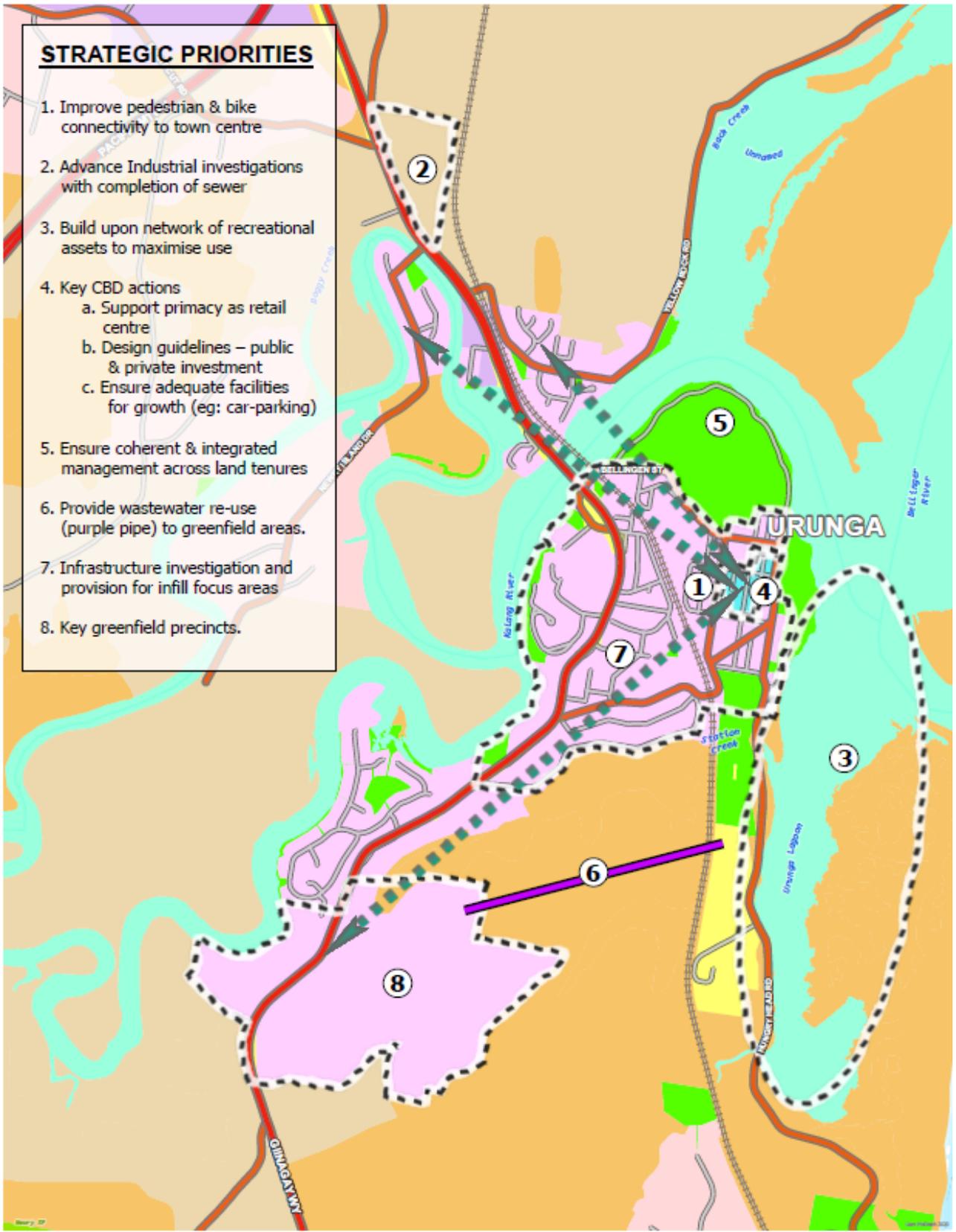
Large parts of the foreshore areas of Urunga are managed by the Bellinger Heads State Park Trust, and there is a need for continued and effective communication and governance to ensure that the communities' aspirations are reflected in the management of this important asset. Facilities such as Reflections Holiday Park at Urunga help deliver economic stimulus to the local economy, and continued investment in key recreational pieces of infrastructure such as the Urunga Boardwalk,

and Tidal Swimming Facility, provide important opportunities for physical activity for an ageing resident population, as well as visitors.

As Urunga continues to develop, and upgrades to community infrastructure are required, it will be important to establish a unifying theme that helps to retain the laid back, coastal vibe and aesthetic of the town that is valued by locals and visitors alike. Opportunities to activate public precincts that may be underutilised should also be actively explored in order to optimise the usage of key precincts in town. This could include, for example, ensuring that any under-utilised Council assets in the CBD area are fully occupied and considering whether the cluster of industrial / depot style buildings on the corner of Bowra & Orara Streets, that serve a range of local and state government agencies, represent the best use of that land in view of its proximity to the town centre, and the industrial functions that they serve.

Specific projects that may be pursued for Urunga, subject to funding and other opportunities, include:

- A master planning exercise for Urunga that synthesises existing aspirations for the future as represented in various statutory and non-statutory documents, across a range of public and private land tenures, and confirms a future identity and role for Urunga. This process may establish design guidelines for further investment, facilitate improved connectivity, confirm triggers for infrastructure upgrades, and identify potential new signature projects to enhance the liveability and reputation of Urunga, such as the extension of the southern boardwalk track to loop back with the Hungry Head bike track.



- STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**
1. Improve pedestrian & bike connectivity to town centre
  2. Advance Industrial investigations with completion of sewer
  3. Build upon network of recreational assets to maximise use
  4. Key CBD actions
    - a. Support primacy as retail centre
    - b. Design guidelines – public & private investment
    - c. Ensure adequate facilities for growth (eg: car-parking)
  5. Ensure coherent & integrated management across land tenures
  6. Provide wastewater re-use (purple pipe) to greenfield areas.
  7. Infrastructure investigation and provision for infill focus areas
  8. Key greenfield precincts.

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<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFDAB9; border: 1px solid black;"></span> R5 Rural Residential	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #D2B48C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Rural	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #00FF00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Recreation	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #008000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> National Park
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# IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & REPORTING

## Priorities for Action Implementation

Action	Priority
Action 1.1 – Rural Lands Strategy	Immediate (commencement) Short term (completion)
Action 2.1 – Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan	Immediate (completion)
Action 2.2 – Coastal Villages Sewering Project	Immediate (commencement) Short-term (completion)
Action 2.3 – Local Housing Strategy Infrastructure Projects	Immediate (commencement) Short-term (completion)
Action 3.1 – Employment Lands Strategy	Short-term (commencement) Short-term (completion)
Action 4.1 – Developer Contribution Plan Review	Immediate (completion)
Action 5.1 – Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study	Opportunistic
Action 6.1 - Implement the Bellingen Shire Local Housing Strategy	Ongoing
Action 7.1 – Maintain funding programs for heritage conservation	Ongoing
Action 7.2 – Maintain currency & accuracy of heritage information	Ongoing
Action 7.3 – Improve promotion of local heritage	Short-term (completion)
Action 8.1 – Implement Biodiversity Strategy	Ongoing
Action 9.1 – Update Shire wide Floodplain Risk Management Plan	Immediate (commencement)
Action 9.1a - Commission updated flood mapping for the Upper Bellingen, Upper Kalang and Dorrigo areas	Short-term (completion)
Action 9.2 –Finalise & implement the Bellingen Shire Coastal Management Program	Short term (completion)
Action 9.3 – Review Bushfire Prone Lands Mapping	Short term (commencement)
Action 10.1 – Finalise Climate Emergency response	Short term (completion)
Action 11.1 – Support projects consistent with Centres narratives	Ongoing, opportunistic
Action 11.2 - Implement the Town Centre Parking Strategy	Ongoing
Action 11.3 - Obtain standard development consent for conduct of events within each town centre	Short-term (completion)

- Immediate (within the next year)
- Short term (within the next 1-3 years)
- Medium term (within the next 3-7 years)
- Ongoing (annually undertaken as part of normal operations)
- Opportunistic (as opportunities emerge)

## Monitoring & Reporting

### COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT CHECK

It is a requirement of the NSW Government that the 2020-2040 Local Strategic Planning Statement is adopted by Council by 1 July 2020. It is also a requirement of the NSW Government that Council reviews its existing Community Strategic Plan by June 30 in the year following the election of a new Council.

The Planning Priorities that are contained within the 2020-2040 LSPS have a strong relationship to the existing Community Strategic Plan (CSP) for Bellingen Shire that was adopted in June 2017. Should the new Community Strategic Plan significantly depart from the strategic focus of the existing CSP, then there may be a potential disconnect between the LSPS and the CSP.

Council will;

- Ensure that the LSPS is considered as part of the process of developing any new CSP for the Shire.
- Review the alignment of any newly adopted CSP with the LSPS and determine whether there is any need to amend the LSPS to ensure alignment.

### COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF LSPS

Council will undertake a comprehensive review of the LSPS at a minimum of once every 7 years following the initial date of adoption.

### ONGOING MONITORING & REPORTING

At the end of each financial year, a report will be prepared for the consideration of the elected Council that will summarise the progress that has been made against each of the Planning Priorities, and will recommend whether any amendment to the LSPS is warranted based upon completion of particular actions, or any emerging matter of importance.

## REFERENCES:

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Factsheets-and-fags/Research-and-demography/Population-projections/2019-Bellingen.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> **Centre for Local Government (University of Technology Sydney) (2019)** “Why Local Government Matters to Bellingen Shire”, UTS Cricos Provider Code 00099F.

<sup>iii</sup> **Jetty Research, May 2016**, Measuring satisfaction and priorities with regard to Council-managed facilities and services – Results from a random telephone survey of 405 adult residents in the Bellingen Shire.

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.mncjo.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MNCJO-Statement-of-Strategic-Regional-Priorities-December-2018.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> **Bellingen Shire Council, April 2018**, Bellingen Shire Homes for our Future – A Discussion Paper to inform a new Growth Management Strategy.

<sup>vi</sup> State of NSW, Office of Environment & Heritage (2016) Integrated Regional Vulnerability Assessment: North Coast of New South Wales. Volume 1: Assessment Report



[WWW.BELLINGEN.NSW.GOV.AU](http://WWW.BELLINGEN.NSW.GOV.AU)

[COUNCIL@BELLINGEN.NSW.GOV.AU](mailto:COUNCIL@BELLINGEN.NSW.GOV.AU)  
33 HYDE ST BELLINGEN NSW 2454  
02 6655 7300