

Byron Shire Rural Land Use Strategy Supporting Background Information

VOLUME 4.1 – DISCUSSION PAPER

This is Volume 4.1 of 4 Volumes containing information used to inform the strategy consisting of:

- 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)



A fresh approach

Rural Land Use Discussion Paper





Byron Shire Council recognises the traditional owners of this land the Bundjalung of Byron Bay, Arakwal People, the Widjabal People, the Midjungbal People and the wider Bundjalung Nation.

The Council recognises that the most enduring and relevant legacy that Indigenous people offer is their understanding of the significance of land and the local and deep commitment to place.

This Discussion Paper respects and embraces this approach by engaging with the community and acknowledging that our resources are precious and must be looked after for future generations.

How to contact us

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Mayoral welcome

Over the past few years our community has made a tremendous effort to take on board more sustainable practices in their daily lives, work habits and business operations.

While this is a great achievement, we need to entrench our new ways in how we use our rural land for a sustainable future. Our natural environment and agricultural lands are very valuable resources. With this in mind, Council has embarked on the preparation of a Rural Land Use Strategy.

The Discussion Paper is the first step in the process and reminds us of how vital our rural community is to forging sustainable ideals. The elements that make up our rural areas are highly interdependent. When completed, the Rural Land Use Strategy will be a plan that secures a vision for a sustainable future and lays the foundation for land use and infrastructure that anticipates and accommodates the needs of our rural areas.

I would like to welcome residents, community groups and businesses, with a collective sense of responsibility to respond to this Discussion Paper and contribute to our efforts in creating a sustainable rural future.

Please join us.



Mayor Simon Richardson



How to have your say?

You can have your say by:

- Completing the questions online www.surveymonkey.com/r/rural_land_use_strategy
- Completing the Discussion Paper Feedback Form (at the end of this paper) and post to:
The General Manager
Rural Land Use Submission
Byron Shire Council
PO Box 219
Mullumbimby NSW 2482
- Emailing your submissions to rural.strategy@byron.nsw.gov.au

Information stalls - Council staff will be out and about in our rural areas throughout the month of May, asking what you value most about our rural areas.

Council staff will also be attending farmers markets and our rural villages. For details go to Council's website www.byron.nsw.gov.au/rural-land-use-strategy

Don't forget to make your submission no later than **30 May 2015**.

About this discussion paper

Council is reviewing our rural land uses as part of a new Rural Land Use Strategy. Our existing rural strategies, such as the 1998 Byron Rural Settlement Strategy and 2004 Sustainable Agricultural Strategy, are outdated. Since both of these documents were written there has been changing expectations about the way people want to live and work in, and enjoy our rural areas, as well as changes in our agriculture and rural tourism economies. We also have a deeper understanding of the connection between human actions and our environment's resilience. As a result, a more holistic strategy that provides a clear vision and planning direction for all rural land uses in the Shire is required.

The Rural Land Use Strategy will provide a strategic framework centred on the management and use of rural land for living, working and leisure. It will guide future land zoning and other planning instruments such as Local Environmental Plans. It will be underpinned by community aspirations and focus on long term sustainability.

This Discussion Paper is the first stage in preparing a new Rural Land Use Strategy for the Shire. The purpose of the Discussion Paper is to better understand what you value about our rural land, as well as what you think are the important issues in relation to our:

- agricultural and resource lands,
- rural living options,
- landscape and environmental assets, and
- tourist and other economic uses.

How you can help?

Council is taking a strategic approach to planning for the future of our rural lands. Your feedback about what you feel are the most important planning issues for our rural lands over the next 20 years will become a valuable starting point.

Council wants to hear from everyone who has some connection or interest in our rural land.

This Paper asks what you value most about our rural land and includes some information on four key themes and poses a number of questions for you to tell us what you think.



Look out for our question symbols throughout the document. We've provided some questions within the four themes to help get you thinking about the type of feedback we are looking for.

Main stages to develop the Rural Land Use Strategy

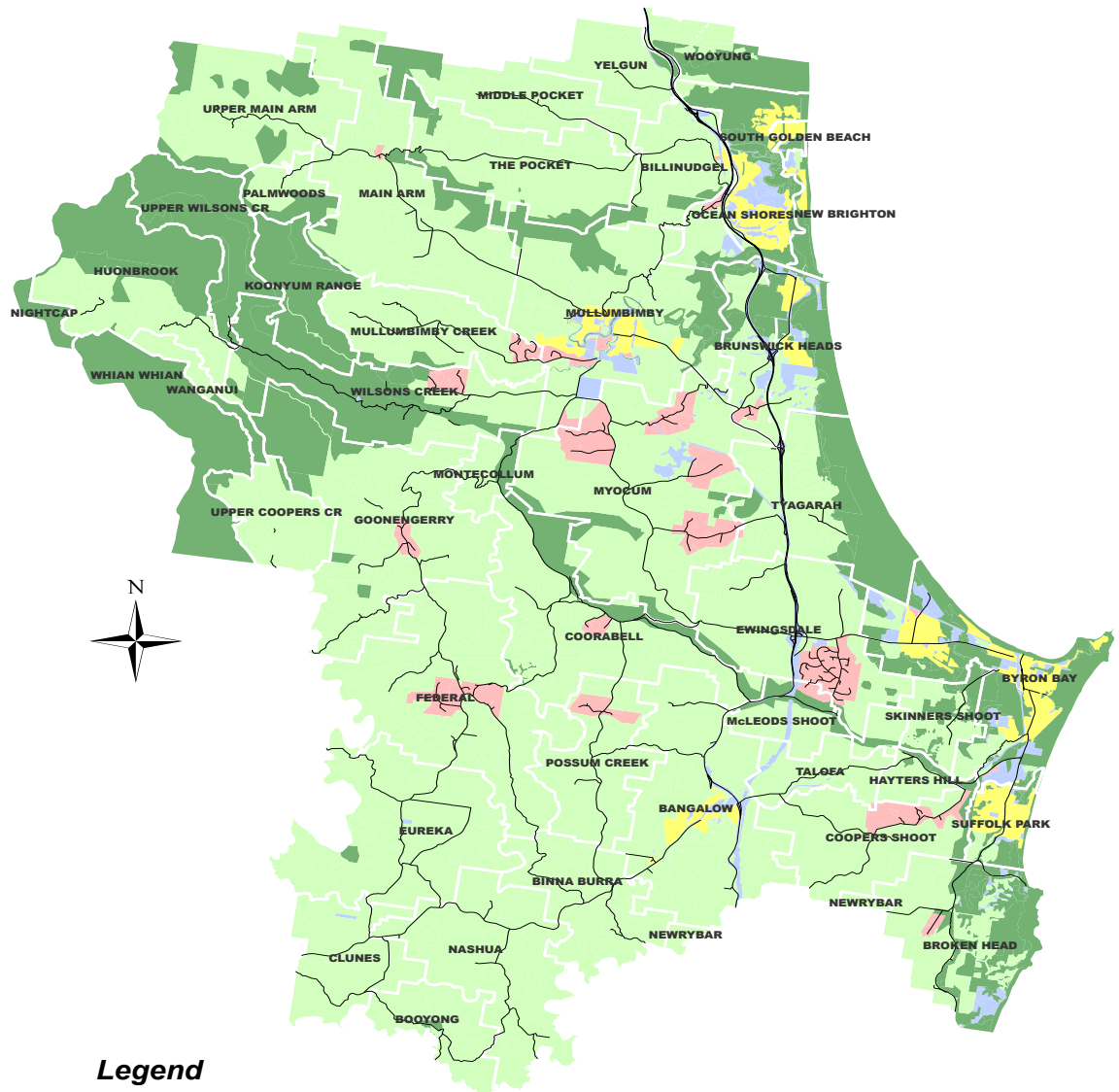


What is rural land?

Our rural areas are not just made up of agricultural land; they also include our National Parks and reserves, quarries, natural areas on private land, acreage living and villages.

Indeed, rural land uses make up nearly 95% of our Shire. Figure 1 shows the spatial distribution of rural and other land uses, while Figure 2 illustrates their proportional breakdown.

Figure 1: Broad land uses in Byron Shire



Legend

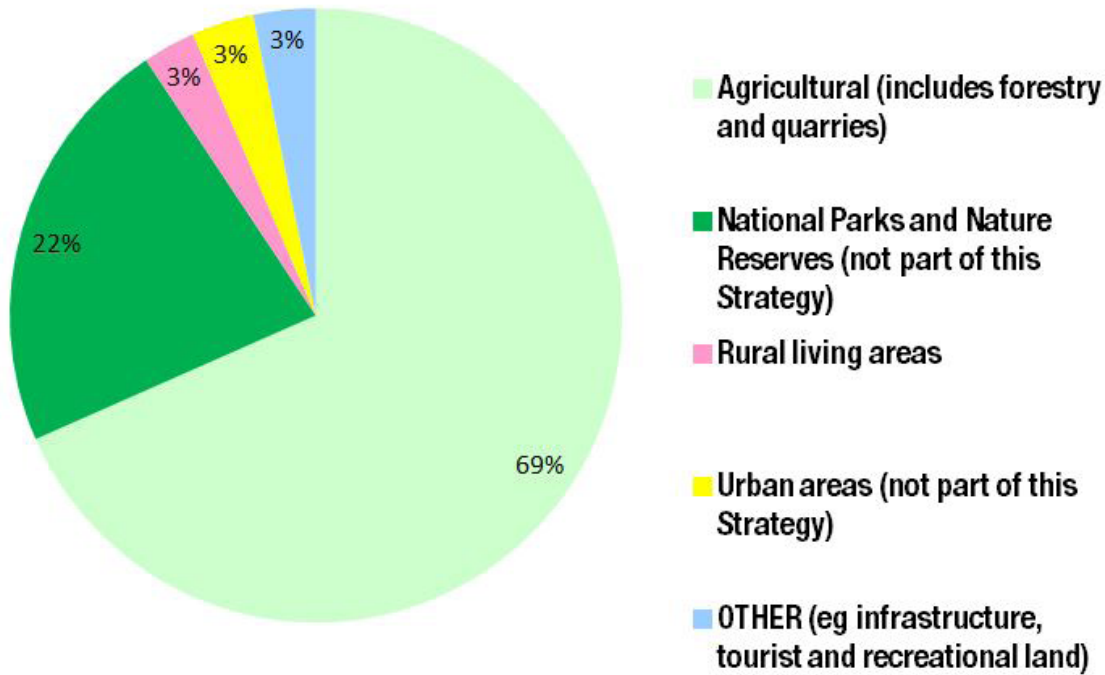
- Roads (higher order)
- Light Green Agricultural-Forestry-Quarry Areas
- Dark Green National Parks/Nature Reserves/Environmental Protection* (not part of this Strategy)
- Pink Rural Living Areas (Village, Rural Residential)
- Yellow Urban Areas (not part of this Strategy)
- Blue OTHER (eg. opens space; tourist facility, infrastructure)

* Based on existing 1988 LEP environmental zones

Did you know...

Rural land uses make up nearly 95% of Byron Shire?

Figure 2: Breakdown of land uses in Byron Shire



Our rural areas are typified as having a lower population density and fewer services compared to our urban areas.


Our rural villages, which include Billinudgel, Federal and Main Arm, are small in size and the boundaries between the built-up area and surrounding farmland or natural areas, blend together. Figure 1 shows the location of the rural localities and villages.

The following urban areas, villages and towns are not part of the Rural Land Use Strategy: Bangalow; Brunswick Heads; Byron Bay; Mullumbimby; Ocean Shores/ New Brighton; South Golden Beach and Suffolk Park.

What do you value?

Managing the "rural" in our rural areas requires an understanding of what you see as valuable. As an appreciator of the rural landscape we encourage you to think about what you value most.

What makes our rural area so special? They offer places where people can live, work and enjoy the landscape - but so do our urban areas.



So...

What do you value most in our rural environment?

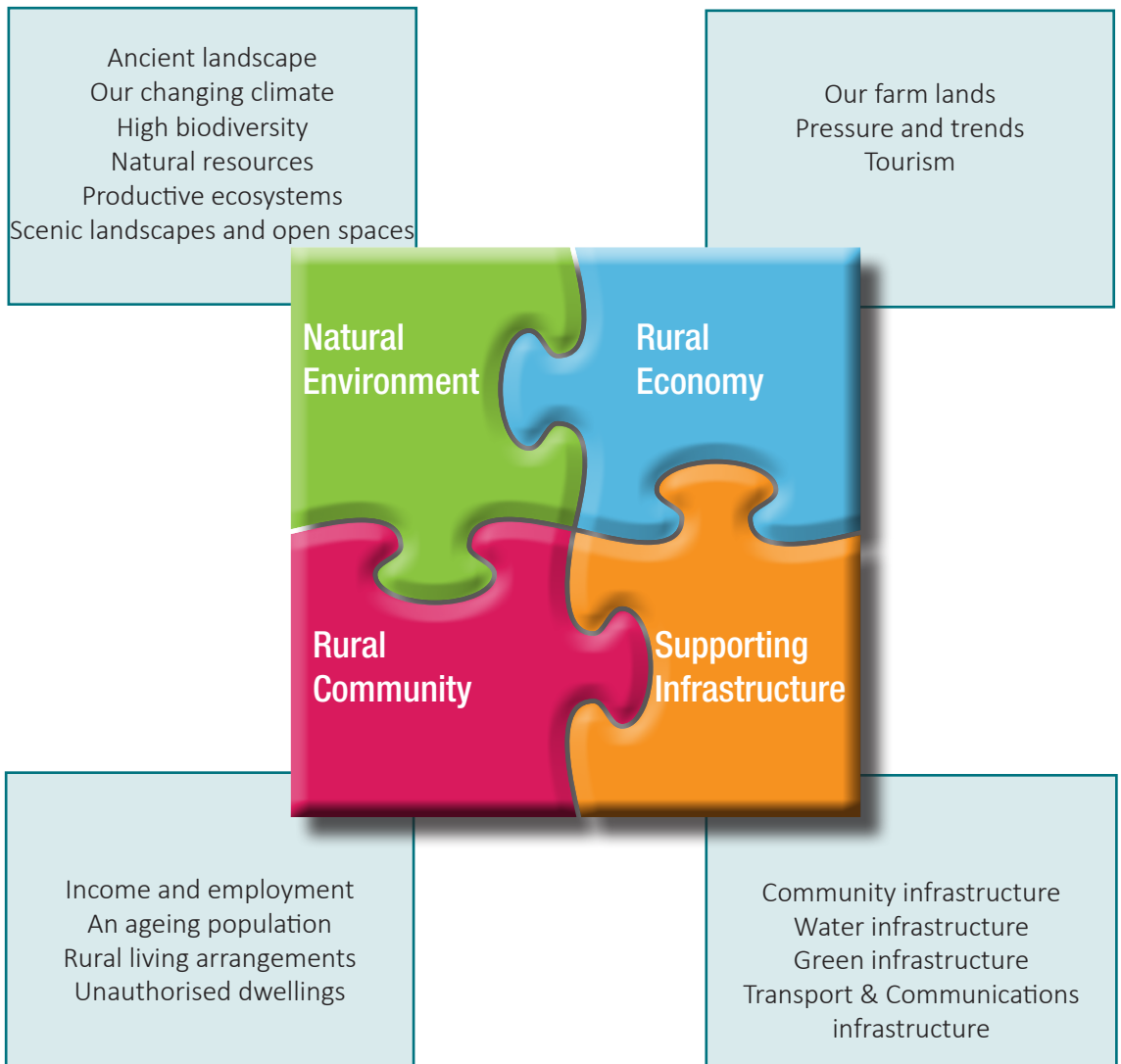
Which places or activities in the rural area do you feel a strong connection with?



Take a photo of what you value most and send to rural.strategy@byron.nsw.gov.au along with your name, location and why you value it.

Themes to be explored

The core elements that contribute to sustainable rural land are healthy and productive rural landscapes and resources, viable and resilient economic enterprises, efficient and effective infrastructure - all supporting a healthy, strong community. These elements are considered within the context of four key themes shown below.



1. Our Natural Environment

Our natural environment is made up of soil, water, vegetation and air. Soil quality and water availability are critical to the health of crops and stock, while water quality is important to the health of our waterways as well as our drinking water supply. Vegetation contributes to the overall health of our environment providing habitat for native species, supporting agricultural productivity and mitigating climate change impacts.

An ancient natural landscape

Set in a dramatic backdrop formed by the Mt Warning Caldera, the Shire is around 56,650 hectares in area. The landscape consists of rugged mountain ranges rising steeply to 800m above sea level, sheltered valleys, coastal dunes and rocky headlands. These landscape features and associated soil types have combined with a warm subtropical climate to produce optimal conditions for:

- range of natural resources
- exceptionally high biodiversity
- productive ecosystems
- dynamic coastline, marine waters, foreshores, estuaries and wetlands
- high quality landscape and scenic amenity

These attributes underpin the Shire's major economic activities of rural production and tourism.

Our changing climate

The Northern Rivers Region has a warm subtropical climate. The CSIRO predicts the following climatic changes to be considered in future planning:

- Hot days more frequent and cold days less frequent
- Summer rainfall will be more extreme and frequent
- Winter rain will be less reliable
- Cyclones will be less frequent and move further south
- Ocean temperature and salinity will rise
- Harsher fire weather for Eastern Australia with an increase in the number of days having a severe bushfire rating.

Decisions about how we utilise land and design future development can influence climate change impacts on the natural environment.

High biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of all living things; the different plants and animals and micro-organisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form. An ecosystem is a community of living things and their physical environment interacting together. An ecosystem can cover a large area such as a forest or a small area such as a pond.

Byron Shire is at the centre of Australia's wet subtropics bioregion that covers south-east Queensland and north-east NSW, and lies where two other bioregions overlap

- the temperate and tropical. As a result, Byron Shire is renowned for the quality and diversity of its natural environment, including:

- overall fauna species diversity equal to the wet tropics bioregion of Northern Queensland, home to the Daintree rainforest and second only to the wet tropics for birds;
- highest diversity of marsupials, frogs and snakes in Australia; and
- high number of relict species such as the red boppel nut and Fletcher's frog, which are direct descendents of species that lived in the rainforests of the ancient continent of Gondwana.

The vegetation on lands used for agriculture and the coastal plains has been cleared to a much greater extent than the steep ranges. As a result these areas are more vulnerable to invasive weeds, feral animals and impacts of climate change.

Natural resources

Natural resources of the Shire provide a wide range of benefits to the people of the region. These include: food production; drinking water and quarrying materials; cultural opportunities for eco tourism; recreation and scenery to enjoy, along with clean air and water.

Prime agricultural land makes up a significant proportion of the Shires' rural areas. These lands are currently protected as a valuable and irreplaceable resource in the Shire.

The Northern Rivers Farmland Protection Project 2005 identified three levels of importance:

- **State Significant Farmland** - not permitted to be developed for uses other than for agriculture;
- **Regionally Significant Farmland** - identified areas include Ewingsdale-Myocum; and
- **Locally Important agriculture areas** - areas that have been identified and mapped as important for agriculture but are usually too small or fragmented to be significant.

Our quarry resources provide a locally important supply of construction material, as the product viability and affordability is closely linked to the cost of transportation.

Some 45% of our Shire is within a drinking water catchment and future activities in these areas will need to be carefully managed.



Lavertys Gap Weir

What we know...

Biodiversity is part of our natural capital and influences the ability of our ecosystems to adapt to future environmental changes.

Farm biodiversity is an important component of environmentally sustainable agriculture.

Safeguarding the quality of the natural environment makes economic sense.

What you told us...

A desire for the community to work together to protect and manage biodiversity assets.

(Community Strategic Plan Feedback 2011)

Broad Issues

As our population grows we will need to plan to retain quality open spaces now and into the future. This means exploring options for the different types of open space and how we can manage these areas successfully.

What you told us...

The community associates, amongst others, the following values with our open spaces:

- *Iconic landscapes*
- *Sense of place*
- *Aesthetic qualities*
- *Recreational opportunities*
- *Therapeutic landscapes*

(Community Strategic Plan Feedback 2011)

Productive ecosystems

We benefit in a number of ways from the services provided by our natural environment. These services include:

- capacity for native vegetation to filter out nutrients in the water, stabilise embankments, buffer against extreme elements, add nutrients to soils, remove carbon and release oxygen into the atmosphere;
- farm productivity including pollination, erosion control and moderating localised climate in particular wind and temperature;
- role of native fish in reducing mosquito numbers;
- role of fertile soils and clean water in the agricultural industry's ability to capitalise on being a agricultural food and produce bowl near the major urban centre of South East Qld; and
- industry and tourism benefits arising from a clean environment including air and water, biodiversity and potential genetic resources.

Safeguarding the quality of the natural environment makes good economic sense. Major sectors such as tourism and the food industry depend on the image and the reputation of Byron Shire's natural environment.

Scenic landscapes and open spaces

Byron Shire's green open space, scenic escarpments, dynamic coastline, foreshores, estuaries and wetlands play a vital role in the Shire's identity and attraction to residents and visitors.

Some of these spaces are accessible to everyone while others provide private open space or contribute to people's experience of the Shire through scenic and landscape amenity. Together these spaces make up a connected and integrated system as follows:



Hinterland natural areas



Private rural lands



Sport and recreation areas



Creeks and waterways

Our people who care about our environment



We have a team of volunteers within our Shire, working to improve our environment. Dunecare and Landcare groups are people with a common concern about the natural environment in their local area. Volunteers undertake a wide range of activities, including revegetation, environmental weed control, fauna habitat creation and community awareness raising events. Whilst usually working on public lands, they also provide guidance to private property holders.

2. Our Rural Economy

Agriculture and tourism are the two key industries that underpin our rural economy. These industries understand that economic growth and the protection of our natural environment go hand in hand by continuing to adopt more sustainable practices in the way they operate.

Our farm lands

Agriculture with related value added products contribute substantially to our economy. The 2011 Census found that the Shire supported some 380 agricultural businesses and the industry employed some 450 people.

Animal production, primarily beef is the largest user of land. Agriculture's overall production is characterised by relatively small holdings and over 58% of landholders are involved in intensive horticulture production such as nurseries.

The agricultural industry is vulnerable to external influences such as drought, currency exchange rates and global economic downturns. These influences may have contributed to the contraction in the annual value of agricultural commodities produced in the Shire from \$40 million in 2006 to \$30 million in 2011.

What do agriculture and tourism mean to our economy?

The farm-gate income from agriculture in 2011 was \$30 million, with an economic multiplier effect of more than \$64 million.

Average tourism expenditure over a four year period to 2013 was \$415 million per annum.

Tourism and agriculture share the following common features:

- Seasonal
- Subject to external shocks and influences eg adverse weather or financial instability
- Lower wages
- Employment is often part time or temporary

Both also share the following common desires:

- Sustainable practices
- Competitive access to local, regional and global markets
- Local economy creating wealth and providing employment
- Giving people access to healthy lifestyles – healthy affordable food, down time that improves our physical and mental well being
- Diversification to offset external shocks

Many of our agricultural activities depend on the Shire's fertile basalt soils, subtropical climate and reliably high rainfall. Coffee and macadamia nuts are examples of crop diversification that capitalise on the soil and climate, only being able to be grown in a narrow climatic band. They are concentrated in Byron and the adjoining Shires of Ballina and Lismore. An analysis of ABS Agricultural Census data by DPI identified that macadamias are worth \$5 million to the Byron economy with an economic multiplier of \$10.5 million.

Economic multiplier is the subsequent handling and processing of primary produce through the community.

Our aquaculture and commercial fishing activities occur within estuarine areas and ocean waters. They rely on healthy catchments and water quality. They currently represent only a very small component of our agricultural economy.

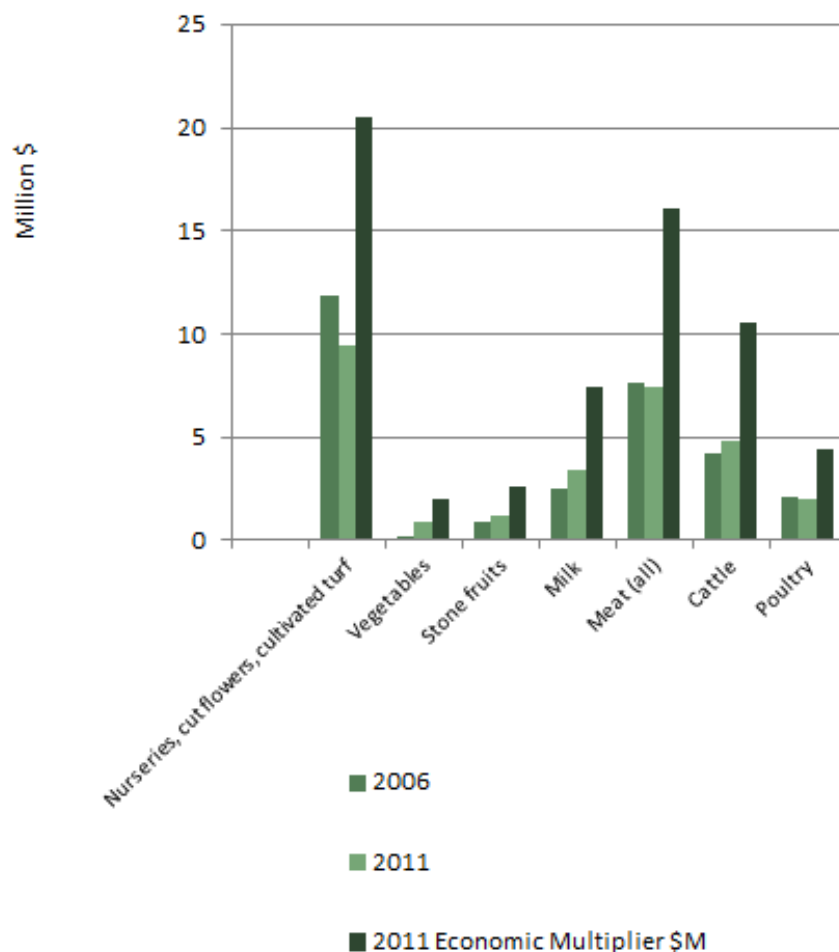


Did you know...

In our Shire there are 380 agricultural businesses who employ about 450 people?

Figure 3 shows values of commodity trends within key agricultural sectors and their multiplier effects.

Figure 3 Value of Commodity Trends in Byron Shire 2006 and 2011



(Note: the ABS only collected data from businesses whose agricultural activity was valued at \$5,000 per annum or more, this estimate of businesses may not include some of the smaller 'hobby' farms.)

Pressure and trends

Over the past two decades there has been strong pressure to subdivide prime agricultural lands. This, combined with rising local land values, is making it increasingly difficult for new rural producers to afford quality land for crop production.

Maintaining a sense of continuity in our community is also being tested as the tradition of family farm succession is in decline. This brings with it a change in ownership of farms with associated new practices, produce choice and capital investment but also effects property values, loss of local knowledge and rate of community turnover. 'Share farming' and community title, in appropriate locations, can be effective in maintaining and/or improving access to farmland. Collective farming models like this enable people to share skills, experience and farming equipment. Diversification such as farming cut flowers and dairy, incubator projects and niche industries are other options to securing our farming future.

Other recent trends include:

- gradual transition away from large broad hectare agriculture to more niche industries (such as cut flower, cultivated turf, alpaca farms, native products and bush food);
- growth of smaller holdings involved in intensive horticulture production;
- land use diversification and product value adding at the farm gate;
- movement away from family-succession farms; and
- greater awareness of and employment of sustainable practices.



What agricultural trends are emerging in our Shire?

What sustainable practices have you employed on your farm or rural business?

Some existing industry relationships

- food production, processing and farmers markets
- nursery and flower growing with weekend markets or wedding venues
- recycling, waste management and composting
- nature based tourism and bushland regeneration projects
- festival sites and music industry

Often small in scale and operated from small land holdings, niche industries have capacity to contribute significantly to the economy. Examples of niche primary production in Byron Shire include beekeepers and agriculture encompassing bush food production and medical research.

Business incubation projects are often sponsored by private companies, Council or public institutions, such as universities. Their goal is to help create and grow young businesses by providing them with necessary support and financial and technical services.



Tourism

A big part of the Shire's economy is the tourism and entertainment industry, which also supports the region's economy. Our tourism industry capitalises on the combination of diverse and colourful communities, relaxed lifestyle, distinctive towns and villages, and our outstanding physical environment as well as our proximity to South East Queensland and major airports.

As a destination the Shire offers a variety of tourist opportunities that are essentially based around cultural and nature-based tourism. These opportunities occur in our rural areas in the form of bushwalking and hinterland tours, health & wellbeing retreats, community markets and a selection of resort-style, cottage, farmstay and B&B accommodation.

The 2011 'Byron Shire Visitor Profile and Satisfaction Survey' found that greater than 50% of single day visitor trips occurred in our rural hinterland and village localities. Popular stops for day trippers include the villages of Federal and Billinudgel, Minyon Falls and Coorabell, as well as the townships of Bangalow and Mullumbimby. For those who choose to stay in the rural hinterland there are over 50 cottages and farm stay options available, with many of these scattered across the Federal, Coorabell, Eureka, Ewingsdale, The Pocket, Binna Burra and Newrybar localities.



What types of recreation and tourism activities do you consider appropriate in our rural areas?

What tourism contributes to our economy:

- The Shire attracts some 160,000 international visitors on average per year bringing in around \$70 million per year.
- Employment arising from tourism expenditure is estimated to be around 2,500 full time equivalent jobs.
- On a four year average 2008 -2013, 55% of our day trippers came from the Gold Coast/Brisbane area, the rest essentially from within our own Far North Coast Region.
- The total expenditure from the wedding industry per annum is \$54 million comprising 17.1% of tourist expenditure for the Shire.



Did you know...

The Shire has 1,360,000 domestic tourists per year, with 74% arriving by car.

What you said...

Tourist traffic growth and its impact on user safety, maintenance and preservation of road infrastructure were tagged as of key importance.

(Community Strategic Plan Feedback 2011)

An array of tourism experiences



Cultural tourism involves learning about and experiencing the Shire's different local cultures including both indigenous and non-indigenous. It encompasses the history, lifestyle, rural production techniques, festivals, buildings and architecture. The Shire's community is known for being a little out of character and valued for its sense of well being and depth of culture. Dispersed throughout the rural area is an array of experiences including arts and cultural trails, farm stays, bed and breakfast and well-being resorts.



Nature based tourism is the fastest growing element of tourism in NSW with people attracted to the natural assets, high quality natural environment and scenic amenity of the Shire. The NSW North Coast Region had the highest proportion, 96.3%, of all international visitors, engaging in a nature based activity. The North Coast Region also had the highest proportion of nights spent by nature based visitors at 97.1%. Going to the beach was identified as the most popular activity. Other popular activities included bushwalking, farm stay and dolphin and whale watching.



Indigenous Tourism

Aboriginal cultural heritage transcends rural lands. Indigenous people seek to share the richness of their culture and care for country through programs and cultural events that engage with non-indigenous people to enhance the participants' respect and understanding of country.



Wedding Venues

An increasing trend in our rural areas is weddings. It is estimated that between 600-700 destination weddings are held in the Shire per year. Key weekends such as Easter and Labor Day have over 20 weddings per weekend. The wedding industry supports the tourism and hospitality industries.



National Parks and nature reserves

Whilst the primary purpose of these lands is to protect native plants and animals and their habitats, places of natural beauty, historic heritage and Aboriginal cultural heritage, they are a key component of the tourism economy. In 2006 a study commissioned by the Department of Environment into the economic impacts of protected areas on the north-east NSW region found that protected areas contributed \$17million per year in direct and indirect income to the regional economy. About \$13 million of this comprised household income, and directly or indirectly generated equivalent to 265 jobs in the region.

3. Our Rural Community

The Byron community is a diverse and colourful mix of people. Each of the towns and villages has its own distinctive character with an assortment of cultural values, embracing both traditional and alternative lifestyles and philosophies. Our rural communities are an important part of the Shire's identity and spirit, as reflected by the many community groups with an active interest in rural issues (eg. Landcare, farmers' markets).

The Shire's population increased by 433 people to 29,209 during the 2006-2011 period. One of the main reasons for such a small population increase was the sewer moratorium that restricted development. Our population is predicted to increase by another 7,000 people by 2026, with most of this expected to occur in our urban areas.

By comparison the rural population declined by some 70 people to 8,740 people during the 2006-2011 period. The rural population is predicted to increase by an additional 320 people to 9,060 people by 2026 (an average growth rate of 0.2% per annum). However, the overall proportion of the Shire's population living in rural areas is predicted to decline from 30% in 2011 to 25% in 2026.

The Far North Coast Regional Strategy directs future population growth to the urban areas so as to protect the environment, natural resources and rural economy; increase housing choice and affordability; and make better use of our infrastructure.

Income and employment

Agriculture, forestry and fishing industries employ 3.5% of the working Shire's population.

A closer look at agricultural reveals that very few farmers now receive 100% of their income from the farm and many supplement income with off-farm jobs. Most of our non-farming rural residents are employed in cafe, restaurant, takeaway and food services, and professional and management occupations.

An ageing population

In past decades there has been a well documented ageing of Australia's population and Byron Shire is no exception. Around 45% of the Shire's rural population is over 45 years of age, as shown in Figure 4. The ageing of our population may impact on the availability of labour for agricultural activities.

Rural living arrangements

There are many reasons why people chose to live in our rural areas including family, financial and lifestyle. With its unique identity and lifestyle-orientation, Byron Shire includes a variety of rural living arrangements other than the traditional farmhouse.

Our rural villages provide the opportunity for people to live in a rural environment, in proximity to others and benefit from the additional services that closer living brings such as parks, bus services and community halls. Rural village zonings also enable a broader range of land uses to develop to over time.

In the wider rural area the diversity of living arrangements includes: concessional lots, farm dwellings, rural lifestyle lots, rural land sharing multiple occupancy, rural community title, dual occupancy, secondary dwellings and unauthorised dwellings.

Concessional lots were historically created to enable farmers to retire on the land or cater for family members. They are the legacy of a past planning policy that no longer applies in NSW.

Over the page a summary on the characteristics of the main rural living arrangements can be found.

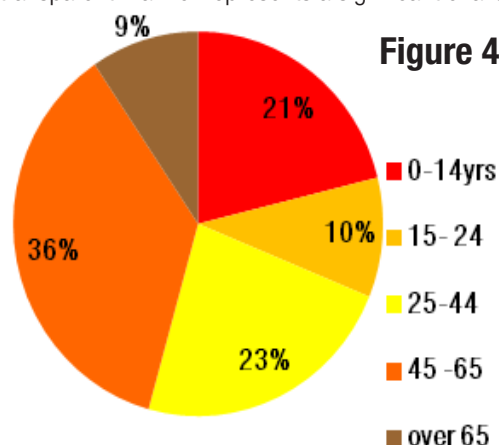
Unauthorised dwellings

The rural housing mix also includes a number of unauthorised rural dwellings, with the total amount being difficult to put a figure on.

Council's Enforcement Policy provides that:

"Council will have regard to the impact the unapproved activity is causing on amenity or harm to the environment. If action is required, Council will consider what is reasonable in the circumstances and ensure the action is not disproportionate to the level of harm or damage arising from the unapproved activity."

The unauthorised dwellings present a combination of safety, health, infrastructure, environmental and equity issues. Addressing these issues in an equitable and transparent manner represents a significant challenge.



What we know...

Single (detached) houses make up the bulk of housing stock in the rural areas accounting for 97% of all rural housing.

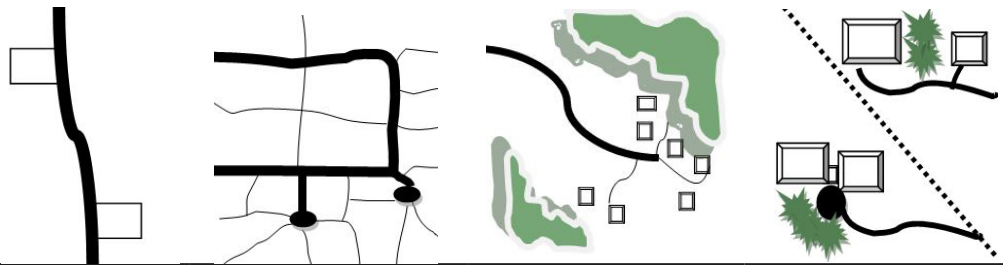
The average occupancy rate in 2011 was 2.5 persons per dwelling.

Lone person households average around 23% of rural households.

20% of private rural dwellings were unoccupied on 2011 census night, with the 'Broken Heads – Coopers Shoot' locality having the highest proportion.

What we know about today's rural lifestyle seekers

- have a higher median age and tend to prefer villages and hobby lifestyle lots.
- move here to enjoy a sustainable and alternative lifestyle;
- often drawn to local natural resource management activities and rural community events .



Type	Farm Dwellings	Rural Lifestyle Lots	Rural Landsharing Multiple Occupancy and Community Title	Dual Occupancy and Secondary Dwellings
Purpose	Typically the farmhouse for a working property, including any associated rural workers' dwellings.	Designed for large lot residential /hobby farm living.	Designed for co-operative living and management of rural land. Multiple Occupancy is where there are multiple dwellings on a single rateable property. Community Title is where multiple dwellings exist on separately rateable lots, with the remainder of the property made up of a larger common lot.	Enables two dwellings on one rural property. Dual occupancy is where two dwellings are situated on one lot of land that are either attached or detached. Secondary dwellings are essentially a small-scale form of dual occupancy that can be located within, attached to, or separate from the main house and can not be subdivided.
Lot sizes	Lot size greater than 4000m ² .	Lot sizes range from 4000m ² to 2.5 hectares.	Generally on properties greater than 18 hectares and with 1 dwelling house per 3ha of land.	Minimum area of 4000m ² in rural zones.
Location	Dispersed through out our rural area.	Many are located near our urban areas and villages and are generally within commuting distance of key employment areas and services.	Locations specified in Council plans and are generally within commuting distance of key employment areas and services.	Capacity for dual occupancies to be dispersed throughout the rural area.
Services	Access road and services vary. Require on site sewage management.	Although these lots do not have reticulated water or sewerage#, their access roads are generally sealed and they are provided with a waste management service. Require on site sewage management.	Although these lots do not have reticulated water or sewerage, their access roads are generally sealed and they are provided with a waste management service. Require on site sewage management.	Access road and services vary. Require on site sewage management.



If you currently live in a rural area, what are your main reasons for choosing to do so?

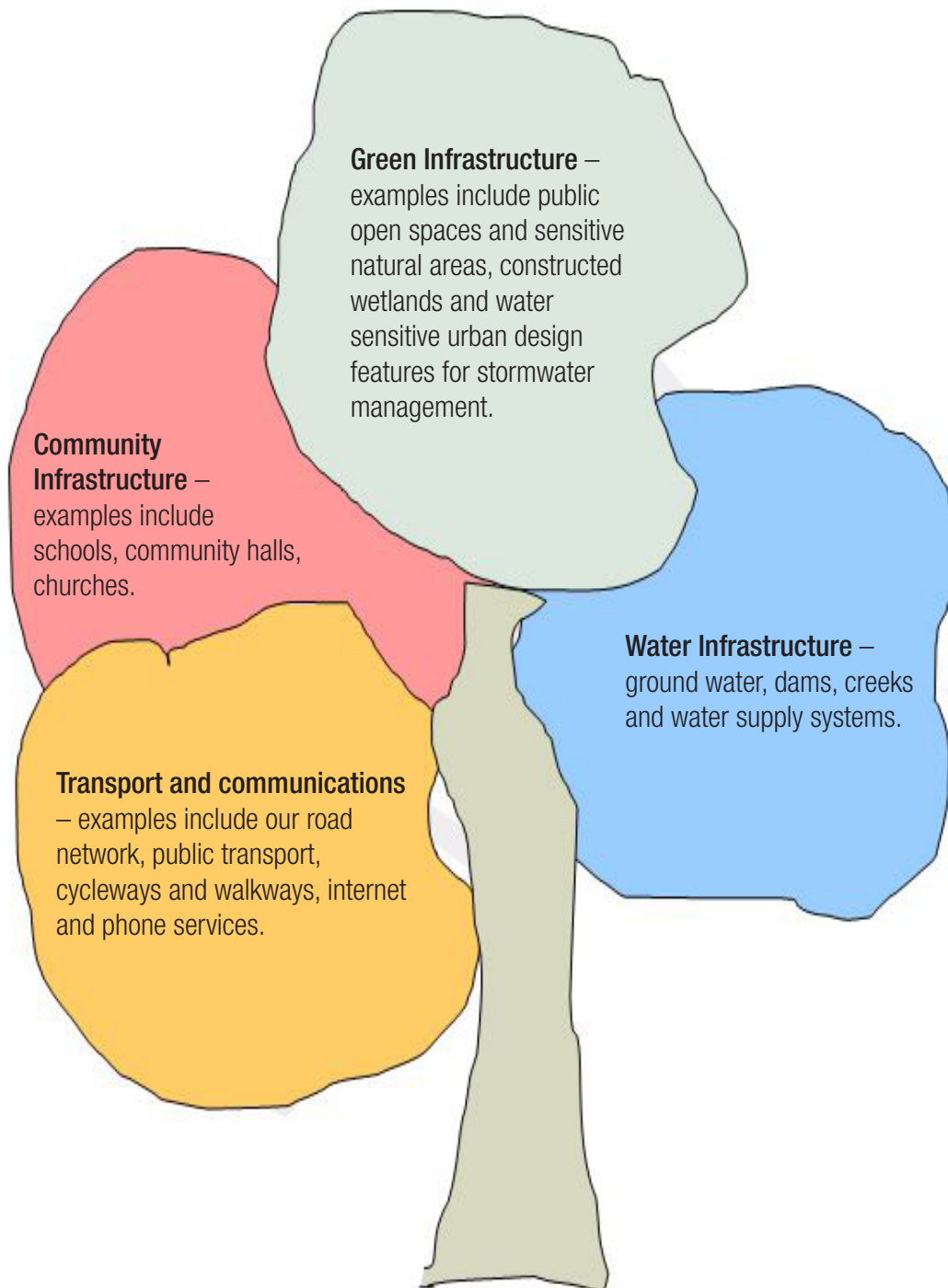
What do you think makes a “liveable” village?

What rural housing priorities should Council consider in its future planning?

With the exception of Billinudgel which is serviced with reticulated water and sewerage.

4. Supporting Infrastructure

Within our rural areas there are four key types of infrastructure.



The foundations that underpin these areas are: sustainable, safe, affordable, flexible, adaptable and using evidence based decision making to ensure that the location, design and delivery of infrastructure benefits the community and natural environment.

What you told us...

A desire to support communities to achieve equitable access to an appropriate range and level of whole of life services such as healthcare, education and housing.

(Community Strategic Plan Feedback 2011)

Community infrastructure

Community infrastructure includes facilities, services and networks which help individuals, groups and community to meet their social needs and enhance their well being.

Community infrastructure is important as it:

- strengthens communities;
- adds value to our lifestyle; and
- creates opportunities for innovation.

Our villages have a key role in providing a certain level of community infrastructure to our rural residents.

They are places for meeting, shopping, learning and working. By allowing people to connect through popular meeting places such as schools, parks and playing fields, community halls, churches, shops and school bus stops, or by just passing each other in the street, they can provide a sense of belonging.

Our popular community meeting places also bring people of different backgrounds and experiences together to exchange ideas and embrace artistic expression.

Water infrastructure

Water infrastructure is important as it:

- provides ecological benefits;
- contributes to biodiversity;
- mitigates the impacts of climate change;
- secures a source of water for our homes, rural production and businesses; and
- offers water based recreational activities.

Within our rural areas there are three water supply catchment systems: Wilson Creek, Rocky Creek Dam

and Emigrant Creek Dam. As rural lands within these urban water supply catchments are not sewered, there is a greater need for appropriate and effective on site water cycle and waste management.

There are growing demands on water for both agriculture and urban supplies. Agriculture is largely reliant on natural water sources, urban demands are mainly met by a central supply source such as Emigrant Creek Dam, and rural homes are reliant on harvesting their own water and supplementing this with urban supply sources. Water consumption can be offset with improved household and business efficiency as well as water recycling.

Green infrastructure

Green infrastructure forms a network of natural, semi natural and engineered assets that provide a range of ecosystem and community benefits. These include:

- offsetting environmental impacts;
- mitigating the impacts of climate change;
- enhancing biodiversity and site aesthetics; and
- reconnecting people with nature.

The concept of green infrastructure has grown beyond public parks and reserves to include:

- ways of integrating wildlife corridors along water-courses, ridges and roadways on both public and private lands;
- using green, permeable and reflective surfaces in buildings, structures and other hard surfaces;
- improving building energy efficiency;
- adapting and recycling of buildings and materials; and
- storm water drains designed to better mimic natural watercourses.

Did you know...

The community of Federal purchased a disused church for community purposes. Now called 'Jasper Comer', this venue accommodates a range of community activities such as yoga, film nights and pop-up restaurants. This recycling of an old building is an example of blending community and green infrastructures.



Transport and communications infrastructure

Road and telecommunication links provide businesses, residents and visitors the ability to access a range of markets such as cattle and produce. They also provide access to services, jobs, shops, medical assistance and leisure opportunities.

Roads serve three key functions within the rural area of the Shire:

- movement of rural freight;
- tourist routes; and
- commuting to access services, employment and schools, including school bus routes.

There is a need to maintain an efficient and safe regional road system to enable access to regional service centres, markets and work. Our rural roads are under pressure to accommodate growing traffic demands.

Where expansion or upgrades have occurred to accommodate increased traffic, striking a balance between supporting economic growth and preserving the rural character and natural environment has been difficult.

In 2015 a review of local roads will be undertaken to determine the priority of road improvements and the levels of service. Due to many years of local government rate pegging in NSW, unfortunately available funding has been challenging for local road upgrades; as a result, this has led to a growing backlog of work to be completed. The current infrastructure

backlog as of June 2014 equates to around \$35 million, of which at least \$15 million relates to our rural roads. The challenge of addressing this backlog in a sustainable way will play a major role in deciding where future rural land use activities should be located.

The alternatives to a car - public transport, cycleways and walkways - are limited. Funding for adequate public transportation or passive transport (walking and cycling) choices in rural areas is also limited. With walking and cycling being a popular leisure activity among rural residents, the challenge is to make these activities safer by minimising conflicts with vehicles, therefore making them a more attractive alternative to the car when commuting between local places.

Rural tourist trails are also a part of our transport infrastructure. These are made up of a combination of sealed and dirt roads, railway corridors, beaches and walking paths, some that cross private land.

Improvements in communications infrastructure, such as access to internet and phone services, mean that an increasing number of people are able to do most or all of their work from home. For our rural areas this can attract new residents from a range of occupations outside the agriculture and tourism sectors. However communications infrastructure is quite variable across our rural areas and this can limit opportunities for telecommuting, internet banking and shopping, on-line education and social networking.



If you live, work or have a particular interest in a rural locality, please tell us the place name and your top 3 infrastructure priorities.





Rural Land Use Strategy Discussion Paper Feedback Form

Complete below or online at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/rural_land_use_strategy

The Discussion Paper is the first stage in preparing a new Rural Land Use Strategy. Please get involved and tell us your thoughts. Your input and ideas are needed.

The Discussion Paper provides background to number of messages that are generally accepted by the community:

- Need to protect and enhance the natural environment
- Need to use our resources and natural environment sustainably
- Agriculture is highly valued and should be encouraged
- Rural tourism can be compatible in our rural areas where they value add and enhance the natural environment and agricultural production
- Our rural areas will continue to offer opportunities for people to live as a community, with the bulk of the Shire's population encouraged to live in our towns
- Future land use needs to look for new solutions to meet our infrastructure requirements.

With all these different messages, there has to be a holistic strategy that provides a clear vision and planning direction for all rural land uses in the Shire. This will be the role of the Rural Land Use Strategy.

It is important to have a strategy for all rural land uses because what happens in one area can affect the outcomes in other areas. To help us better understand your values, priorities and aspirations for our rural land we welcome your feedback to the questions below.

1. ANSWER ONLINE TO BE IN A DRAW FOR A PRIZE:

For those that opt to answer this survey online, Council is randomly selecting 3 respondents for a mini prize pack of health and body products. PRIZE WINNER:- please tell us the best way to get hold of you if you are randomly picked from all the electronic survey respondents:

2. What do you value most and do not want to see lost in our rural environment ?

3. Which places or activities in the rural area do you feel a strong connection with?

4. Personal Details

Name:

Rural locality where you spend the most time:

Your address:

Phone number:

Email address:

5. Survey Demographics - please tick circle as appropriate

	Female	Male	0-24 yrs	25-44	45-65	Over 65
Sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Age Group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. The Discussion Paper is framed around four themes.

Of the elements discussed within each 'Theme', which elements do you think are the most important to be considered when planning the future of our rural areas? Number your top 5 priorities with '1' being the highest.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An ancient natural landscape
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our changing climate
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High biodiversity
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Natural Resources
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Productive ecosystems
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scenic landscapes and open spaces
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our farm lands
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pressure and trends
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tourism
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Income and employment
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An ageing population
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural living arrangements
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community infrastructure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Green infrastructure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water infrastructure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport and communications infrastructure

7. What agricultural trends are emerging in our Shire?

<input type="text"/>

8. What sustainable practices have you employed on your farm or rural business, do they include the following? please tick boxes as appropriate or add to.

- Erosion control
- Water conservation
- Habitat reinstatement, revegetation or weed control
- Sharing of equipment with other farmers/businesses
- Local climate management measure such as wind breaks

Other (please specify)

9. What types of recreation and tourism activities do you consider appropriate in our rural areas?

	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Farm stays and B&B	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wedding venues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Horse riding trails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Farm cafes/shops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health retreats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Artesian studios	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

10. If you currently live in a rural area, what are your main reasons for choosing to do so?

- Farmer or family member
- Lifestyle
- Financial
- Local business opportunity

Other (please specify) or please tell us the business opportunity that drew you to the rural area ?

11. What do you think makes a 'liveable village'?

	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Sense of community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relaxed lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open space and clean environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being safe and secure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A local shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A local hall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

12. What rural housing priorities should Council consider in its future planning?

	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Housing that responds to our changing demographics such as aging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New rural residential lifestyle lots	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New villages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New residential multiple occupancy and community title	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify) or please tell us the reasons for your choice above.

13. If you live, work or have a particular interest in a rural locality, please tell us the place name and your top 3 infrastructure priorities?

Name of village or rural locality

Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

14. Are there any other comments you would like to make about our rural land?

15. Finally, do you hold any information or material that would help with preparing a Rural Land Use Strategy, if so we would welcome an opportunity to discuss it with you. Please tick the box below and ensure your contact details are provided above in Question 4 or alternatively call Council's Planners on 6627 7126 or email: rural.strategy@byron.nsw.gov.au?

Yes, I have further information