

North Coast Regional Plan 2041

This document answers frequently asked questions about the strategic land use planning blueprint for the North Coast region

What is a regional plan?

In 2017, the Department of Planning and Environment finalised regional plans. These will guide planning for the existing and future community across the 9 regions of NSW.

These plans set a clear vision and direction for how each region can build on future opportunities to ensure their communities grow to become even more vibrant, dynamic and prosperous. This is balanced with the need for housing, jobs, infrastructure, a healthy environment, connected communities and access to green spaces.

Structured around defined goals, objectives and actions, the regional plans set out the requirements for clear and coordinated planning across all levels of government and within the community.

The department reviews and updates the regional plans every 5 years to reset priorities, goals and direction so we can continue to achieve the best outcomes for the community.

What is the North Coast Regional Plan 2041?

The North Coast Regional Plan 2041 (the plan) is the 5-year update of the inaugural North Coast Regional Plan 2036. The plan applies to the 12 local government areas of Tweed, Byron, Ballina, Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey and Port Macquarie–Hastings. It is a 20-year land-use plan that focuses on and informs all areas of local strategic planning, from the development of local plans to the assessment of planning proposals.

The plan extends the timeframe for the plan to 2041 and builds on the momentum and key priority actions delivered from the 2036 plan.

How was the plan reviewed?

From February 2021, the Department of Planning and Environment reviewed the current regional plan and how it has been used. We sourced updated data and evidence on drivers of growth and change during extensive consultation with local councils and other stakeholders.

The review included a public exhibition of a draft 2041 plan from 11 July 2022 to 24 August 2022 during which the community and stakeholders had their say.

The updated North Coast Regional Plan 2041 reflects this work and incorporates feedback from the consultation. It resets the previous plan's priorities to ensure continued benefits for the North Coast community for the next 20 years.

What are the key themes of the plan?

The plan aims to protect and enhance the region's assets and plan for a sustainable future.

It acknowledges the significant changes that have happened over the past 5 years. The plan capitalises on several major infrastructure investments that are already underway to help transform and enhance the region's economic and social wellbeing and drive job creation. These include the ongoing upgrade of the Pacific Highway, the Clarence Correctional Centre, the Tweed Valley Hospital and the Richmond Valley Regional Job Precinct. The plan includes actions to promote these economic drivers.

It retains a strong emphasis on settlement planning for housing and employment and includes planning principles for local strategies and settlement planning guidelines. The regional cities of Tweed, Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie will continue to act as primary growth anchors and deliver a wide range of job opportunities, housing, education and health services.

Other centres such as Murwillumbah, Mullumbimby, Byron Bay, Ballina, Kyogle, Casino, Grafton, Bellingen, Macksville and Kempsey are playing an increasingly important role in providing housing and employment opportunities and supporting local communities.

Health care and social assistance remain the region's main economic driver, while the growing education and training, construction, tourism, retail and agriculture sectors are expected to generate increasing employment opportunities.

The plan provides an overarching framework to guide subsequent and more detailed land-use plans, development proposals and infrastructure funding decisions at a regional, subregional and local level. It is divided into 2 parts which guide the strategies, actions and collaboration activities:

- Part 1 – Thriving and Sustainable
- Goal 1 – Liveable and Resilient
- Goal 2 – Productive and Connected
- Part 2 – Growth, Change and Opportunity
- Goal 3 – Planning for Communities (including a narrative for each council area).

How does the plan protect the region against natural hazards such as floods and bushfires? How does it respond to climate change?

We've seen how devastating flooding and bushfires can be and natural disasters are likely to increase with climate change. We want to ensure that all new development is done safely, and our planning processes consider these risks early in the decision-making process. The plan aims to avoid new development in high-risk areas prone to bushfires and flooding.

The NSW Government has delivered a *Strategic Guide to Planning for Natural Hazards*, which will help councils in their future resilience planning and evacuation processes.

Several reports into natural disasters, as well as the NSW Coastal Management Framework, will continue to help guide the early decision process and avoid the development of new infrastructure in high-risk areas. This process includes objectives to manage the effects of climate change and ensure future infrastructure designs are flood-resilient.

The plan also factors in recommendations from the NSW Government's independent inquiry into the catastrophic floods. The inquiry's findings will help us strengthen resilience, backed by the new Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC).

The NRRC will play an important role in planning, rebuilding and construction work of essential services, infrastructure, and housing, to help communities rebuild their lives and homes as quickly as possible.

How many more homes are needed for the North Coast?

Over the next 20 years, the North Coast will need at least 40,000 more homes to house its growing population.

The plan includes a goal to ensure 40% of new housing by 2036 comprises small, lower-maintenance apartments, townhouses, and villas, on lots less than 400 square metres. This measure will help accommodate new residents, provide more housing options for a changing population and contribute to more affordable housing options.

How else does the plan support future housing needs?

One of the plan's key points is to encourage the development of housing options that promote social inclusion, including crisis accommodation and affordable living for seniors, people with disability and single households.

The plan proposes the establishment of an Urban Development Program for the North Coast to improve the coordination and delivery of new housing.

What provisions are in place to protect the region's wildlife habitat, particularly the koala population?

We are committed to ensuring that koalas remain protected and continue to thrive. We understand that development can threaten koala habitat, and the plan directs growth away from these areas.

We've helped councils develop comprehensive koala management plans in areas such as Tweed, Byron, Bellingen, Kempsey, Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Ballina. The NSW Koala Strategy is also the biggest pledge by any state government to secure koalas in the wild, committing to doubling population numbers by 2050.

The plan includes actions to protect existing vegetation by directing future growth to urban growth areas, help species recover, and plant new trees in streets and parks to strengthen corridors that support koalas and other wildlife.

What's in it for my council?

Priorities for each council are set out in local government narratives, which will guide further investigations and implementation. The priorities build on the objectives and actions in the plan.

Regional planning encourages infrastructure delivery that targets the needs of its communities. It also encourages efficiencies in the allocation of resources and investment to improve the liveability and sustainability of the region. The NSW Government will help councils to translate these priorities into local plans.

How does the plan fit in with councils' local strategic planning statements?

By 1 July 2020, all councils in NSW were required to prepare a local strategic planning statement (LSPS) setting out:

- the 20-year vision for land use in the local area

- the special character and values that are to be preserved
- how change will be managed into the future.

All councils in the region prepared LSPSs for their local government areas.

An LSPS allows a council to ensure that priorities identified in the regional plan are placed within a clear local context and consider an area's unique economic, social and environmental characteristics.

Importantly, the LSPS also allows councils to translate their own strategic planning work into local priorities and actions, which in turn informs the review of the regional plan. This feedback cycle from local to regional planning ensures that there is a two-way 'line of-sight' between the different levels of spatial planning.

The LSPSs prepared by all councils in the region, in consultation with their communities, were a key input into the plan.

What are the next steps?

The NSW Government will strengthen governance arrangements already in place and continue to convene the North Coast Coordination and Monitoring Committee to oversee and report on the implementation of the Plan's actions. The Committee will also monitor the effectiveness of the Plan's strategies in setting guidance that supports strategic planning and land use planning decisions for the region. [Register to receive updates](#) on implementation of the regional plan.