

# Byron Shire Rural Land Use Strategy Supporting Background Information

## VOLUME 2 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This is Volume 2 of 4 containing supporting information used to inform the strategy, as follows:

- Volume 1 Consistency with State Policy Framework (BSC #E2018/16606)
- Volume 2 Background Information (BSC #E2018/16617)
- Volume 3 Potential Sites for Future Rural Lifestyle Living Opportunities and Future Urban/Village Development (BSC #E2018/16648)
- Volume 4 Preceding Stages
  - 4.1 Discussion Paper (BSC #E2018/16632)
  - 4.2 Site Suitability Criteria and Mapping Methodology (BSC # E2018/16629)
  - 4.3 Policy Directions Paper (BSC #E2018/16624)

### Document History

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## How to read this Volume

The format of this Volume continues our rural land themes. Our Rural Economy has been split into ‘agriculture’ and ‘tourism’ sections as the supporting information differs for these two aspects of the economy

Under each theme heading is a brief summary of:

- **Key Considerations** – matters that have informed the policy direction, site suitability and mapping criteria and actions referred to in the Strategy. These considerations are focused on:
  - What do we know?
  - What is important in best directing our efforts?
  - What guidelines may be needed?
- **Current Trends** –examples of emerging or current trends to assist in the reader to better understand the considerations.

# Our Rural Environment: Key Considerations

## What do we know?

- Key habitats and wildlife corridors contribute to:
  - farm productivity providing a source of bush produce, shelter, pollination and soil benefits
  - biodiversity, genetic diversity and ecological interactions such as pest and disease control
  - scenic landscape amenity enhancing people's overall general well being and Byron Shire's tourist appeal
- The Byron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) lists 'connectivity and restoration' as a key principle for biodiversity conservation and outlines a comprehensive framework for achieving this outcome.
- The state government supports protection of environmentally significant areas through appropriate environmental zones.
- Community Feedback 2015 recognised the need for protection and improvement of the environment; that it is everybody's responsibility and should be an important consideration in land use planning and the development process.
- Community Feedback 2015 expressed support for linking future rural lifestyle living and tourism development opportunities to environmental enhancement outcomes.
- Council's Community Strategic Plan 2022 and Low Carbon Strategy 2014 actions include a local planning framework responding to greenhouse emission reduction, peak oil preparedness and changing weather patterns
- The importance of water for the functioning of our natural environment as well as meeting the needs of our rural and urban communities
- There is potential for communities and small businesses in rural areas to invest in renewable energy projects or develop their own projects for local benefit.

## Where should we focus our efforts?

- continually improving and sharing our knowledge on environmental enhancement opportunities
- involving, supporting and recognising individuals, communities and businesses that undertake environmental enhancement works
- managing rural land to facilitate opportunities for non market and market based projects that enhance environmental quality and resilience
- improving capacity for future rural lifestyle living and tourism opportunities to deliver environmental enhancement outcomes
- continually improving management of weeds and pests
- recognising the value of past environmental enhancement works as part of the development assessment process

## What guidelines may be needed?

- protecting High Environmental Vegetation and other important environmental assets.
- establishing priority enhancement corridors (as defined in glossary): including riparian and habitat protection; linking future rural lifestyle living and tourism opportunities to environmental enhancement outcomes; a scheme to acknowledge and support land owners who have undertaken, or plan to undertake, environmental enhancement works; and cost-effective ways to undertake of such works
- integrating farm operations and priority enhancement corridors: addressing corridor placement, commercial agroforestry and mutually beneficial management practices including buffers, bushfire risk management and weed control such as camphor removal for biochar or other commercial uses
- encouraging sustainable transport, water capture and use, ecosystems services and low carbon or renewable resource activities

## Our Rural Environment: Current Trends

### Key habitat and corridor enhancement

The process of establishing an interconnected network of vegetation and habitats to support the future viability of our biodiversity. Comprising high environmental value vegetation and supporting key habitat features, such a network can increase opportunities for flora and fauna to move and adapt to changing conditions over time.

### Market-based environmental incentives

Opportunities for rural landowners to generate income from environmental enhancement works include:

- *biobanking* – landowners committing to enhancing and protecting biodiversity values on their land through a biobanking agreement that provides saleable credits to be used to fund on going management of their land.
- *carbon farming* – farmers reducing greenhouse gas emissions or capturing carbon in vegetation and soils on their farms as part of an approved project for credits that can be traded or held. An example under investigation by local farmers is camphor laurel removal for production of biochar.
- *agro forestry* – farmers capitalising on the potential to integrate farming with forestry and native bush produce such as seeds, flowers, oils and cabinet furniture (like to know more please read the ‘Tony Kenway’s’ local story)

### Enhancing energy efficiency

Council’s Zero Emissions and Low Carbon strategies support low emission, renewable energy generation and encourage ways to save energy. Examples of emerging responses in line with these initiatives include:

- *green walls and roofs* - buildings incorporating planting on the roof and walls as a means to enhance biodiversity, energy efficiency and building’s appearance, provide a food source or help regulate weather impacts.

- *clean energy* - greenhouse reduction is best achieved by progressing from the generation of clean energy for individual consumption to establishing community/district scale energy infrastructure. One such example is Local Electricity Trading – Byron, trading excess energy produced from a rooftop or field solar system with the neighbouring developments have heavy energy needs and little roof or ground area for a solar array. Another example is the Sustainable Northern Rivers Host Feasibility study of regional biohubs (including farming operations such as piggeries) that produce biogas that could be captured as a useful source of renewable energy.

## **Our Rural Economy: Agricultural Considerations**

### **What do we know?**

- The state government considers good quality agricultural land to be a finite national and state resource that must be conserved and managed for the longer term
- The Sustainable Agriculture Strategy 2004 vision is for a productive, profitable and diverse agricultural enterprises supporting the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- Community Feedback 2015 indicated continued support for embracing sustainable agriculture, protecting our farmland and market place advantage as a leader in local food production, security and consumption
- Farming can occur on a range of soil types, landscapes, property sizes, under a variety of business arrangements and extends beyond the farm gate sharing transport routes, workers, produce, equipment and marketing opportunities
- Free range farms need adequate land for rotation and fallow, may rely on externally sourced feed and can be low scale
- Horticultural growing conditions require a high degree of control over nutrients, weeds and moisture
- Buffers and zones can be used to separate land uses to ensure long-term protection of both areas impacted upon and areas used for the conflict generating activity
- Sub-commercial farms provide an opportunity to cultivate new farms and farmers
- A misalignment of property and zones boundaries affects certain lands in our rural area, causing confusion about permissible uses.

### **Where should we focus our efforts?**

- protecting state and regionally significant farmland
- continually improving and sharing our knowledge on farming activities
- ensuring land use buffers reflect latest farming requirements
- involving, supporting and recognising individuals, communities and businesses that practice sustainable farming methods
- enabling our farmers to adapt their business more easily to meet demand or changing

circumstances such as market trends

- improving our understanding the network of farms and communities that support our agricultural economy
- facilitating opportunities for prospective farmers that require land to farm
- continually improving management of weeds, diseases and pests

#### **What guidelines may be needed?**

- agricultural and non agricultural land use assessment: to better manage potential impacts on natural resources, farm production, operation and haulage routes including use of buffers that best reflect the varying nature of farm production
- farmland access: promoting ways for land owners of vacant or underused farmland to connect with potential farmers to provide access to their land for farming; this may include a transferable development rights to secure long term retention of farmland and provide the potential farmer with greater certainty about their ongoing access
- standards for improving spatial accuracy of property and zone boundaries

## **Our Rural Economy: Current Trends**

### **Emerging Farming Operations**

- *organic and free range* - capitalising on our rich biodiversity, and the emerging local and global awareness about how food is produced. Its freshness and safety, 'food miles' (how far its travelled and the carbon footprint created in the process) and the need for food security are all considered in the production process (like to know more please read the Hayters Hill Farm local story)
- *intensive horticulture* - the intensive production of plants or crops generally grown in imported material in containers and located within a building, structure or outdoors such as wholesale nurseries and hydroponics.
- *perennial horticulture* - crops that generally take more that two years from planting to bearing capacity. In selecting a site, key determinants comprise soil condition and fertility and local climate. Examples include stone fruit orchards, coffee and macadamias.

### **Ways of generating a more secure income**

- *value adding* by enhancing produce before releasing to the market to increase price and sales such as a coffee grower roasting beans before selling at farm gate, markets or retail outlet.
- *diversification* between land uses to help ride the ups and downs of financial markets such as a farm with farm stay (like to know more please read the Byron Farm Stay local story)
- *linkages and clusters* to gain production or commercial advantage such as cross pollination from one farm to another, agistment, road side stall food trails, farmers markets, and contract growing in the sugar, dairy and wholesale nursery plant industries

### **Diversifying Farm Land Access Opportunities**

Leasing or sharing a farm offers an alternative to buying land and/or equipment for those

wanting to farm. These arrangements can enable more affordable access to land and reduced production and food costs. Examples can include:

- *lease agreement* - farmer leasing the land and operating the farm as their own
- *share farming agreement* - where the farming and the risks are shared between the two or more farming parties
- *farm-share* - households (not necessarily local) investing in a farm as a co-operative and buying its produce at a reduced cost
- *transferable development rights* where the landowners achieve non agricultural development approval on a portion of a property in exchange for maintaining an area of farmland

(If you would like to know more please read Joel Orchard's local story: "Collective farming for the next generation" in the Rural Land Use Strategy)

## **Our Rural Economy: Tourism Considerations**

### **What do we know?**

- The Destination Management Plan 2014 – 2020 and Community Feedback 2015 indicated support for rural tourism to be low scale, compatible with farms and protective of the natural environment
- Rural operators motivated by a desire to showcase the area and their activities, benefit from the capacity to attract a steady turn over of visitors, linkages with other operators, ready access to small villages, larger towns and urban area and the development of tourist trails
- Touring is a popular way of enjoying the rural area and is often combined with walks, overnight stays and rural produce shopping; opportunities range from cycling, self drive to organised bus tours
- Good management includes mitigating potential tourism impacts such as late night noise and anti-social behaviour
- Encouraging sustainable transport for tourism helps reduce overall road traffic, emissions and carbon generation
- The level of frequency, scale, accommodation, access and servicing varies with each type of tourism development
- Visitors to our rural areas include both day trippers and overnight stays accommodation
- Hosting functions and weddings in the rural hinterland are becoming an increasingly popular trend

### **Where should we focus our efforts?**

- continually improving and sharing our knowledge on tourism activities and experience
- aligning visitor and tourism operator expectations and values with the local community
- involving, supporting and recognising individuals, communities and businesses that enhance rural tourism

- designing developments in villages to help create public spaces within village centre areas that support cultural activities, events and festivals
- ensuring planning provisions reflect the latest rural tourism accommodation trends
- ensuring future rural tourism opportunities remain low scale and compatible with surrounding agricultural activities and rural character

### **What guidelines may be needed?**

- ensuring the location, scale and operation of potential wedding venue activities is compatible with their rural setting
- supporting the following outcomes in line with the Destination Management Plan 2014 – 2020 and Community Feedback 2015 :
  - community information and interpretation services to ensure visitors and operators are aware of the available experiences, appropriate behaviour and safety considerations
  - sustainable use and appreciation of the rural area through product and image development and promotions
  - buffers and management structures that address incompatible land uses and potential impacts on the local community
  - appropriate signage for visitors and local suppliers to the rural tourism activities

## **Our Rural Tourism: Current Trends**

### **Ecotourism**

Capitalising on proximity to areas of high biodiversity and the emerging local and global awareness about responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. It involves interpretation and education and can include recognizing the rights and spiritual beliefs of the traditional owners in the community and working in partnership with them to create empowerment. Examples include eco lodges, nature health retreats and rainforest accommodation cabins.

### **Adventure and recreational tourism**

Capitalising on nature and the outdoors to offer more physically active pursuits and in some cases a challenge requiring specialized skills. The activities typically benefit from the capacity to attract a high turn over of visitors and are well suited to organised groups such as celebration parties and team building exercises. Examples include music festivals, horse riding, cycling, walking, mountain biking, parachuting, hang gliding, fossicking and health and wellness retreats.

### **Rural community based tourism**

Capitalising on the more traditional aspects of the rural community including its history and involvement in food production, arts, crafts and local festivals. Examples include farm stay, village festivals, cafes and restaurants (like to know more please read Byron Farm Stay local story)

### **Hinterland function and wedding venues**

These venues comprise private properties as well as community buildings. They capitalise on the beauty of the rural landscape, intimacy of location and sometimes a panoramic vista.



Examples venues include Coorabell Hall and private house style venues situated in locations such as St Helena and Coorabell.

## **Our Rural Community: Key Considerations**

### **What do we know?**

- Our rural community lives in a range of housing types and settlement patterns. These represent a combination of dispersed households and rural lifestyle living choices that have evolved over the years and include:
  - Dwelling Houses, Dual Occupancy and Secondary Dwellings;
  - Village Zoned Areas;
  - Large Lot Residential (also known as 'Conventional Rural Residential'); and
  - Multiple Occupancy (also known as 'Rural Landsharing') and Community Title.
- whilst rural lifestyle living remains a relevant part of the housing mix in our rural areas, it is important to understand that this form of settlement represents primarily a 'lifestyle choice' that plays a minor role in meeting the overall housing needs of the Shire
- it is vital that any potential urban land is not consumed by rural lifestyle living opportunities as the majority of the Shire's future population growth will be housed in our urban areas
- Community Feedback 2015 indicated a strong desire to retain the 'rural' in the landscape when considering future rural housing opportunities
- Community Feedback 2015 indicated key attributes attracting residents include:
  - the environment and picturesque amenity
  - work/life balance
  - strong community connection
  - opportunities to interact with both wildlife and farm stock
  - potential for employment and business diversity from niche tourism, food industry, farming and home based business
- based on the current rates of rural dwelling uptake for rural lifestyle living opportunities, it is estimated the Shire has approximately 15 years of supply that could be made available through re- subdivision of vacant and developed R5 Large Lot Residential zoned land (based on the current LEP controls)
- Unauthorised dwellings in rural areas present a combination of safety, health, infrastructure, environmental and equity issues

### **Where should we focus our efforts?**

- encouraging better connections between lifestylers and farmers
- strengthening the role of our villages in the broader landscape (like to know more please read Federal Store local story)
- safe guarding and securing future 'urban land'
- investigating capacity for re-subdivision within existing large lot residential estates, but

only where there is sufficient support by affected residents within those estates

- facilitating good neighbours by favouring future rural lifestyle living opportunities on land parcels of a size adequate to enable formation of small viable communities and better economies of scale and in locations that provide appropriate separation distances from surrounding farming and avoid the need for dispersed housing
- consulting with 'NSW Family and Community Services' and other housing support organisations during development of any policy for unauthorised rural dwellings

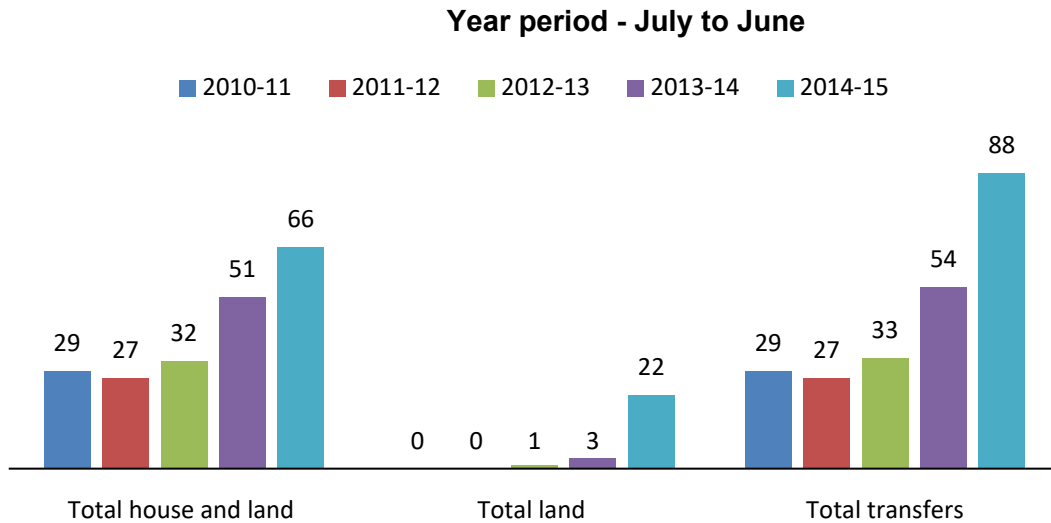
### **What guidelines may be needed?**

- a land release program to guide the location of future rural lifestyle living opportunities over the next twenty years with a comprehensive review at the end of each five-year period. The identification of potential priority localities along with indicative sequencing ensures that future opportunities are located and linked to enable efficient infrastructure provision.
- examples of how a clustered subdivision design and layout for rural lifestyle living opportunities can provide improved social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- information packs for new and potential land owners and residents to assist in their understanding of rural issues such as land tenure options, allowable activities and land management responsibilities.
- encouraging housing diversity and choice in our Village Zone.
- improving Council's data base on subdivision and dwelling approvals.
- establishing a policy framework for addressing unauthorised dwellings that is transparent and equitable with Council's formal commitment to fully resource all aspects of the policy implementation

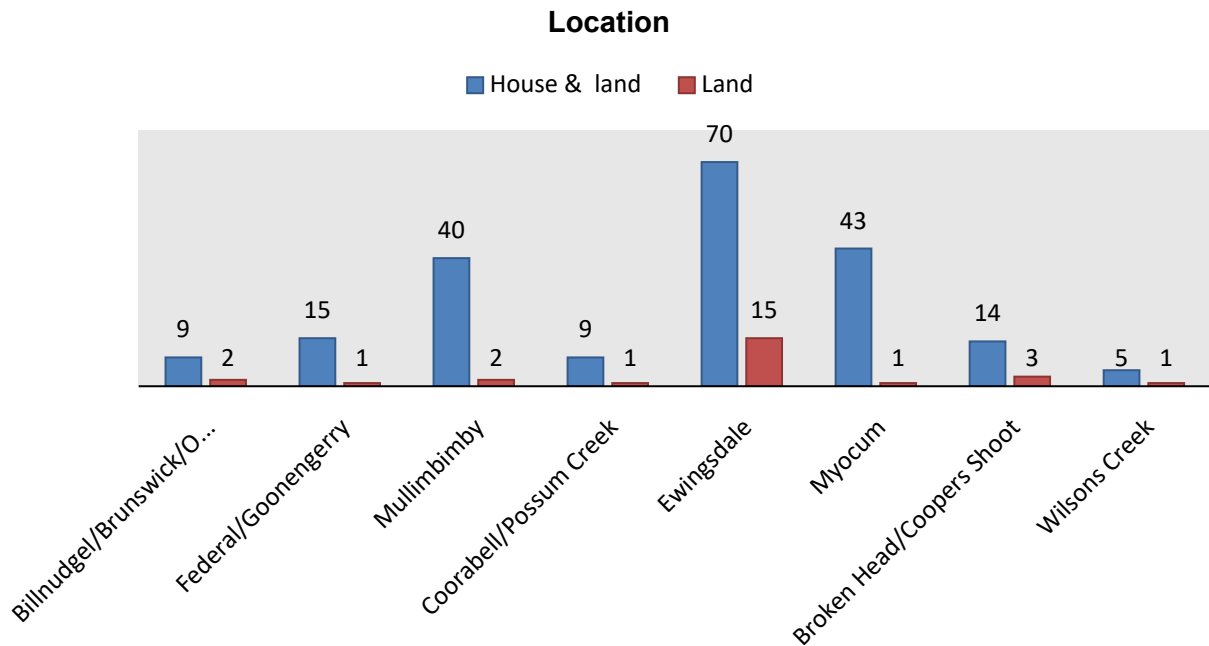
## **Rural Lifestyle Living: Current Trends**

### **Large Lot Residential**

Land zoned R5, 1(c1) or 1(c2) comprises some 1,620 ha. These zones facilitate Large Lot Residential, also known as conventional rural residential subdivision, that is the traditional or "single lot" subdivision of freehold land, with an estimated currently supply of 900 lots. The majority of these estates are currently zoned 'R5 Large Lot Residential' under LEP 2014, with certain areas still zoned '1(c1) or 1(c2) under LEP 1988 as deferred matters to be resolved when Council reviews its environmental zones. Figure A1 shows property transfers for land zoned Large Lot Residential from 2010 – 2015 were in the order of 230 transfers, accounting for a turn over of approximately 25% total parcels in this zone. The majority of transfers were house and land combined, with only 11% being land transfers — primarily in Ewingsdale as show on Figure A2.

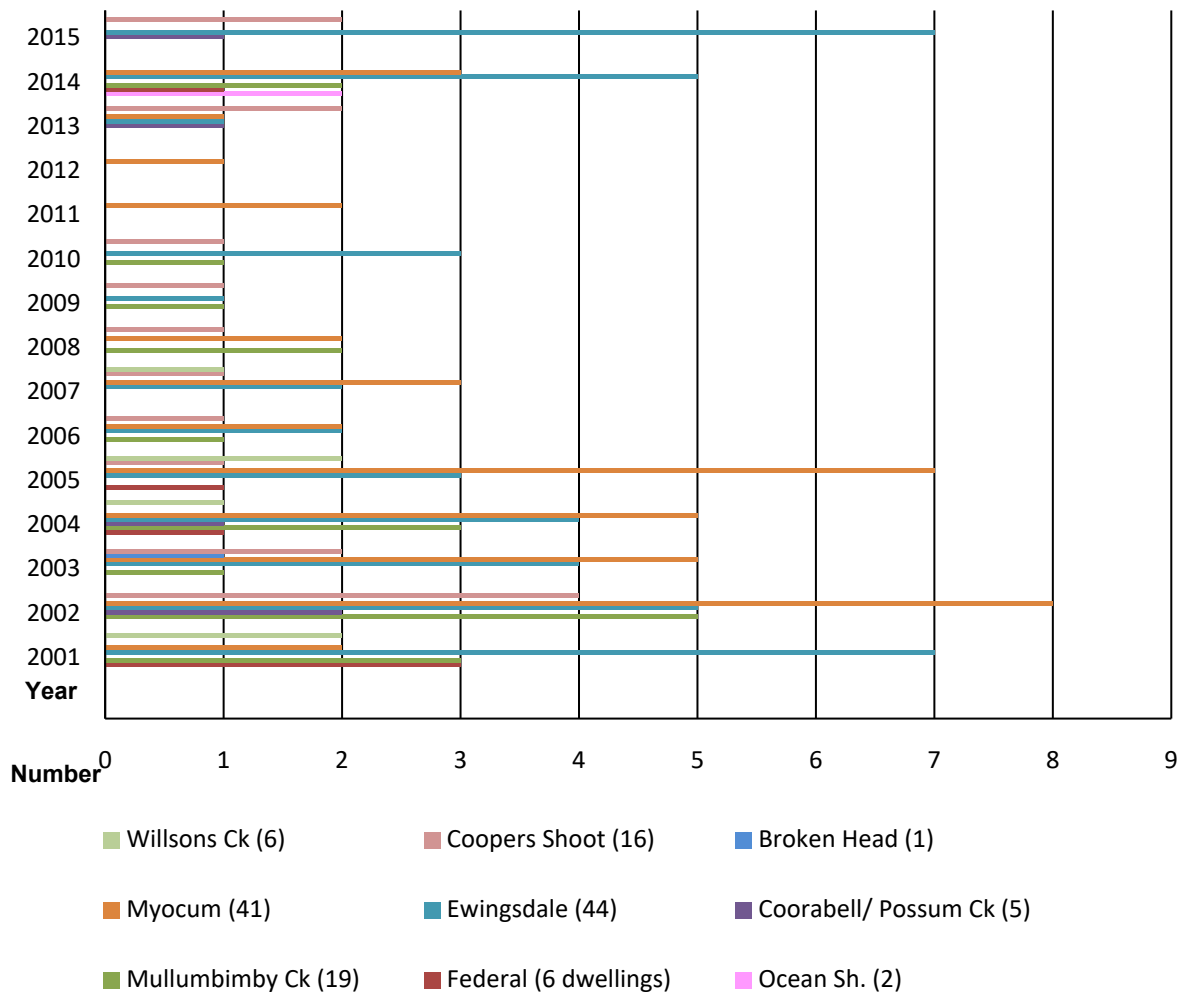


**Figure A1: Total property transfers per year for 'Large Lot Residential' zoned land between 2010 - 2015**



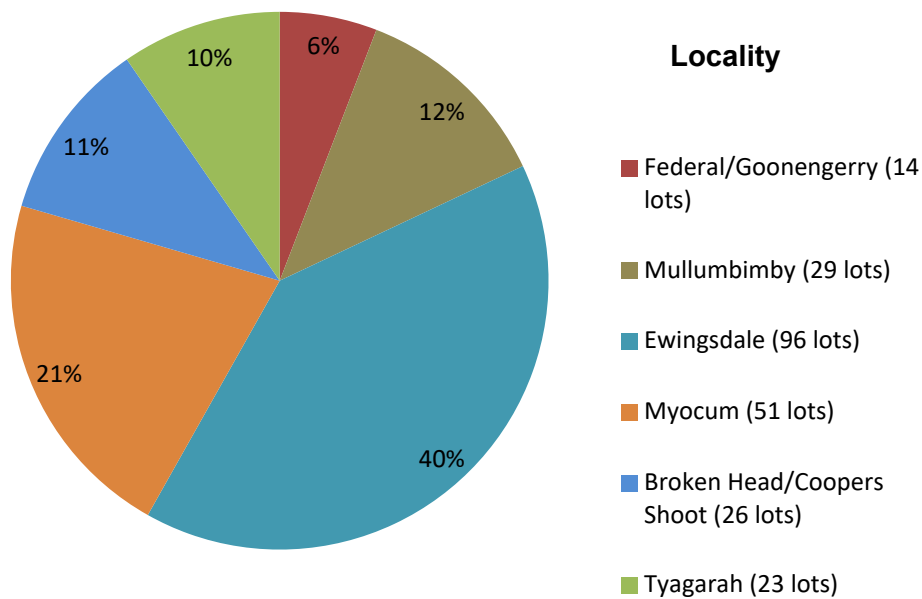
**Figure A2: Total property transfer by location for Large Lot Residential 'R5' zoned land, 2010 - 2015**

Figure A3 shows the number of dwelling house approvals on land zoned R5 Large Lot Residential from 2001- 2015 by locality, with the total for the zone in the order of 140 dwellings. The recent higher figure for Ewingsdale accords with a vacant land release in 2014 -15.



**Figure A3: Number of annual dwelling approvals per year by location from 2001 -2015**

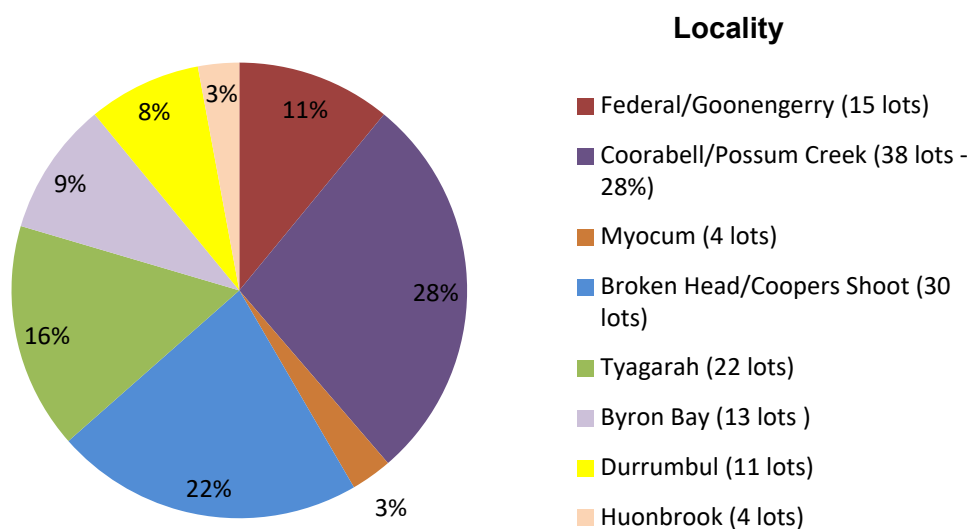
Within our existing large lot residential estates there may be capacity for further re-subdivision based on Minimum Lot Size requirements under Byron LEP 2014, theoretically yielding some 230 additional lots (noting there is a degree of uncertainty about the actual capacity for this land to be further subdivided). Figure A4 indicates the gross area of land, location and potential additional lot yield from such land.



**Figure A4: Percentage breakdown of existing large lot residential estates that could be re-subdivided into additional lots (based on Minimum Lot Size figures under Byron LEP 2014)**

### Rural Community Title Subdivision

This living arrangement was embraced under the Byron Rural Settlement Strategy 1998 as an important means to achieve collective, coordinated management of land including environmental repair and enhancement while encouraging community self reliance in the provision of services and infrastructure. Figure A5 indicates by locality the number of residential lots that have been developed for community title since this Strategy came into effect (noting that nearly 50% of these relate to conversion of existing multiple occupancy developments).



**Figure A5: Existing community title residential lots by locality**

## Supply & Demand: rural lifestyle living opportunities

Total dwelling approvals in the rural area for the period 2001 – 2015 equated to some 430 dwellings or in the order of 30 dwellings a year. Of these dwellings approximately 50% (around 15 dwellings/year) were associated with community title and conventional rural residential development. Assuming future rural lifestyle living dwelling approvals continue at around 15 dwellings per year, this equates to a potential 15 years supply through subdivision of vacant and under-developed land zoned for large lot residential development alone (based on past approval rates). In addition, *Strategy Table 9– Potential Sites for future rural lifestyle living opportunities* estimates between 40-75 additional dwellings for the areas identified for such opportunities (ie. approx. 5 years supply). Collectively these figures provide for a 20 year supply of large lot residential development opportunities, based on the current planning controls. However this is only a theoretical supply estimate as there is a degree of uncertainty associated with the relatively high rate of property transfers in R 5 large lot residential zone land (around 45 transfers/year) compared to dwelling approvals (see Figures A2 and A3).

Notwithstanding the above figures, the Strategy recognises that whilst rural lifestyle living remains a relevant part of the housing mix, it represents primarily a 'lifestyle choice', with most of our Shire's future housing needs to be provided in our urban towns and villages. Therefore the land release program is not based on a detailed demand and supply budget. Instead, future rural lifestyle living opportunities have only been considered in locations that are largely unconstrained from development, have a strong potential to build on and strengthen existing communities and can provide an acceptable standard of road infrastructure at no cost to the wider community.

## Rural Villages

Rural village settlements have the greatest capacity to provide a diversity of households with a range of lots sizes, adaptable buildings/housing and housing options that support a mix of tenure arrangements including rental, community title and Torrens title. New lots and dwellings can be created within existing villages by infill or through the extension of a village boundary.

### *Federal*

Federal is a small village of some 60 houses in the village area accommodating around 170 residents. Community facilities include a general store, restaurant, community hall, preschool and communal parkland. Between 2001–2015, 12 building approvals were issued for dwellings. The majority of which were in Roses Road. Situated on the western side of the Federal is some 14 ha of land zoned Village with subdivision potential. The subject land contains features that will influence the potential yield such as a water course, vegetated areas, existing dwellings and access limitations. Where such constraints exist a community title arrangement may afford the best development solution. It is estimated that this land could provide in the order of some 30 - 40 additional lots (based on minimum lot area of 2000m<sup>2</sup> in LEP 2014). In addition a number of lots within the existing built village area may also provide an opportunity for further subdivision. Based on the past pattern of dwelling approvals should this land be developed this would provide in excess of 20 years supply.

### *Main Arm*

Main Arm is smaller than Federal with a general store as the main community facility. Between 2001 – 2015 only one new dwelling was approved — this being within the recently created Moran Close subdivision on the southern side of Main Arm Road. Situated on the north western side of the Main Arm is some 6 ha of land zoned Village with subdivision

potential. The subject land contains features such as a steep land and areas of native vegetation that will influence the potential yield. Where such constraints exist a community title arrangement may afford the best development solution. It is estimated that this land could provide in the order of some 12 additional lots (based on minimum lot area of 2000m<sup>2</sup> in LEP 2014). Based on the past pattern of dwelling approval should this land be developed it would, together with Moran Close, provide in excess of 20 years supply.

### *Billinudgel*

Whilst 'residentially' the smallest of all the villages, Billinudgel being serviced with water, sewer and good access to the Pacific Highway has developed primarily as a light industrial area supported by community facilities including a general store and hotel. Unlike the other two villages it is situated on the perimeter of the larger Ocean Shores urban area, separated only by the Pacific Highway. Only one dwelling approval was issued in the 15 year period to 2015. There is no potential for additional lots within the existing Village zoned land mainly due to high hazard flooding. However there may be opportunities for future village expansion on flood free lands to the southwest that have reasonable the proximity to existing water/sewer infrastructure, as shown on Map A-1 at the end of this Volume 3. This would however be subject to the findings of other studies which may identify other higher order uses for this area (eg. additional industrial land).

(Note: Information on property transfers and dwelling approvals in this section has been sourced from Byron Shire Council records.)

## **Our Rural Infrastructure: Key Considerations**

### **What do we know?**

- Byron Rural Settlement Strategy 1998 encouraged rural lifestyle living communities to be more self reliant in the provision of services and infrastructure
- Through the Community Feedback 2015 we heard that the community is endeavouring to achieve greater self-reliance at the business, community and individual level in the provision and use of infrastructure including water, electricity, waste minimisation, and community infrastructure such as halls
- Our roads, bridges, and stormwater drainage systems provide an important support mechanism for people visiting, living and working in the rural areas
- Of all infrastructure services provided by Council our road network is one of the most expensive to maintain
- There is limited funding available to bring our rural roads and bridges up to a contemporary standard, which in turn has led to a growing backlog of work to be completed
- A major focus of the State government's 'Fit for the Future' program is on sustainable infrastructure asset management outcomes
- The Council's Community Strategic Plan 2020 requires sound financial management in the interests of the community and Community Feedback 2015 indicated support for requiring certain forms of future rural development to provide an acceptable standard of

road infrastructure at no cost to the wider community.

### **Where should we focus our efforts?**

- enabling greater self reliance for infrastructure and servicing in our rural areas
- ensuring that future rural lifestyle living opportunities are located in areas that are capable of providing a standard of road infrastructure (both condition and capacity) at no cost to the wider community

### **What guidelines may be needed?**

- Minimum specifications for road condition and capacity assessment

## **Other References**

As the Strategy builds on information provided in the previous stages and a policy framework reflective of a number of adopted Council strategies, readers are encouraged to refer to the following additional documents for supporting background information.

### **Documents directly associated with Rural Land Use Strategy**

- Discussion Paper
- Policy Directions Paper
- Site Suitability and Mapping Criteria Paper
- Community Feedback 2015

### **Other background Council documents available on Council's website include:**

- Community Strategic Plan 2022
- Byron Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2014
- Byron LEP 1988
- Byron Rural Settlement Strategy 1998
- Development Control Plans
- Developer Contribution Plans (Section 94)
- Sustainable Agriculture Strategy 2004
- Byron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2005 (currently under review) (1)
- Low Carbon Strategy 2014
- Beyond Zero Emissions
- Destination Management Plan 2014 - 2020
- Heads of Agreement Bundajalung of Byron Bay (Arakwal People) – Memorandum of Understanding 2013