



Water and energy resources

BACKGROUND

The Far North Coast is supplied with water from numerous sources administered through various authorities. Tweed Shire Council administers water from the Clarrie Hall Dam on the Tweed River. Rous Water supplies the majority of the towns and villages in and around Lismore, Ballina, Byron and the lower Richmond Valley via Rocky Creek Dam, Emigrant Creek Dam and groundwater from the Alstonville Plateau. A supplementary source is now provided by extractions from high flow periods in the Wilson River. Kyogle and Casino have separate water schemes supplied from the Richmond River. Wardell is supplied from Marom Creek, Nimbin from Mulgum Creek, with Mullumbimby supplied from Wilson's Creek, which is within the Brunswick River catchment.

All councils in the Region are developing Integrated Water Cycle Management Plans. These plans

aim to reduce water extraction from rivers and groundwater through demand management strategies, recycling effluent for reuse and managing stormwater runoff. These measures, in addition to other council and community initiatives, will lead to improvements in water quality throughout the Region's waterways, especially within the town water supply catchments. Dual use reticulation systems are now being incorporated in to some new residential release areas. In addition, all new houses must comply with the targets set by BASIX for reducing water and energy consumption in NSW.

These demand management and reuse options along with the new Wilson River source indicates there will be sufficient water to meet population forecasts in the medium term. There is a need, however, given the lead time for major infrastructure planning and approval, to consider long term supply adequacy and security

in light of regional population projections. State government agencies, in conjunction with local water supply authorities, will review future supply options to ensure long term regional water efficiencies and improved drought security. In addition, the Department of Natural Resources will be determining environmental flow and water access rules for both surface and groundwater though the macro water-sharing process.

Energy generation is undertaken by private companies and State-owned corporations. Transgrid, which is owned by the NSW Government, operates the high voltage transmission network while the supply of energy to customers is the responsibility of Country Energy. The identification of substantial coal seam gas reserves provides the opportunity for the development of a local energy industry, and local power generation.

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OUTCOMES

The Regional Strategy seeks to maintain and improve existing ground and surface water quality levels, especially within town water supply catchments. The development controls applicable to new urban releases within these catchments will require careful preparation to guarantee a continuing acceptable drinking water supply.

Best practice initiatives relating to efficient use, demand management and recycling of water, which benefit the water supply and its sources, are encouraged.

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

The Regional Strategy aligns with the work of the Department of Natural Resources and councils to ensure a secure safe and adequate regional water supply through:

- the determination of environmental flow allocations for all unregulated rivers within the Region

- the specification of per capita reduction targets in town water use and strategies to achieve this
- improved water cycle management to increase reuse of effluent and reduce the impact of sewerage and stormwater.

ACTIONS

- Councils are to complete Integrated Water Cycle Management Plans.
- Local environmental plans will recognise and protect the regional water supply system through appropriate planning provisions.
- In preparing local environmental plans councils will liaise with water and energy providers and make provision for any regional gas, water and electricity infrastructure corridors that may be required.
- All future development is to apply water sensitive urban design principles, including the use of dual use reticulation systems in releases of adequate scale, and meet storm water management targets that support the environmental values of the catchments.

- The Department of Natural Resources, Department of Energy Utilities and Sustainability and local water authorities will prepare a Regional Water Plan to ensure long term regional water efficiencies and improved drought security.
- Suitable locally generated and/or renewable energy projects such as wind, solar, bio-waste and wave power will be supported.





Regional transport

BACKGROUND

The Region is currently serviced by a transport network comprised of road, rail and air infrastructure, facilities and services. The extensive road network includes:

- two major north–south corridors, the Pacific Highway and Summerland Way
- an east–west link, the Bruxner Highway.

There is an estimated 380 million trips made by residents and visitors, and around 20 million tonnes of freight moved within and through the Region each year. The road network is especially important with approximately 75% of all journeys within the Region by car.

A major initiative of the State and Commonwealth governments is the upgrading of the Pacific

Highway to dual carriageway standard. The improvements to the road corridor will provide greater transport efficiency and safety for residents, and for intra- and interstate movements. The Pacific Highway extends for 140 kilometres through the Region, of which 56 kilometres has been upgraded to dual carriageway and 20 kilometres approved or under construction. The remaining roadway is currently being project-planned for future upgrade.

The main Sydney–Brisbane rail corridor passes through the western part of the Region linking the Far North Coast to the east coast passenger and freight rail network, the capital cities and major shipping ports. The Australian Rail Track Corporation, as lessee of the rail network from the NSW Government, is currently upgrading the track and

signalling on the North Coast Line between Maitland and the Queensland border. This work will involve concrete re-sleepering, the lengthening and/or upgrading of 11 passing loops and various smaller upgrade projects. The aim of this investment is to assist in reducing travel times for intermodal freight trains by 3.5 hours and thereby to increase the amount of freight transported by rail on the North Coast line from the present 19% to 30%. An upgraded efficient rail freight link north to the Port of Brisbane or south to Sydney will be of increasing value to the economic development of the Region.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005–2026 has identified the future extension of the Gold Coast rail link to Coolangatta airport by 2026 and the planned investigation of significant employment lands and

housing at Bromelton—which has direct links to the Summerland Way and North Coast rail line—as major infrastructure initiatives. The Far North Coast Regional Strategy, as part of its regular review, will progressively identify and link transport needs with the projected population growth of both the Region and adjoining South East Queensland in order to achieve optimal transport planning and coordination for residents and businesses.

A rail corridor also exists between Casino and Murwillumbah, which was replaced by bus services in 2004. This service links with the existing regional bus network, which together with local school buses service the Region's major towns and settlements.

Air services are provided by three airports. Coolangatta (Queensland) operates some international flights, while both it and Ballina primarily operate domestic jet services. Lismore provides a commuter flight service to Sydney.

OUTCOMES

The Pacific Highway will continue to be the primary inter/intra-region road corridor and the efficiency and safety of this corridor will accordingly be protected.

The identification of local transport hubs will assist in linking the Region's major urban centres with each other and with destinations/origins outside the Region.

Through its settlement planning

and urban design actions, the Strategy will improve connectivity and accessibility within urban areas.

The development of improved transport linkages with South East Queensland will be considered during the ongoing review of the Strategy.

ACTIONS

- Planning and construction of the Pacific Highway upgrade program through the Region will be continued.
- Local environmental plans will provide for passenger interchanges in all major regional centres, major towns and towns. These interchanges will be well connected to pedestrian and cycle ways.
- Land use and transport planning must be integrated to minimise the need to travel, and to encourage energy and resource efficiency.
- Local environmental plans are to recognise and protect the regional transport network through appropriate planning provisions.
- The Casino to Murwillumbah rail corridor will be protected.
- As the Gold Coast rail extension is planned, investigation will be undertaken to determine whether demand warrants extension of the route into NSW.

