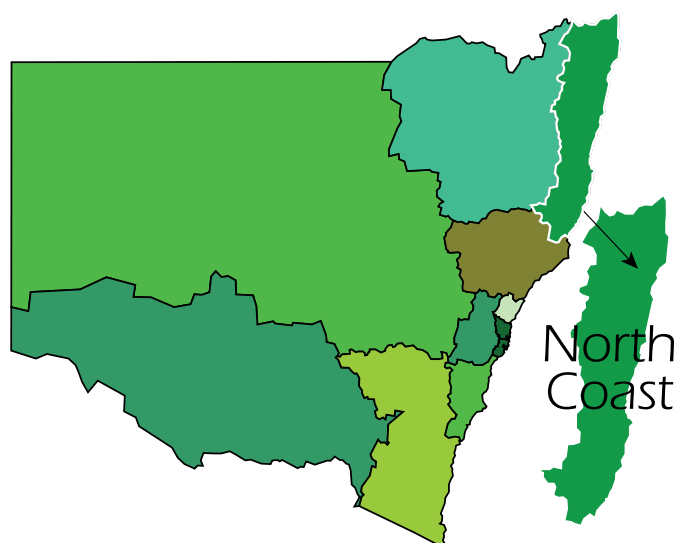


North Coast

REGIONAL DELIVERY UPDATE 2008



The **State Plan: A New Direction for NSW** is the Government's 10 year vision for strengthening NSW and prioritising Government effort.

In each region, Government agencies are working closely with local government and community partners to deliver the priorities of the State Plan and tackle the issues that exist in the region.

Key challenges

During the State Plan consultations the local community and stakeholders identified the key challenges for the North Coast as:

- Creating employment and training opportunities,
- Planning for infrastructure to support the growing population,
- Balancing development with the protection of the coastal environment.

Regional Business Growth Plans are being developed for the Northern Rivers and the Mid North Coast. The plans will determine key actions to promote economic growth and increase the number of local jobs.

The Far North Coast Regional Strategy and Draft Mid North Coast Regional Strategy will guide new development and assist in ensuring a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future in the 25 years to 2031.

A detailed report of State-wide progress against all State Plan priorities and targets can be found at www.stateplan.nsw.gov.au

Results Summary 2007

Personal and property crime rates increased slightly.

- Property crime¹ increased a little but is below the state average.
- Personal crime² increased slightly and is above the state average.

Access to quality healthcare on the North Coast improved.

- Emergency department waiting times improved across all triage categories but there is work to be done to meet all national triage benchmarks.
- Demand for emergency department services increased by 6% over 2006–07.

The level of achievement of school students improved, including:

- More Year 5 students met the minimum and proficient standards in literacy and numeracy.
- Substantial improvements in the number of indigenous students meeting minimum standards for literacy and numeracy.

Improvements to the transport system.

- Upgrades to the Pacific Highway opened from Yelgun to Brunswick Heads.

A stronger North Coast economy.

- Employment in the North Coast region increased from 201,400 in 2005–06 to 216,800 in 2006–07.
- TAFE NSW—North Coast Institute assisted over 30,000 individuals across the region to achieve their vocational education goals in 2007.
- In 2006–07, NSW Government business programs assisted 34 investment projects, representing a capital investment of \$231 million and the creation or retention of 368 jobs for the region.

Planning for jobs and infrastructure.

- Far North Coast Regional Strategy and Draft Mid North Coast Regional Strategy includes capacity for 79,500 extra jobs and 109,400 additional dwellings by 2031.

1. Property crime includes break and enter dwelling and motor vehicle theft.
2. Personal crime includes domestic violence-related assaults, non-domestic violence related assaults, sexual assault and robbery.

The Way Forward

RIGHTS RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Ensuring safety of residents and building community harmony is integral to the long term strength of NSW communities. Property crime on the North Coast increased slightly but is below the State average. Our challenge is to maintain the low rate of property crime and reduce anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related violence.

Keeping people safe and building harmonious communities

Since March 2007 new Police Stations have opened at Yamba and Lismore.

NSW Police have improved targeting of 'crime hotspots' through streamlining their practices to free-up resources for 'high visibility policing' and increasing partnerships with local government, state government agencies and the community. Examples include:

- A Crime Prevention Partnership to reduce alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour will

be established with local council and community organisations in the Richmond area in early 2008.

- **Liquor Accords** promote responsible drinking and help curtail anti-social and violent behaviour. Liquor Accords have been established across the North Coast.
- A project to reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people by directing them away from crime and toward school, training and recreational activities will be established in the Richmond Local Area Command.

The Balund—a facility will open in Tabulum in 2008 and offer a live-in diversionary program for up to 70 offenders. The program is aimed at diverting young aboriginal offenders from full-time custody.

The Ballina and Taree Streetbeats and the Kempsey and Nambucca Aboriginal Community Assistance Patrols continue to provide outreach youth support for young people on the street at night.

DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES

Service delivery is the core business of the State Government. Improving access to high-quality health, education, and transport services is a priority for this region.

Healthy communities

Demand for emergency department services on the North Coast grew by 6% in 2006–07. Over this time emergency department waiting times improved in four of the five triage categories and met the national benchmarks in three of the five triage categories.

North Coast communities welcomed the Government's commitment to the upgrading of hospitals, in particular the buyback of the Port Macquarie Base Hospital and the provision of a new facility in Coffs Harbour.

The Ballina Transitional Care facility was upgraded in January 2007 providing improved transitional care for elderly patients moving to independent living.

Further improvements to quality health care and meeting the needs of a growing and ageing population include:

- A new Coronary Care Unit at Tweed Hospital opened in November 2006 and the \$10.9 million development of the Tweed Clinical Education and Research Institute is progressing including a new 30-bed ward.
- A new ambulance station has been established at Port Macquarie.
- Lismore Hospital is being redeveloped. Stage 1 is due for completion in 2008 and planning for Stage 2 is underway. This will include the establishment of an Integrated Cancer Centre. New Cancer Centres at Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie are expected to deliver radiation therapy to over 800 cancer patients per year.
- Integrated drug and alcohol, mental health and welfare referral services are being provided in Nimbin in a partnership with Government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs).

Students fulfil their potential

Achievement in literacy and numeracy underpin the ability of all students to learn effectively in most school subjects. All North Coast schools have developed personalised student literacy and numeracy plans to help lift student's attainment level.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in Years 9 and 10 have been expanded to 25 schools. Initial evaluations have shown the program influenced six in ten students to complete Year 12.

Trade Schools will be opened at Ballina High School, Nambucca Heads High School and Kingscliff TAFE providing vocational training for school students.

Career Link is a series of joint programs between North Coast schools, TAFE and local industry to promote vocational education and employment for school students. The program started in 2007 and has resulted in a significant increase in school student participation in VET.

Byron Community Campus is a community and Government partnership providing opportunities for those young people in the Byron Shire who had not benefited from traditional, formal schooling and require a flexible community learning environment.

TAFE has established the V Tracks program to promote and increase the availability of VET to Year 10 Aboriginal school students.

17 additional classrooms were provided to schools in the region to help reduce class sizes.

A \$6 million major capital works project to upgrade facilities at Bowraville Central School, catering for 330 primary and secondary students, is planned for completion by early 2009.

An effective transport system

Improving Roads

The Pacific Highway is being upgraded. The Brunswick Head to Yelgun section of the highway was opened in July 2007.

The Karuah to Bulahdelah section 1 and Bundacree Creek to Possum Brush section are complete. Section 2 and 3 of the Karuah to Bulahdelah will be completed in late 2009.

Public Transport

The Rural and Regional Bus Reform Consultative Taskforce has identified options for contracting bus services in rural and regional areas. The Government will introduce:

- More appropriate planning, funding and contracting arrangements for regular route and school bus services. Existing services will continue to be provided under new

improved contracts, to be progressively rolled out over 12 months, commencing July 2008.

- \$2.50 Pensioner Excursion Ticket allowing all day travel on regular bus services in regional centres, country towns and villages.

- Half-fare concession entitlements will be extended for all bus travel by full-time tertiary and senior secondary students, apprentices and trainees.

FAIRNESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Protecting those at risk and supporting vulnerable communities is at the heart of what the NSW Government does. Providing support to communities or individuals experiencing disadvantage is a priority for this region.

Strengthening Aboriginal Communities

A significant gap exists between the well being of Aboriginal residents on the North Coast compared with the rest of the population. The State Plan targets a reduction of the gap between Aboriginal communities and the total population of NSW. There are five initial focus areas—family safety, education, environmental health, economic development and community resilience and are in addition to the existing strategy, **Two Ways Together**.

Specific initiatives to deliver on these targets in the North Coast region include:

- Supporting Aboriginal community engagement groups to develop **Local Action Plans** in Tumbulam, Bowraville and Ballina.
- Generating new job opportunities in Tweed Heads for Aboriginal people through **Job Compacts** and employment on Government construction projects and the **North Coast Aboriginal Employment Strategy** which aims to raise employment of Aboriginal people within NSW Government agencies in the region to 2.2%.
- Implementing the water and sewerage capital and maintenance program in discrete Aboriginal communities to improve water quality and health outcomes.
- Joint management arrangements at Arakwal, Ti Tree Lake, Byron Bay and Githabul national parks which will ensure Aboriginal people are involved in planning and decision making and management of biodiversity is improved through the application of Aboriginal knowledge and experience.
- A waste clean-up program of Aboriginal land at Purfleet to implement sustainable waste management strategies and reduce illegal dumping of rubbish.

Increasing employment and community participation for people with disabilities

Implementing **Stronger Together** is improving services for people with a disability and their families living on the North Coast. It is estimated that by the end of 2007–08 this will include 85 supported accommodation places, 80 new respite places, 90 new therapy places, case management to more than 500 people and extra early intervention services and new family support programs to 20 families.

All eligible school leavers on the North Coast are able to access the **Transition to Work** or **Community Participation**

programs. These programs help school leavers to develop life skills and, where appropriate, the skills necessary to gain employment or go on to further education. In 2008, 102 North Coast school leavers commenced post school programs.

Improved outcomes in mental health

Our approach to dealing with the challenges in mental health on the North Coast is to focus on a continuum of care for people with a mental illness, including prevention, early intervention, treatment and community support. New mental health services and funding include:

- \$1.2m to improve Port Macquarie Hospital mental health facilities and \$7.4m for the development of a 20 bed non-acute mental health unit at Coffs Harbour Hospital.
- Construction of new inpatient units at the Richmond Clinic which is underway and will provide 40 adult acute inpatient beds and an 8 bed specialist child and adolescent unit.
- The **Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI)** provides supported housing and rehabilitation to people with a mental illness. HASI is being expanded to help people who wish to stay in their own homes or with families. **New Horizons** has been funded by the North Coast Area Health Service to provide extra support places in Tweed Heads, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey and Port Macquarie.
- The **Rural Critical Care Program** is providing extra mental health assessment in emergency departments at Tweed, Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie (16 hours per day). Emergency mental health assessment and support is available 24 hours, seven days per week via the telephone to other emergency departments in the North Coast Area Health Service.

Early intervention to tackle disadvantage

Early intervention is often the most effective way of overcoming disadvantage. Key delivery agencies are increasingly investing in early intervention programs to help minimise the impact on crisis services and deliver better outcomes.

The **Brighter Futures** program provides case management, quality childcare and pre-school, parenting skills and home visiting in Tweed Heads, Lismore, Ballina, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie. **Brighter Futures** is being delivered by the Department of Community Services (DoCS) Early Intervention Teams in partnership with Mission Australia, The Benevolent Society, Uniting Care Burnside and Casino Neighbourhood Centre.

GROWING PROSPERITY ACROSS NSW

The key economic challenges for the region are to create new high skilled jobs, assist in the provision of service jobs by supplying adequate commercial areas, and support, strengthen and broaden the region's economic base.

Strong rural and regional economies

Regional Business Growth Plans are being finalised for the Northern Rivers and the Mid North Coast. The plans determine key actions required to attract investment into the Region and increase local jobs. Government agencies, the North Coast and Mid North Coast Regional Development Boards, and other partners will work together to:

- Assist the manufacturing sector to increase productivity and global competitiveness, in particular the development of industry clusters e.g. develop and support 'Manufacture Coffs Coast' and 'Nambucca Vehicle Body Building Manufacturing Cluster'.
- Promote the North Coast as a location of choice for business and employees, e.g. during 2008, HF Hand Constructors Pty. Ltd. are establishing a steel fabrication facility at Sancrox (near Port Macquarie). This is expected to create up to 110 new jobs in the Hunter and Kempsey.
- Provide infrastructure to support population and industry growth, including the implementation of the Innovative

Development of Excellent Aged-care Services (IDEAS) Project for the aged-care services sector, and the Northern Rivers Regional Industry and Economic Plan.

- Assist investment facilitation in logistics, renewable energy, agriculture, tourism and creative industries.
- Simplify planning processes and improve access to employment lands.
- Improve business sustainability, including re-use and recycling of water and introduction of alternative energy technologies.
- Bring new skills to the region and retrain the existing workforce.

A **State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) for Rural Lands** is now in force. It provides a framework for the management and protection of rural lands, which will support the regional economy and rural industries.

During 2007–08, nine Local Government Areas on the North Coast will be involved in **Regional Community Economic Development** projects. These aim to increase the capacity of local communities to participate in improving existing businesses and developing appropriate new industries.

Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies

Tackling skills shortages, especially those in the trades, is a

major challenge for the region.

A **NSW Skills Centre** will be established in Lismore providing training and specialised solutions for industry and improved employment prospects for individuals. The Centre will support the **North Coast Aboriginal Employment Strategy** which aims to raise the employment of Aboriginal people in the region by 3.2%.

TAFE NSW—North Coast Institute and North Coast State Training Services has partnered with public and private providers to assist the aged services sector on the North Coast to develop innovative and collaborative solutions to the sector's skills and industry needs.

The Nambucca Vehicle Body Manufacturing Cluster is now a key driver of the Nambucca Shire economy and is expected to expand with projected employment growth.

Implement Collaborative Partnership Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Department of State and Regional Development and the North Coast Institute of TAFE to improve flexibility of training delivery and skills development for industries and businesses.

TAFE NSW—North Coast Institute is working with local businesses to deliver training on campus, face to face and on-the-job to trainees and apprentices. A new Trade School at Nambucca Heads High School will further support this activity.

ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING

The key environmental challenges for the region are to protect the region's environmental assets and ensure sustainable use of natural resources while providing for the development and growth of communities.

A secure supply of water and energy

While some areas were in drought last year, the North Coast region has received substantial rainfall in 2008. With nearly all dams in the region at full capacity, most areas have lifted water restrictions although many Councils have adopted permanent Level 1 restrictions.

A **Regional Water Plan** for town water supplies is being prepared to improve drought security and water efficiency across the northern parts of the Region. **Regional Water Sharing Plans**, to manage water extraction, facilitate trading and clarify entitlements for the environment, basic rights of users, town water supplies and licensed users, are expected to start on 1 July 2008 for the **Lower North Coast Area** and the **Bellinger Area**. There are eight further water sharing plans due to be finalised and announced by 2009.

Energy infrastructure on the North Coast has been upgraded to increase capacity and cater for future growth, including:

- Construction of new substations at Lennox Head (for the Ballina and Byron Bay region), Cudgen (Tweed Valley), Nana Glen (Coffs Harbour area), South Boambee (West Sawtell), Raleigh and Macksville.
- Upgrades to the substations at Port Macquarie, Lismore and South West Rocks.
- New transmission lines between Taree and Coffs Harbour and upgrade the existing Coffs Harbour to Kempsey transmission line is underway.

Practical environment solutions

The draft **Far North Coast Regional Conservation Plan** and the draft **Mid North Coast Regional Conservation Plan** are being prepared and will provide direction for the coming 25 years.

Between 2004 and 2007 the **North East NSW and South East Old Rainforest Recovery Plan** has protected over 450ha and 75km of high conservation value ecosystems across the Upper Clarence, Tweed, Brunswick and Richmond Catchments.

In February 2007 the Githabul People and the NSW Government signed an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) that will enable national park and forest land near Mount Lindsey to be co-managed by the Githabul people and the NSW Government. The Githabul ILUA is the largest ever made in NSW.

Improved urban environment

The **Far North Coast Regional Strategy** and draft **Mid North Coast Regional Strategy** will guide new development to assist in establishing a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future to 2031. These will:

- enhance opportunities for jobs closer to home by protecting strategic employment and agricultural land to help meet projected need for an additional 79,500 new jobs
- ensure capacity for 109,400 additional dwellings for 151,400 more people with increasing infill and multi unit development
- support environmental and heritage protection
- identify long term infrastructure requirements (including business infrastructure)

A **Regional Cities Taskforce** has been established for Tweed Heads to facilitate the revitalisation, development and positioning of Tweed Heads as one of the economic focal points for the North Coast.

Land supply rezonings will be finalised in Port Macquarie, Tweed, Clarence Valley and Ballina.

Improved cultural and recreational options

- Planning for the construction of the coastal walk from Crescent Head to North Wall, Port Macquarie has been undertaken to link with existing trails in the national park estate. Construction of the walk will be commencing later in 2008.
- The Angourie and Lennox Head Surfing Reserves have been established to protect these iconic surfing locations. A further surfing reserve is planned for Crescent Head.