GOAL 4 – A prosperous economy with services and infrastructure

The North Coast offers residents job opportunities across a diverse range of industries. Major investment in traditional sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing will remain important, however, healthcare, education, tourism and retail have great potential to drive employment growth (see Figure 20). This is particularly the case with the health sector, which will provide services for the ageing population. The draft Plan is focused on providing greater job opportunities in these growing service sectors, and giving the community better access to more health, education and tourism services.

The economy will continue to rely on a sufficient supply of employment land for investment, as well as freight and transport networks that provide efficient access to markets. The Gold Coast will need around 150,000 new jobs to support its population growth over the next 20 years and – with the upgrade of the Pacific Highway – the North Coast is expected to provide the necessary employment land to assist in underpinning this growth.

FIGURE 20: CHANGING EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY ON THE NORTH COAST

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics
Infrastructure delivery will be essential to support the growth of the North Coast. Growth has already been matched by increased health and education services, and investment in transport services and water and electricity infrastructure. Given the current infrastructure networks and planned upgrades, the North Coast is in a strong position to meet the needs of the growing and changing population. The NSW Government will support councils and infrastructure providers to identify appropriate sites and infrastructure, such as cemeteries and crematoria.

Utility providers are planning infrastructure at local and regional levels to provide reliable water security and electricity supply. Long term planning for a secure water supply should be based on integrated water cycle management planning on a subregional scale to maximise benefits from the interconnection of schemes, and to improve management and financial results. The $180 million Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour Regional Water Supply Scheme and the Northern Rivers Regional Bulk Water Supply Strategy are examples of this type of initiative.

The NSW Government will use the North Coast Housing and Land Monitor to guide infrastructure providers about the capacity and forecast capability of existing infrastructure and the need for any upgrades.

The draft Plan aims to:

- develop an action plan to expand nature-based and cultural tourism on the North Coast;
- prepare for the expansion of services, as necessary, at major hospitals in the region;
- apply planning controls that encourage and promote clusters of health and education-related activities, and plan for the transport services associated with the growth of these precincts;
- aid the creation of extra primary and secondary school places across the North Coast to support projected population growth;
- maintain an adequate supply of industrial and business-zoned land over the long term; and
- establish business parks that can support the growth of knowledge industries.

**DIRECTION 4.1 Expand the tourism sector on the North Coast**

Tourism on the North Coast is worth more than $3.4 billion annually and supports around one in three jobs in the region. The tourism industry will continue to make a significant contribution to jobs growth on the North Coast as the number of visitors to the region continues to increase.

Coastal harbour and river entrance assets on the North Coast are valued at around $1 billion and support tourism charters, commercial fishing and recreational boating. A program of repair, upgrade and/or replacement is being implemented through the NSW Government’s Coastal Infrastructure Program.

The NSW Government recognises that tourism can increase pressure on the environment and on small communities. The draft Plan provides a framework for sustainable tourism management. Future large-scale tourism facilities will be focused in the appropriately serviced prime tourism development areas of Tweed Heads/Kingscliff, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Ballina and Byron Bay. Medium to smaller-scale sustainable, nature-based and coastal tourism accommodation – outside these prime tourism development areas – will be located in towns such as Yamba, South West
Rocks, Old Bar, Nambucca and Bellingen. Accommodation should aim to be high-quality and showcase the natural environment.

Councils should provide zoning, floor space ratios and height requirements for the facilities, consistent with their location. This will support investment and provide the necessary infrastructure to accommodate a range of tourism opportunities.

**ACTION 4.1.1 Facilitate the nature-based, events and cultural tourism sectors on the North Coast**

The region will need to maintain and enhance the broad range of tourism experiences on offer; encourage investment in facilities for nature-based and cultural tourism; invigorate existing tourism assets, including conference facilities; and develop new assets.

Facilitating tourism through appropriate development controls and public transport will be at the core of growing the sector.

The NSW Government will:

- identify opportunities to expand visitation to regionally significant nature-based tourism places, such as Ellenborough Falls, Dorrigo National Park, Wollumbin-Mount Warning National Park, Iluka Nature Reserve and Yuraygir Coastal Walk;
- identify ways to develop the Casino to Murwillumbah rail corridor for environmentally friendly tourism and leisure activities, particularly cycling and walking;
- improve tourism-related transport services, including seasonal transport options such as holiday bus services and park-and-ride facilities;
- develop servicing plans for major annual festivals to encourage public transport use; and
- work with councils to provide flexible local planning controls for diverse cultural heritage tourism activities, including opportunities to engage with Aboriginal communities and their culture.

**Tourism on the North Coast**

In June 2014, the North Coast was ranked third in Australia for the number of overnight visitors and trip expenditure. Destination NSW estimates that over 11 million people visit the North Coast annually. The region supports both domestic and international tourism, including iconic destinations like Byron Bay which had 1.4 million visitors in the year to September 2014.

The *North Coast of NSW Destination Management Planning – June 2013* identifies the region’s coastal areas, beaches, nature and outdoor-based activities as unique attractions.

In 2014, around 8.8 million people visited national parks and reserves on the North Coast. Nature-based tourism is continuing to grow on the North Coast and there are opportunities to develop complementary land uses, infrastructure and services to support and build on these activities and cultural heritage attractions.

There is an opportunity to create a rail trail for cyclists and walkers along the Casino to Murwillumbah rail corridor. This will develop the region’s green/active and nature-based tourism base. This project can use existing infrastructure (subject to safety upgrades) to provide economic benefits through job creation, as well as support existing and emerging business ventures. The *Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Trail Study (2014)* estimated a minimum of around 88,300 visitors a year.

There will also be opportunities to build on the region’s ability to host major sporting events and festivals such as the Saltwater Freshwater Festival, Byron Bay Bluesfest, Ironman Port Macquarie and the FIA World Rally in Coffs Harbour.
Anatomy laboratory, Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour

NSW Health has a range of prevention measures in place that promote a healthy lifestyle and is looking at early intervention and integration of aged care services to reduce demand for hospital services. More emphasis will be given to keeping patients out of hospital by managing their health in community settings.

Health facilities across the North Coast need to be easily accessible by car and, where possible, by public transport. Adequate car parking and traffic management are important considerations when planning upgrades to health facilities. The NSW Government will prioritise health facilities as important destinations when planning future bus routes and networks.

**ACTION 4.2.1 Support health services precincts by attracting complementary uses in these precincts**

The NSW Government aims to identify opportunities to cluster pharmacy, allied health and specialised care services that can support the major referral hospitals, and make it easier to access health services. In addition to health services, other supporting land uses should be encouraged in these precincts, including accommodation options for health staff, patients and carers.

The NSW Government will work with councils to:
- identify land for health services precincts and infrastructure needs at Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Tweed Heads, Lismore and Taree; and
- introduce planning controls that encourage clusters of related activity such as higher education facilities; specialist and allied health infrastructure; research institutions; patient and carer accommodation; and housing choices for employees and patients.
Case study: Lismore Health Precinct

Lismore Base Hospital is an important health asset for the Far North Coast subregion. It is a centre for specialist medical advice and treatment for acute and complex health conditions, integrated community healthcare services and medical training. St Vincent’s Private Hospital, University Centre for Rural Health and Southern Cross University are all located near the Base Hospital.

Lismore City Council and the Northern NSW Local Health District are investigating the potential for housing and employment activity that is compatible with their major health infrastructure in the central business district. The Lismore City Health, Wellbeing and Medium Density Precinct Project currently under way will identify the best ways to modify zoning and design parameters to enable flexible housing density and amenity for residents and patients visiting health facilities in the Lismore CBD.

DIRECTION 4.3 Enhance education precincts

Education is the second-fastest growth sector on the North Coast and made the second-largest (7.3 per cent) contribution to gross regional product in 2013.20

A number of major universities have campuses in the region, including Charles Sturt University and the University of Newcastle at Port Macquarie; Southern Cross University at Coffs Harbour, Lismore and the Gold Coast (on the Queensland border with Tweed Shire); and the University of NSW at Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie.

Currently, more than 440,000 people on the North Coast have a tertiary education, an increase of 7 per cent in 10 years (see Figure 21).21 Demand for vocational and tertiary education is expected to continue as the region’s population increases.

The North Coast TAFE is one of the largest regional training providers in Australia and enrolls more than 45,000 students annually in nationally recognised courses and training.

The TAFE has plans for greater and more efficient use of current assets and the deployment of more mobile, multi-purpose and onsite classrooms. These facilities will be introduced across industry areas and into communities that have never had access to campuses, and for workplaces needing short-term learning services. To complement the change to more mobile learning, investments will be made in digital infrastructure to support online and self-service options and increase remote learning opportunities.

The NSW Government will prioritise vocational and tertiary educational facilities when planning future bus routes and networks.
ACTION 4.3.1 Facilitate planning for additional primary and secondary school places to meet the region’s growing needs

The Department of Education is preparing a long term strategic plan to 2031, as well as regional plans and school cluster plans to respond to changing demands in schools throughout the State.

By 2031, there are expected to be around 4,050 more primary school places and 1,720 more high school places in public schools on the North Coast. The projected growth in the number of school-aged children is likely to be accommodated in existing schools. The Department of Education will monitor changes in demand in all North Coast public schools over time and plan for additional school places, as required.

Private schools make an important contribution to primary and secondary education and will continue to do so throughout the North Coast.

The NSW Government will:

- continue to develop a revised service model and approach to asset planning; and
- monitor the rate and take-up of development in regional centres and new release areas to respond to increased school enrolments.

ACTION 4.3.2 Work with education providers and councils to create education precincts that support campuses

Education precincts have been identified for the regional cities and regional centres that will build on the strong links that exist between institutions and industry sectors to grow the economy and skilled local jobs. Opportunities will be provided for applied research and development jobs and innovative businesses to operate in the education precincts.

The region’s ageing health workforce highlights the need for training and development opportunities to maintain an adequate supply of skilled staff. Creating links between health services and education precincts could help in this respect. In Port Macquarie, the University of NSW, University of Newcastle and North Coast TAFE are establishing a Joint Health Education Facility to expand tertiary education opportunities in health care.

The NSW Government will:

- work with universities, North Coast TAFE and councils to plan for education-related land uses around educational institutions in Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Lismore and Tweed Heads; and
- introduce planning controls that encourage clusters of related activities such as research institutions, applied research and development organisations, and student accommodation.

DIRECTION 4.4 Provide well-located and serviced supplies of employment land to expand industry investment opportunities

The availability of industrial land throughout the region is an important component of a growing economy. Establishing an adequate supply of employment land will improve confidence in the economy, create job opportunities, encourage the establishment of new industries, and allow the expansion of existing operations.
Previous investment has unlocked strategically located and relatively affordable employment land that has provided opportunities for private sector investment, strengthened productivity benefits, and increased investor and business confidence. New employment areas will be needed in the long term to support the expansion of food processing, manufacturing, and freight and logistics operations throughout the region.

**ACTION 4.4.1 Provide an adequate supply of employment land aligned with demand**

The *North Coast Employment Lands Study* (2014) was undertaken to determine the factors influencing industry growth and employment change throughout the region, and to identify the trends that determine future industrial land needs. The study found that, overall, there is sufficient supply of employment land to accommodate projected employment growth on the North Coast for the next 20 years; however some locations have a limited surplus and will need further investigation (see Figure 22).

Where suitable employment land is not readily available, coordination across local government areas at a subregional level will support the delivery of the employment and economic development objectives of the draft Plan.

Local manufacturing will continue to generate the need for oversize and overmass trucks to transport metal fabrication, concrete girders and similar loads. Councils should incorporate planning for freight access when releasing new industrial areas, including applying Austroads’ *Guidelines for Planning and Assessment of Road Freight Access in Industrial Areas* (2014).

The NSW Government will:
- work with councils to provide adequate employment land to prevent potential restrictions to business investment.

![Figure 22: Existing and Proposed Employment Land in Urban Growth Areas (Hectares)](source: MacroPlan DiMasi North Coast Employment Land Review, 2015)
ACTION 4.4.2 Encourage well-located employment land with suitable buffers to minimise land use conflicts

Employment land needs to be protected from encroachment by incompatible development that is sensitive to the real or potential impacts of noise, smoke, dust, odour, vibration and light, and/or because it generates potential risks.

Due to their type, scale and nature, certain heavy industries – such as concrete batching plants – may need to be located away from some traditional mixed-use employment areas that have a greater mix of bulky goods and light industrial uses. Councils should do this through their local planning strategies.

Marine-based industry such as shipbuilding is an example of development that may need to be located outside traditional industrial areas. To help councils plan for marine-based industries, the Department of Planning and Environment has released the Marine-Based Industry Policy – Far North Coast and Mid North Coast (2015).

The NSW Government will:
- encourage councils to minimise potential for land use conflict by locating employment land in appropriate areas with suitable buffers, prevent sensitive uses encroaching on existing areas, and apply design guidelines in local planning policies.

DIRECTION 4.5 Grow the region’s commercial and business centres

The region’s settlements have naturally developed over time so that higher-order commercial and retail functions are located in Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads, while regional centres and towns continue to provide certain retail functions to their local areas. Further afield, the Gold Coast and Newcastle offer wider retail opportunities.

Within each settlement, commercial centres are a focus for activity and support residential and employment growth. Considerable investment in social, economic and transport infrastructure has been made in these areas. They contribute to the quality of life of residents, and create a sense of place and wellbeing for the community.

Knowledge-intensive industries are a potential growth sector in the region. The roll-out of the national broadband network will increase access to knowledge and customers. Demand is growing on the North Coast for more highly skilled workers in the knowledge-based economy. The Far North Coast has a high concentration of creative professionals, particularly in the fields of visual arts, design, literature, publishing, screen and digital content. Between 2001 and 2006, the creative industries were one of the Far North Coast’s top four growth industries.22
Technological advances have allowed knowledge industries to set up in agglomerated business parks. Demand is increasing for purpose-built business facilities in well-located and easily accessible areas that offer the benefits of agglomeration, corporate prestige, amenity, proximity to labour, and cost-effectiveness.

Councils should support the growth of knowledge industries by applying flexible planning controls and providing business park development opportunities. By having greater locational choice, knowledge industries can decide what best suits their needs, which will help improve productivity and access to a range of jobs for residents.

**ACTION 4.5.1 Plan for future retail and commercial needs**

It is important to support retail and business activity in existing commercial centres that have sufficient zoned and appropriately located land. Councils should regularly review their retail and commercial land supply and demand in areas experiencing population growth, to plan for sufficient zoned land.

Where it is not possible to expand or accommodate growth in existing centres, or where there is significant market demand, councils may need to consider new centres of an appropriate size and scale relative to their purpose, and the area to be served, to permit additional retail and commercial development. Proposals for new centres (including retail proposals) will need to demonstrate how they:

- respond to retail supply and demand;
- respond to innovations in the retail sector;
- maximise the use of existing infrastructure (including public transport and community facilities) commensurate with the scale of the proposal; and
- enhance the value of the public realm.

The net community benefit should be a factor when assessing these proposals.

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to focus retail activity in existing commercial centres, unless there is a demonstrated need for new centres, with positive social and economic benefits for the community.
Transport and freight infrastructure on the North Coast supports jobs; provides business with good access to South East Queensland, the Hunter, Sydney, and international markets; and allows residents, who enjoy coastal and rural lifestyles, to move around the region and to other metropolitan centres.

The region continues to benefit from access to important domestic and international airports and the upgrade of the Pacific Highway.

Freight movement, freight transport facilities, and warehousing and distribution centres are well represented on the North Coast. The Pacific Highway carries the second-highest level of freight of any road in Australia. In 2011, 5.8 million tonnes of freight travelled along the highway into the North Coast and more than 3.3 million tonnes travelled out of the region. Total freight on the Pacific Highway is forecast to increase by 83 per cent over the next 20 years to 29.1 million tonnes a year.23

The draft Plan aims to:
- limit development with direct access to the Pacific Highway to allow the free flow of traffic and retain the travel time savings and safety benefits from the upgrade;
- designate highway service centre locations close to bypassed towns to deliver economic benefits and to encourage motorists to take breaks;
- provide guidelines for locating freight facilities along the Pacific Highway to support the cost-effective and efficient movement of freight;
- undertake corridor studies across State roads to set a 20-year framework for managing transport demands, including freight transport; and
- zone land close to the Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Ballina and Gold Coast airports to allow for their continued development as aviation precincts.

**DIRECTION 5.1 Strengthen the Pacific Highway’s function as a key road corridor of State and national significance**

Since 1995, the Pacific Highway upgrade program has cut travel times between Newcastle and the Queensland border by almost 90 minutes for heavy vehicles and about 60 minutes for light vehicles (see Figure 23). Future Pacific Highway upgrades are expected to cut travel times by another hour or more while also increasing safety.

The NSW and Australian Governments have already invested $8.6 billion in upgrading the Pacific Highway. An estimated $6.4 billion will be spent completing the upgrade program, with $1.4 billion committed in 2015. This is one of Australia’s most significant investments in transport and freight infrastructure, and should be finished by the end of the decade.
Funding has been committed to complete the duplication of the highway between Newcastle and Woolgoolga, and between Ballina and the Queensland border, by late 2017. The remaining 155-kilometre section between Woolgoolga and Ballina is in the planning and pre-construction stage. The Coffs Harbour bypass is also moving ahead, with around $37 million expended to acquire land in the proposed corridor.

As additional sections of the Pacific Highway upgrade are completed, industries on the North Coast will have more opportunities to supply products to other markets, which will act as a catalyst for employment growth.

**ACTION 5.1.1 Protect the travel time and safety improvements from the upgrade program**

One of the many factors contributing to the time-savings on the Pacific Highway is the grade-separated access on motorway-class sections where the speed limit is generally 110 km/h. These sections optimise the safe and efficient movement of major regional and inter-regional traffic. In addition, strict traffic control, via grade-separated interchanges, delivers superior conditions for capacity, congestion, speed and safety. Local traffic can use alternative routes along service roads or the local arterial road networks.

Access to motorway-class sections of the highway will only be allowed via grade-separated interchanges. The NSW Government and councils will prevent additional direct ‘at grade’ access to motorway-class sections of the upgraded highway, as this will gradually erode the safety, travel time and economic benefits.

The NSW Government will:
- work with councils to limit development directly accessing the Pacific Highway; and
- consider the need to provide additional grade-separated interchanges along the Pacific Highway.

**ACTION 5.1.2 Designate highway service centres along the Pacific Highway**

There is an extensive rest stop network across major road corridors in NSW. Facilities provided at each rest stop vary and typically depend on the local environment and site characteristics. Highway service centres, one type of rest stop, encourage motorists to take breaks and therefore contribute to travel safety and efficiency.

The following sites have been identified as potential locations for Highway Service Centres along the Pacific Highway:
- Chinderah (at Chinderah Bay Road and Tweed Valley Way);
- Ballina (at Teven interchange);
- Maclean (at the interchange near Ferry Park);
- Woolgoolga (at the Arrawarra interchange);
- Nambucca Heads (at the Nambucca Heads interchange);
- Kempsey (at the South Kempsey interchange);
- Port Macquarie (at Oxley Highway); and
- Taree (at Old Bar Road).

These locations are close to bypassed towns, which will retain the economic benefits.

The NSW Government will:
- work with councils to appropriately locate service centres along the highway.

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**TABLE 5: VOLUME OF FREIGHT IMPORTED ALONG THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY IN 2011 (FROM QUEENSLAND AND GREATER TAREE) IN KILOTONNES PER YEAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>From South</th>
<th>From North</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Far North Coast subregion</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>2,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid North Coast subregion</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>1,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower North Coast subregion</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 6: VOLUME OF FREIGHT EXPORTED ALONG THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY IN 2011 (FROM QUEENSLAND AND GREATER TAREE) IN KILOTONNES PER YEAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>To the South</th>
<th>To the North</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Far North Coast subregion</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>1,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid North Coast subregion</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower North Coast subregion</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1,120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ACTION 5.1.3 Identify freight transport facilities along the Pacific Highway**

Freight transport facilities, warehousing and distribution centres have locational needs that depend on efficient supply chains, access to customers, land availability and access to main roads. The upgrade of the Pacific Highway has highlighted the need for a coordinated regional approach to locating freight facilities along this nationally important corridor. Freight Transport Facilities Locational Guidelines (see below) have been developed to guide the development of freight facilities along the Pacific Highway.

The NSW Government will:

- encourage councils to identify strategic sites for freight transport facilities that link to existing and future transport-related industry.

**DIRECTION 5.2 Expand the region’s aviation services**

Airports on the North Coast are important gateways for business, tourism and personal travel, as well as for high-value airfreight. In 2014, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Ballina Byron Gateway airports handled more than 850,000 passenger movements with Sydney Airport – placing them in the top five busiest regional NSW routes (see Figure 24).

Gold Coast Airport is an international gateway with direct flights to New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and China. The draft Plan seeks to sustainably manage an increase in services at the region’s airports, while providing opportunities for aviation-related business growth by activating aviation precincts.

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### Freight Transport Facilities Locational Guidelines

Development needs to be consistent with the *Draft North Coast Regional Plan* and relevant Section 117 Directions and State Environmental Planning Policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to the site, to and from the Pacific Highway, should have interchange capability for heavy vehicles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The site is to be on relatively flat land to minimise cut and fill.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The site should avoid physically constrained land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The site should avoid potential areas of high environmental value, significant farmland and natural resources mapped in the draft Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETTLEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The site should not adjoin urban areas or sensitive land uses, such as residential development, or be located where land use conflict may limit future expansion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure needed to service the land should be physically and financially feasible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expanding regional airports will enhance the region’s reputation as a major tourism destination, and help to boost economic growth. Gold Coast, Ballina Byron Gateway, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie airports need to be able to expand to meet demand, as well as the Civil Aviation Safety Authority’s additional requirements for increasing services, passenger numbers and larger aircraft.

These four airports are near residential and other urban uses which mean there are potential noise and traffic issues, and land use conflicts from the possible expansion or development of airport services. It will be important that councils consider ways to protect the expansion of services at these airports from inappropriate surrounding development.

**ACTION 5.2.1 Develop aviation precincts with compatible and complementary uses**

In addition to Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Ballina Byron Gateway and Gold Coast airports, a number of other airports service the North Coast, including those at Taree, Kempsey, Grafton, Casino and Lismore. These airports have limited commercial flights and could provide other aviation-related services. Some councils have masterplans to capitalise on opportunities to diversify and maximise the potential of value-adding industries close to these airports.

The operational aspects of airports need to be protected to provide efficient access for passengers and freight, and to provide land for aviation-related activities. The development of retail and bulky goods uses should be avoided in these areas.

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to encourage the development of aviation precincts with compatible and complementary industry and business uses.
DIRECTION 5.3 Enhance the connectivity of the region’s road and rail freight and transport services

In addition to the Pacific Highway, transport in the region is focused on both the north-south connections provided by the Summerland Way, Mount Lindesay Road and the North Coast Rail Line to South East Queensland and the Hunter; and the east-west connections to the New England North West via the Oxley Highway, Gwydir Highway, Bruxner Highway and Waterfall Way.

The regional rail and coach network provides important freight and passenger transport links with Sydney and Brisbane. Enhancements are being made to infrastructure to increase the freight carried via rail, expand capacity, remove pinch points and modernise the freight network. This will provide opportunities for intermodal and rail freight terminals to support the region’s manufacturing and agricultural sectors.

Case study: Casino Meat Production and Cross-border Connections

The Northern Co-operative Meat Company Ltd has been based in Casino for 79 years, employs more than 1,000 local people and contributes $55 million in wages annually to Richmond Valley. It operates an international export and domestic service abattoir and boning complex, which produces more than 49 million kilograms of meat and meat products each year.

Up to 10, twenty-foot equivalent unit containers are transported daily from Casino to the Port of Brisbane for export. The meatworks draw cattle from the New England North West region of NSW, and from the Darling Downs in Queensland. Some 80 per cent of pigs processed at the abattoir are sourced from South East Queensland.

The NSW Freight and Ports Strategy identified transport restrictions as a challenge for industries on the Far North Coast. These affect both raw materials being transported into the area and finished products transported out of the area, particularly to the Brisbane market and port. Due to terrain constraints, the number of east-west links between the North Coast, the New England Tablelands and the Darling Downs is limited.

The proposed Casino rail freight terminal may help cut the number of long-haul heavy vehicle trips and allow for around 250,000 tonnes of additional rail freight. It will provide a facility that can act as a base for manufacturing, processing and distribution industries, with excellent transport connections for domestic and international markets.

Case study: Ballina Byron Gateway Airport and Port Macquarie Airport Aviation Precincts

The Ballina Byron Gateway Airport is adjacent to the Southern Cross Industrial Estate and close to the Pacific Highway and Ballina CBD, making it well-located for an aviation precinct.

A masterplan is being developed to expand and upgrade the airport’s facilities, including a new passenger terminal and access road. It will also focus on developing an aviation precinct. Ballina Shire Council has been identifying opportunities for industrial activity in the area.

Port Macquarie Airport is close to the Pacific Highway and the city’s CBD. A masterplan for an airport precinct business park recommends upgrading the Hastings River Drive-Boundary Street intersection in the short to medium term to cater for increased traffic from the airport and the precinct. More traffic, transport and land use planning will be needed to identify the scope of road infrastructure improvements.
Noise from freight movements on road and rail is a sensitive issue for communities close to freight corridors. The freight network needs to be buffered from encroaching development, to allow freight activity to continue outside peak hours. While the industry has a role in minimising the impacts of freight operations, buffers can help reduce noise problems for communities.

Councils will identify buffer measures in local environmental plans to minimise the impact of development on the efficient functioning of the freight industry.

**ACTION 5.3.1 Identify connectivity improvements for key State roads on the North Coast**

Transport for NSW, in conjunction with Roads and Maritime Services, is preparing corridor strategies for State roads in NSW to consistently manage and plan the State road network. The Department of Planning and Environment will work with Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services to develop these strategies for all State roads on the North Coast.

Corridor strategies will set a vision and objectives; respond to current and future challenges and issues; and set short, medium and long term priorities and actions to manage the corridors. The strategies set a 20-year framework to align road safety, traffic efficiency and asset management with policy on freight access.

The NSW Government will:
- continue to deliver corridor strategies for all State roads on the North Coast.

**ACTION 5.3.2 Provide improved transport services between larger settlements and regional communities**

The Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers Regional Transport Plans recognise the importance of investing in public transport infrastructure and services to improve connections with urban areas and to help reduce social disadvantage. Detailed plans to implement and deliver these strategies are being developed.

Transport for NSW will work with bus operators to develop routes and timetables to improve bus services in the region’s major centres and their connections with regional communities. It will also work with local transport operators and councils to develop programs that focus on serving the unique characteristics of each town.

Flexible transport services are likely to be more useful in smaller towns and villages. Transport for NSW will investigate what works best for each area and will liaise with local transport operators and providers to implement these services.

The NSW Government will:
- investigate opportunities to improve bus operations in the region’s regional cities and regional centres, and their connections with regional communities in towns and villages; and
- work with local transport operators and community transport providers to investigate a range of delivery models for flexible transport, to determine what works best for different areas.

**ACTION 5.3.3 Identify and protect future rail corridors on the North Coast**

The Australian Government is investigating opportunities for a high-speed rail network to reduce travel time between capital cities along the east coast. This may generate new opportunities for economic development in the region.

Another potential rail corridor for the longer term is located south of the Gold Coast along the coastal corridor. This aligns with the Queensland Government’s Connecting SEQ 2031 An Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland (2011), which has identified an extension of the Brisbane heavy rail line to the Gold Coast Airport.

The NSW Government will:
- work with other governments to plan for future rail corridors on the North Coast.