

State Plan Priority P6
Regional Business Growth Plan – Mid North Coast Region
June 2008

1. The region

The Mid North Coast region includes the major centres of Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Taree. As at June 2007 the region had a population of 249,046 which grew by 6.1 per cent between June 2002 and June 2007¹. Main industries include: manufacturing; retail trade; health and community services; construction; education; tourism; and agriculture. Emerging industries include organic production and hydroponic vegetables, ICT industries and creative industries. There is also continuous growth in the tourism industry.

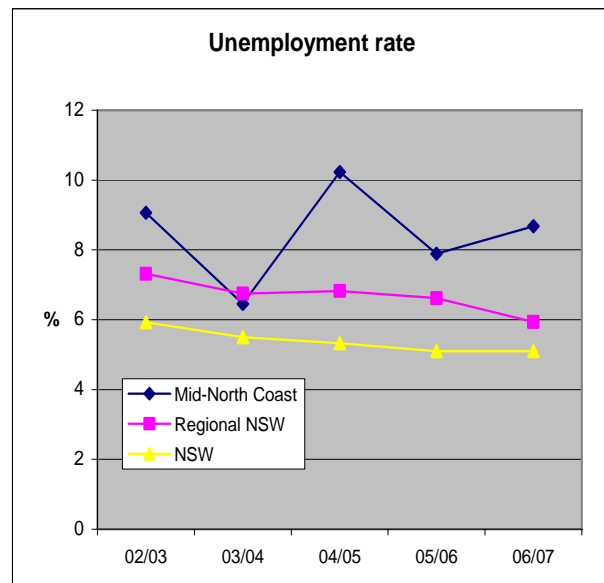
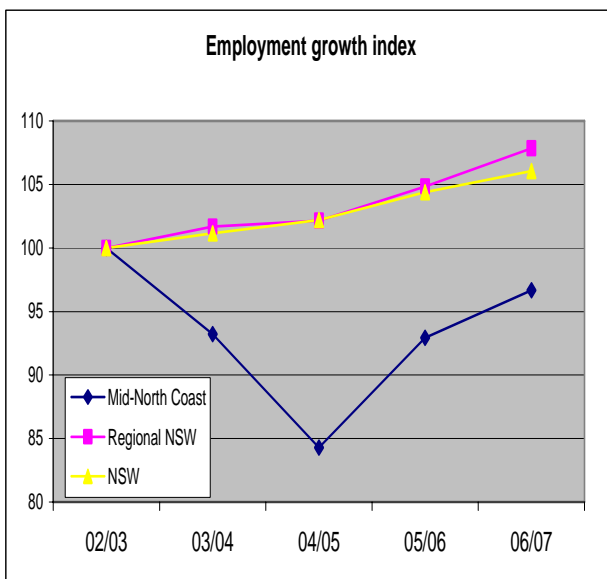
2. Regional opportunities and challenges

TYPE OF ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
Industry development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composite manufacturing (boatbuilding and plastics) • Value-adding forestry, agricultural, horticultural and seafood products • Aged and child care services • ICT industries • Creative industries • Exploration and development of minerals and petroleum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing operations under pressure from offshore competitors
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy generation • Development of safe “all-weather” ports along the coastline will promote greater investment opportunities for recreational, transport and commercial boating • Opportunities for development contributions to enable the provision of infrastructure necessary to respond to changing demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of infrastructure with business and population growth • Coastal development pressures • Balancing development contributions to ensure housing and employment lands affordability and delivering appropriate community infrastructure

¹ Source: ABS, Cat No. 3218.0, Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2006-07.

TYPE OF ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
Land use/Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of LEPs and the <i>Mid North Coast Regional Strategy</i> present opportunities to identify and develop new employment lands Each council in the region is reviewing and modernising its land use planning framework as part of the Standard LEP Planning reforms will improve operation of planning system by providing: streamlined approach to rezoning; transparent assessment of major proposals; faster assessment of routine developments; and improved accountability and affordability of development contributions Recent gazettal of the Rural Lands SEPP provides greater certainty about resolving rural land use conflict 	
Skills & Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOU between DSRD and TAFE to improve flexibility of training/skills development for industries and enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills shortages Ageing population High unemployment, relatively low income per capita, and disadvantaged communities in the region

3. Regional indicators and measures

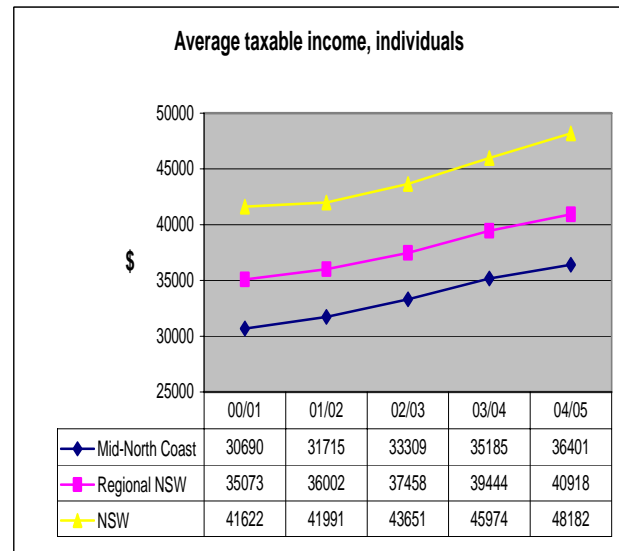
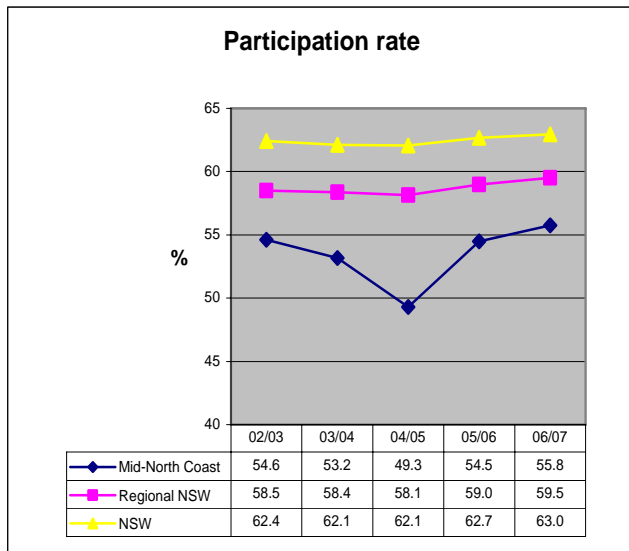


Total Employment, (000's)

	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07
Mid-North Coast	91	85	77	85	88
Regional NSW	1186	1206	1212	1243	1279
NSW	3118	3154	3187	3255	3307

Total Unemployment (000's)

	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07
Mid-North Coast	9.0	5.9	8.8	7.3	8.4
Regional NSW	93.6	87.2	88.7	88.2	80.7
NSW	196.6	183.6	179.3	175.0	177.8



Notes: (1) Data is based on ABS Labour Force regions. These regions normally approximate the DSRD regions, but in the case of the Mid North Coast region, the ABS data *includes the Clarence Valley*, while the DSRD region *excludes the Clarence Valley*. Graphs and tables in this section should therefore be read with caution. (2) Labour Force data for the financial year is based on the average of four quarters at August, November, February and May. (3) Taxable income for regions has been based on the postal area – statistical division concordance based on the 2006 Australian Standard Geographical Classifications. The concordance as at 2006 has been applied to previous years. As a result, changes in postal areas or additions and deletions of postal areas in previous years have not been considered. Sources: Labour Force data sources from ABS Cat No 6291.0.00.003 and unpublished ABS data. Taxable income data sourced from the Australian Tax Office at www.ato.gov.au

4. High priority and high impact strategies to address barriers to business investment

Strategy 1 Simplify government planning processes and improve access to employment land

The *Mid North Coast Regional Strategy* envisages that increases in the population on the Mid North Coast will demand a capacity for the creation of an additional 47,000 jobs. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of which will be needed to meet demands for housing and servicing of this population, with the remaining twenty-five per cent (25%) creating new industry and services to supply markets outside the region.

The minimum stock of additional employment lands needed in the next 25 years is estimated at 225 hectares spread across the Clarence; Coffs Coast; Hastings Macleay; and Manning Valley/Great Lakes subregions. Local Environment Plans (LEPs) need to ensure that sufficient lands are zoned as employment, and are available for such use. The Department of Planning (DOP) and local councils are the responsible agencies.

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Promote and implement DOP's *Mid North Coast Regional Strategy* including the development of the Mid North Coast Regional Development Board's Regional Economic Profile (REP).

- Conduct a series of investment tours of existing and proposed employment lands to establish local and metro investor interest. Involve local councils and their economic development officers, investors, real estate agents and finance providers.
- Where employment lands are identified, assist selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) to produce up-to-date local investment attraction marketing materials which explain the benefits of relocating from high cost metropolitan areas to the Mid North Coast.
- Further employment land studies where necessary, especially in relation to particular industry sector needs.

Impacts

- All initiatives are focussed on achieving the growth of a total of 47,000 new jobs as identified in the *Mid North Coast Regional Strategy*.
- Strategies will enhance availability of employment lands for potential investors, and underpin investment attraction by ensuring industrial land information is available and accessible.

Resources

- Councils have been provided with planning reform funding to resource the preparation of new LEPs.
- Initiatives supported by the Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) will be funded from the Department's existing regional development programs.
- The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will publish the 'North Coast Land Use Conflict Handbook' and distribute copies to local councils and planners. The handbook will assist local planners with the development of new LEPs and responses to key buffer and land use conflict outcomes contained in the *Mid North Coast Regional Strategy*.
- DPI will help identify important farmland through the *Mid North Coast Regional Strategy*.
- Ongoing work by the Department of Lands to identify development opportunities on Crown lands.

Strategy 2 Develop initiatives to assist the manufacturing sector with innovation to increase productivity and global competitiveness

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Develop and support the Manufacture Coffs Coast network (industry network of world class advanced manufacturers) and the Nambucca Vehicle Body Building Manufacturing Cluster.
- Facilitate development of other local manufacturing networks involving, where relevant, training providers and the delivery of business development workshops.
- Conduct at least two (2) Lean Manufacturing Awareness workshops in the region.
- Conduct manufacturers tours – targeting employer needs for skills – linked to the Regional Coordination Management Group's (RCMG) skills project.
- Conduct at least one Regional Innovation Advisory Service Seminar and Expo in the region.
- Investigate and facilitate the formation of innovation clusters based around existing businesses and organisations.
- Conduct at least two (2) export workshops with manufacturers.
- Formulate quick response strategies to sudden job losses in the manufacturing sector due to business or industry restructures/closures.

Impacts

- Currently there are 160 jobs in the Nambucca Vehicle Body Building Manufacturing Cluster. It is expected that this will expand to 400 jobs by 2009/10. The Manufacture Coffs Coast network has grown from 35 to 45 members in last two (2) years, representing approximately 500 jobs. The network is anticipating to grow and to represent around 700 jobs in 2008/09 and \$180 million turnover.

- Networking within a structured cluster environment provides opportunity for joint initiatives, mentoring and industry development programs aimed at building company growth.

Resources

- DSRD will provide support for cluster support programs and export seminars sourced from existing program funds.
- Other initiatives will involve contributions from other stakeholders.

Strategy 3 Pursue infrastructure for business needs (especially broadband) and infrastructure to support population growth (in particular aged care services)

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Investigate the development and facilitation of health and aged care clusters, incorporating strategies for attracting health and aged care businesses.
- Implement the Innovative Development of Excellent Aged-Care Services (IDEAS) project for the aged-care services sector.
- The Department of Lands is working with the retirement village industry to identify opportunities for development or redevelopment of regional Crown lands or underutilised or underperforming regional state-owned assets (e.g. showgrounds, bowling clubs, golf courses) for masterplanned options to develop aged care facilities and services.
- Conduct at least two (2) e-commerce seminars in the region.
- Facilitate the development of a strategically placed regional technology park - the Coffs Harbour Education Campus.
- Major infrastructure projects 2006/07 to 2015/16 as outlined in the *Mid North Coast Regional Strategy* to be pursued in the context of the *State Infrastructure Strategy*.

Impacts

- Improved workforce development management capacity in aged care services to support industry expansion in the region.
- The CHEC Technology Park will help underpin emerging e-commerce opportunities in the region.

Resources

- Funding for the CHEC Technology Park is being pursued from the Commonwealth Government.
- DSRD initiatives will be funded through existing regional development programs.
- Funding for the Pacific Highway and water infrastructure issues to be looked at in the context of the *State Infrastructure Strategy*.
- Ongoing work by the Department of Lands to identify opportunities on Crown lands for aged care facilities.

Strategy 4 Develop initiatives to assist investment facilitation in logistics, renewable energy, value-add to agriculture, tourism and creative industries

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- The Mid North Coast REP provides guidance for the development of a robust regional economy which capitalises on existing and emerging opportunities. The REP will be promoted as a resource for industry and an important input to government economic development plans.
- Support industry development opportunities recommended in the REP where appropriate (including development of industry clusters and logistic capacities).
- Continue support to grow and market food value-added industries, including organics.

Impacts

- Growth of food value-added industries is anticipated to create an extra 100 jobs within 2 years.
- Capture momentum in innovation, particularly in relation to longer term projects in alternative energy enterprises.
- The REP will help initiate the development of investment opportunities in selected industries.

Resources

- Appropriate private sector projects supported by DSRD through existing business programs and services.
- North Coast Institute of TAFE to increase its support for the food industry by delivering Certificate II and III Food Processing training to a range of regional producers.
- Seed funding for projects to be provided through DSRD regional programs.

Strategy 5 Develop initiatives to bring skills to the region and to retrain the existing workforce

The Mid North Coast is experiencing a shortage of skilled and qualified people in many occupations. The region has a lack of skills in: metal fabrication; building and construction; manufacturing; engineering; planning; aged and health care.

High Priority and High Impact Initiatives

- Implement the Collaborative Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between DSRD and the North Coast Institute of TAFE to improve flexibility of training delivery for industries and enterprises. The North Coast Institute of TAFE is implementing a number of initiatives, including:
 - Working with schools and local industry to deliver metals training at Nambucca as part of the new Trade school;
 - Partnership with the Nambucca Vehicle Body Manufacturing Cluster to deliver training including pre-employment skills training and Certificates II and III in automotive manufacturing (Bus, Truck and Trailer) for trainees and apprentices; and
 - Partnership with Manufacture Coffs Coast network.
- Work through the RCMG to undertake a skills project to support vocational education and training by building better links between schools, TAFE and industry, and focussing on skilling young people to address skills shortages.
- Work with DET (State Training Services) to identify and implement two (2) industry based Strategic Skills Program activities in the region.
- Proceed with the Nambucca Heads Trade School, focusing on metal, engineering and allied trades.
- Conduct a series of industry career visits involving local industries, local councils and career advisors.
- Support the Skills Expo targeting year 9 students to encourage careers in services and trades.
- The aged care services sector is a growth industry with significant skills shortages. Strategies to tackle these have been developed as part of the IDEAS project.
- The COAG Hunter and Mid-North Coast Indigenous Preparation Scheme project commences in 2008. One of the aims of the project is to identify local skills shortages and provide work experience and training to indigenous participants to address shortages.

Impacts

Lack of skilled labour results in:

- restricted growth for local businesses. e.g. companies in the Nambucca Vehicle Body Building Manufacturing Cluster have advised that they require more people with appropriate trade skills.
- local businesses/industry not maintaining operations in the region and/or off-shoring facilities.

Resources

- The Nambucca Heads Trade School has been approved by DET and is scheduled to commence training in 2008. In addition, a proposal for a School Skills Centre lodged with the Commonwealth Government is awaiting approval.
- Both the IDEAS and Indigenous Preparation Scheme projects are funded under the COAG Targeting Regional Skills Program and jointly managed between DET and DSRD. The North Coast Institute of TAFE is a partner in the IDEAS project.
- DPI will provide PROfarm courses to help land managers use their natural resources in a sustainable manner and adapt to climate change impacts. PROfarm courses will also be delivered to improve personal, financial and resource management skills especially in times of threat such as industry restructure and drought.

Strategy 6 Develop initiatives to attract potential investment in minerals and petroleum

The Mid North Coast region has potential for minerals however the area is relatively data poor and therefore remains under explored.

High priority and high impact initiatives

- During 2010-11 a helicopter-supported gravity survey is proposed that will cover the entire region.
- The acquisition of high resolution airborne magnetics and radiometrics is also proposed for a large part of north-eastern NSW during 2010-2011. The region is within the area proposed for acquisition.

Impact

- The new data and information are designed to attract both minerals and petroleum exploration investment into the region, support area selection and guide exploration strategies.

Resources

- The NSW Government has committed \$16.5 million to the New Frontiers exploration initiative across NSW over the next three years.
- This is expected to be supplemented by additional funding from industry and the Commonwealth Government.

For more information: regional@business.nsw.gov.au