

Policy Directions Paper

Presenting policy directions
for rural lands in Eurobodalla

July 2015



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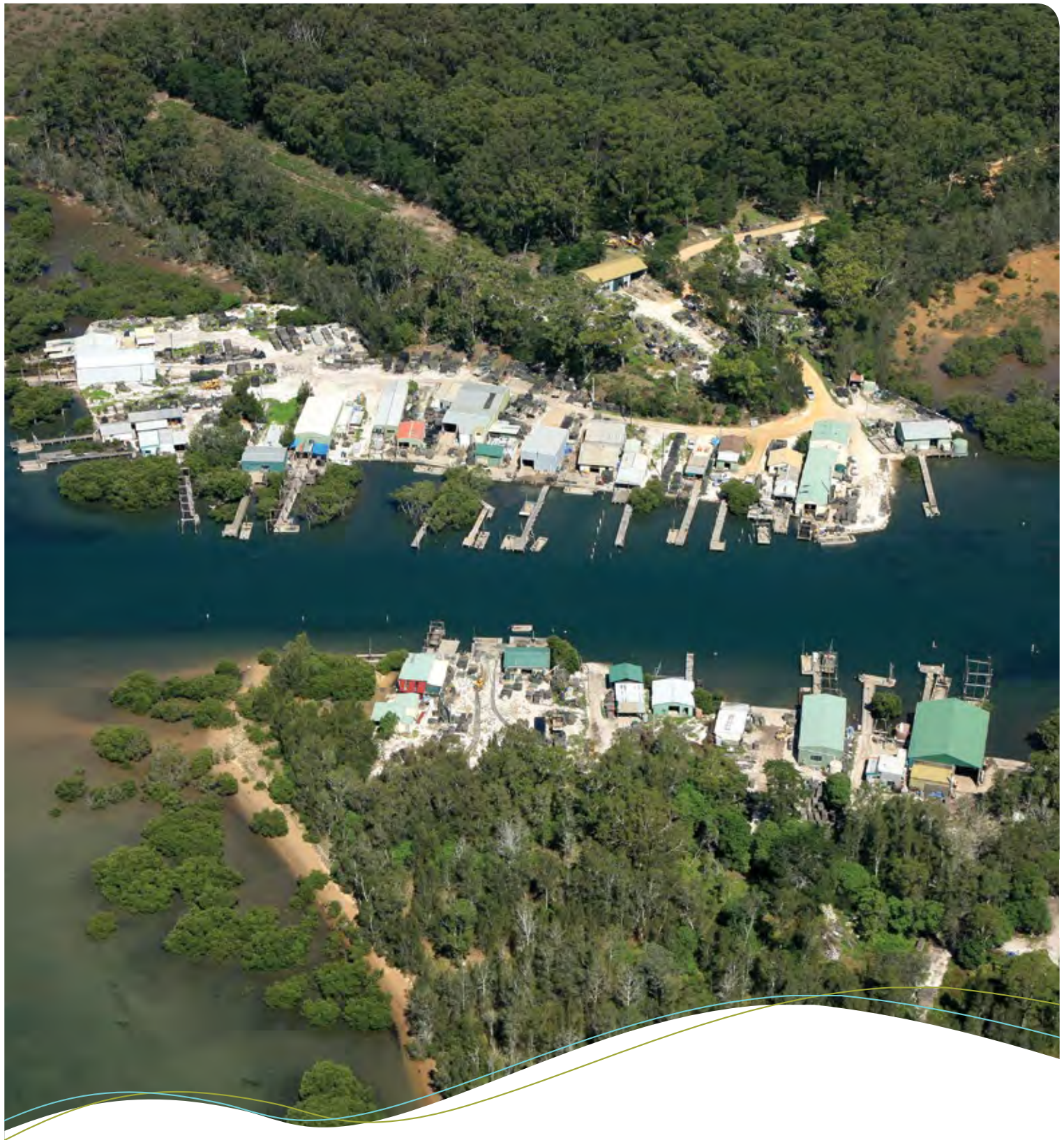
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Supporting Documents

This Policy Directions Paper is supported by two related documents:

[Policy Directions Workshops - Suggestions and Responses](#) – Outlines all of the suggestions for policy directions made at the Policy Directions Workshops and how the draft policy directions in this paper address those suggestions.

[Vision Statement for Eurobodalla's Rural Lands](#) – Presents a preferred vision statement for rural lands in Eurobodalla, developed by Council and the Rural Lands Steering Committee.



Policy Directions Paper

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Background

Eurobodalla Shire Council, with the assistance of a Steering Committee of rural land owners and representatives of key State Government Agencies has been working on the development of a Rural Lands Strategy for Eurobodalla.

The purpose of a Rural Lands Strategy is to set a clear vision and policy framework for the future of the Shire's rural areas. It will recommend new planning guidelines for rural land use and development.

Why develop a Rural Lands Strategy?

It is important that Council's strategic planning for the Shire is reviewed from time to time so that changing circumstances and new issues can be addressed. In addition, as a result of concerns raised during the development of the Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan 2012, 46.5% of private rural land was deferred from the LEP. In agreeing to defer these lands, the then Minister for Planning stated that the outcomes of the Rural Lands Strategy would be used to resolve the zoning of the deferred lands and other relevant planning provisions, such as environmental overlays.

What has happened so far?

The development of the Rural Lands Strategy commenced in August 2012 with the establishment of the Rural Lands Strategy Steering Committee. The role of the Committee is to assist with the preparation of the Strategy by providing guidance, input and advice to Council.

The first major stage of the project was the preparation and exhibition of a Rural Lands Issues Paper in June/July 2013. Council received 173 submissions from land owners and other interested persons on the Issues Paper.

The second major stage of the project was the development of a Rural Opportunities and Constraints Study undertaken by consultants RMCG. This Study included mapping of rural land and high conservation value vegetation in the Shire, all of which was made publicly available in April 2014. Almost 100 land owners met with Council staff to view and discuss the mapping. A process was also established with the Office of Environment and Heritage to facilitate additional validation of the vegetation mapping at the request of property owners.

This Policy Directions Paper is an element of the third major stage of the project, which commenced in June/July 2014 when 10 policy directions workshops were held with approximately 100 rural land owners and other community representatives.

Building upon the suggestions and recommendations from the policy directions workshops, a draft Policy Directions Paper was developed by Council with the assistance of the Rural Lands Steering Committee. The draft Paper was then exhibited for broader community input. See page 7 of this paper for a summary of community engagement outcomes, which will be used along with this final Policy Direction Paper to inform the development of a Rural Lands Strategy.



Introduction

This Paper presents policy directions to guide the development of a Rural Lands Strategy for the Eurobodalla Shire.

What are policy directions?

A policy direction is an overarching statement used to guide the development of strategies and actions.

How have the policy directions been developed?

The policy directions in this Paper are based on an understanding of the evidence developed during the previous stages of the Rural Lands Strategy project and consideration of community views. In particular, the policy directions are informed by:

- The Rural Lands Issues Paper;
- The Rural Opportunities and Constraints (ROC) Report;
- The agricultural and environmental mapping associated with the ROC Report; and
- The Overview of Proceedings of the Policy Directions Workshops.

To see how the policy directions in this Paper respond to the suggestions made at the Policy Directions Workshops, please refer to the document **Policy Directions Workshops - Suggestions and Responses**.

What do the policy directions address?

The policy directions address the following themes:

1. Rural Production
2. Legislation and Policy
3. Rural Economic Development
4. Rural Tourism
5. Natural Resources
6. Environmental Hazards and Values
7. Rural Residential Development

Each policy direction needs to be read in conjunction with the others, not in isolation, as they work together to form a suite of policy directions for rural lands in Eurobodalla.

The policy directions are structured as follows:

Intent – Outlining the aim of the policy direction;

Application – Identifying ways the policy direction can be implemented; and

Rationale – Providing some background and justification for the policy direction.

Community Engagement

There has been significant community involvement in the development of the Rural Lands Strategy so far, beginning with submissions made by land owners to the draft Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan in 2009 and 2011. In response to many of these submissions, some rural land was deferred from the Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan 2012 and the Rural Lands Strategy process commenced to resolve the planning provisions for the deferred lands.

When a Rural Lands Issues Paper was placed on public exhibition in 2013, Council received 173 submissions from land owners and other interested community members. Following a review of the submissions, the Rural Lands Steering Committee identified a number of matters that needed further consideration in the development of the Strategy.

Following the release of the Rural Opportunities Constraints Report and Maps in April 2014 over 100 land owners contacted Council to discuss how the mapping related to their land. As a result, Council has been working with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to update the vegetation mapping and implement a regular review process.

Approximately 60 land owners attended Policy Directions Workshops in June-July 2014. All of the suggestions and recommendations from the workshops were collated and considered in the preparation of the draft Policy Directions Paper which was then placed on public exhibition.

61 submissions were received to the exhibition of the draft Policy Directions Paper during April and May 2015. All of the submissions have been provided to the Rural Lands Steering Committee, Councillors and the consultant preparing the Rural Lands Strategy.

What happens next?

Work on the final stage of the Rural Lands Strategy, being the development of a draft Strategy for public exhibition, is now underway.

All of the submissions and other feedback received by Council and the Rural Lands Steering Committee throughout the project, and including the submissions to the earlier exhibition of the Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan in 2009 and 2011, will be taken into consideration in the drafting of the Strategy.

The draft Strategy will be developed having regard to all of the evidence gathered, particularly data that has been validated, the matters raised in submissions and relevant government policies, and will make recommendations on a range of matters including:

- the zoning of rural land;
- any changes to land use permissibility, minimum lot sizes and dwelling entitlement provisions;
- the nature and location of any mapping overlays;
- rural economic development strategies, including for rural tourism; and
- best practice environmental management in a rural context.

The Strategy will include mapping of relevant planning provisions, such as zoning and minimum lot size, to inform a future amendment to the Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan 2012.

Land owners and other interested community members will have an opportunity to review a draft Rural Lands Strategy and provide feedback on the draft recommendations before a final strategy is adopted by Council.

Policy Direction 1: **Encourage primary production**



Intent:

The intent of this policy direction is to ensure existing and future primary production on rural lands is facilitated and encouraged through the planning framework.

Application:

- Apply the RU1 Primary Production and RU4 Primary Production Small Lots zones to rural land (including the deferred lands) that is or has the potential to be used for a variety of agricultural activities;
- Establish appropriate minimum lot sizes for rural land that provide for a mix of farm types and sizes and support a range of rural activities without compromising the existing or potential use of productive agricultural lands;
- Provide opportunities for rural dwellings in appropriate locations, where a dwelling is required to support rural activities and will have minimal impacts on services, infrastructure and the existing or potential use of productive agricultural lands; and
- Facilitate the diversification of rural activities and manage existing and potential land use conflicts.

Rationale:

The most productive rural land in Eurobodalla is shown on the Agricultural Land Map (in the Rural Opportunities and Constraints Report) as Class 1 to 4 Agricultural Land. Where the productive land is in larger rural holdings, the RU1 Primary Production zone is the most appropriate rural zone to apply. Where the land is in smaller holdings, the RU4 Primary Production Small Lots zone is the most appropriate alternative zone. The use of these zones sends the right message that the land can be used for a range of rural activities. See Box 1 for an overview of the general purpose of the RU1 and RU4 zones outlined in the Department of Planning and Environment's Practice Note PN 11-002.

The RU3 Forestry zone applies to State Forests and the RU5 Village zone applies to rural villages.

It should be noted that Council resolved on 22 July 2014 to not use the E3 Environmental Management zone for

rural lands in Eurobodalla on the basis of significant community opposition to the E3 zone and as a review of the E zones by the Minister for Planning was underway.

Subdivision of land in or adjoining rural areas can have significant adverse impacts on rural activities. Planning rules for subdivision should provide an appropriate balance between facilitating change and growth in rural activities and avoiding fragmentation that may result in a loss of land for primary production or an increase in land use conflicts. In considering the application of subdivision and other controls, Council must be consistent with the principles outlined in State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008 (See Box 2).

Dwelling entitlements on land zoned RU1 (or the equivalent zones under the Rural LEP 1987) are generally limited to land defined as an existing holding or parcel. Where there is a dwelling entitlement, current rules also permit dual occupancies and secondary dwellings (granny flats), providing housing opportunities for farm workers or family members to support farm growth or succession planning. Community and industry representatives have expressed strong views regarding the provision of greater potential for the creation of dwelling entitlements within rural lands and that existing entitlements not be removed. In developing the Rural Lands Strategy, a framework for alternative approaches to addressing dwelling entitlement in rural areas will be developed, having regard to the principles outlined in Box 2.

On land zoned RU4, a dwelling is permissible with consent. In defining areas to be zoned RU4, consideration should be given to the number of new dwellings that may be able to be developed in the area and the impact of those dwellings on the local and regional road infrastructure and the potential for land use conflicts to arise with existing and potential adjoining primary production.

Land use permissibility in the RU1 and RU4 zones should be reviewed to ensure maximum flexibility in rural land uses, as is appropriate having regard to the scale and impact of the activity on the primary purpose of the land for primary production.



Box 1:

Overview of the general purpose of the RU1 and RU4 zones

Department of Planning and Environment Practice Note PN 11-002

RU1 Primary Production Zone

This zone covers land used for most kinds of commercial primary industry production, including extensive agriculture, intensive livestock and intensive plant agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, mining and extractive industries. The zone is aimed at utilising the natural resource base in a sustainable manner.

The zone is not a default zone for non urban land. The zone is allocated to land where the principal function is primary production. In 2011, 'intensive livestock agriculture' and 'intensive plant agriculture' were added to the zone Direction to ensure these uses are included in the Land Use Table as either permitted with or without consent.

RU4 Primary Production Small Lots Zone

This zone (previously named Rural Small Holdings) is for land which is to be used for commercial primary industry production, including emerging primary industries and agricultural uses that operate on smaller rural holdings.

In 2011, the name of the zone was changed to clarify that it is a rural zone for agricultural uses, not a pseudo-residential zone. The objectives of the zone have been changed to encourage employment opportunities in relation to primary production on small lots and to minimise fragmentation and alienation of resource lands important for food security.

The changed zone name, modified core zone objectives and additional mandated permissible uses ('intensive plant agriculture' and 'plant nursery') better reflect the intent of the zone – being an agricultural industry/food production focus and not a rural residential lifestyle zone.



Box 2:

Rural Planning and Subdivision Principles

State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008

The Rural Planning Principles are as follows:

- (a) the promotion and protection of opportunities for current and potential productive and sustainable economic activities in rural areas,
- (b) recognition of the importance of rural lands and agriculture and the changing nature of agriculture and of trends, demands and issues in agriculture in the area, region or State,
- (c) recognition of the significance of rural land uses to the State and rural communities, including the social and economic benefits of rural land use and development,
- (d) in planning for rural lands, to balance the social, economic and environmental interests of the community,
- (e) the identification and protection of natural resources, having regard to maintaining biodiversity, the protection of native vegetation, the importance of water resources and avoiding constrained land,
- (f) the provision of opportunities for rural lifestyle, settlement and housing that contribute to the social and economic welfare of rural communities,
- (g) the consideration of impacts on services and infrastructure and appropriate location when providing for rural housing,
- (h) ensuring consistency with any applicable regional strategy of the Department of Planning or any applicable local strategy endorsed by the Director-General.

The Rural Subdivision Principles are as follows:

- (a) the minimisation of rural land fragmentation,
- (b) the minimisation of rural land use conflicts, particularly between residential land uses and other rural land uses,
- (c) the consideration of the nature of existing agricultural holdings and the existing and planned future supply of rural residential land when considering lot sizes for rural lands,
- (d) the consideration of the natural and physical constraints and opportunities of land,
- (e) ensuring that planning for dwelling opportunities takes account of those constraints.



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a large green field is partially covered by a dense forest of trees. A winding asphalt road runs diagonally across the middle of the image. To the left of the road, there is a small, light-colored building with a steeple, possibly a church, and a sandy area next to it. To the right of the road, there is a residential area with several houses and buildings. The background shows more green fields and a small pond.

Policy Direction 2:

Cut red tape

Intent:

The intent of this policy direction is to recognise the need to assist rural production by simplifying legislative rules and requirements as they apply to rural land in Eurobodalla.

Application:

- Ensure planning controls minimise bureaucratic processes where appropriate, saving time and cost for land owners;
- Ensure planning controls are legible, transparent and, where possible, written in plain English, or alternatively supported by plain English fact sheets;
- Ensure planning controls are located in the most appropriate planning instrument to ensure simplicity and transparency;
- Zone all rural land under one local environmental plan in accordance with the Department of Planning and Environment's Standard Instrument for LEPS;
- Split zoning to be applied where appropriate to recognise different land uses or landscapes; and
- Council and the community to advocate for change through reviews of relevant legislation, plans and policies.

Rationale:

Legislative rules and requirements can be complex, particularly where a number of different Acts, policies and planning instruments apply. Such complexity can lead to a real or perceived lack of flexibility and a sense of over-regulation. Legislative rules can also be complex because they are written using legal language. This is the case for planning instruments such as State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) and Local Environmental Plans (LEPs). In addition, an LEP must be

written in the format of the State Government's Standard Instrument for LEPS.

Local rules such as Development Control Plans (DCPs) should be written in simple, plain English to provide for a legible and transparent planning system. For other legal documents, consideration should be given to developing plain English fact sheets to help explain the relevant provisions.

The current planning rules and requirements in Eurobodalla are complex by virtue of the deferral of some lands from the Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan 2012 (46.5% of private rural land in Eurobodalla was deferred from ELEP 2012). This has resulted in two Local Environmental Plans applying to rural land in Eurobodalla. One of the key outcomes of the Rural Lands Strategy will be to achieve zoning of all rural land under one local environmental plan.

Split zoning, being the application of more than one zone on a single property, should continue to be used, where appropriate, to recognise different land uses or landscapes, such as important wetlands. In developing the Rural Lands Strategy, consideration needs to be given to the circumstances in which split zoning is appropriate and the alternative approaches to split zoning where it is not considered appropriate.

From time to time, various Federal and State Government legislation, plans and policies are reviewed with opportunity for community input. Whenever the opportunity arises, Council and the community should participate in these reviews to identify barriers to rural development and advocate for appropriate changes. Simplification of, and greater flexibility within the various Acts, regulations and policies that apply to rural land may assist in encouraging growth in the rural sector in Eurobodalla and elsewhere.





Policy Direction 3:

Support economic development

Intent:

The intent of this policy direction is to facilitate a productive and economically sustainable long-term future for rural lands in Eurobodalla.

Application:

- Promote an “open for agri-business” culture in Eurobodalla to support local food and fibre production;
- Support innovative and diverse farming enterprises and activities;
- Encourage and support improvements in local rural skills, practices and marketing methods; and
- Optimise the use of existing public infrastructure and efficiently plan for additional infrastructure to support rural activities.

Rationale:

Establishing a positive and pro-active approach to encouraging appropriate economic development in Eurobodalla's rural areas will create an ‘open for agri-business’ culture. It is about working together to get the most out of the available rural resources in a sustainable way and to increase the profile of and demand for local produce in local, regional and larger markets.

There is already a diverse range of farming activities in Eurobodalla, from dairying and grazing to oyster growing, a range of cropping and horticulture activities, bee keeping and horse breeding. However, there is significant potential and opportunity for more diversity and innovation that Council can support through economic

development strategies. See Box 3 for some examples of diversification opportunities in Eurobodalla.

Skill retention and development is primarily a matter for the State Government, education providers, industry peak bodies and land owners through education policies and initiatives and on-farm job opportunities. Council can support others in this area by continuing to hold workshops with rural land owners on business development and environmental management matters.

Water, transport and telecommunications infrastructure is important for the growth of rural activities in Eurobodalla. There are a range of stakeholders responsible for providing, maintaining and upgrading this essential infrastructure. Where Council is not the authority with direct responsibility, Council can support land owners by lobbying for necessary improvements. In particular, lobbying for improvements to the major highways that traverse the Eurobodalla Shire to enable B double access will have significant positive benefits for agriculture and the economy more broadly through reducing the currently high costs of freight.

As the responsible authority for the maintenance and upgrading of rural roads, Council's program for this work is constrained by a significant annual funding gap and a backlog of planned works. It is critical that land use planning decisions consider the short and long-term impacts on the capacity of the road network and the costs of any required improvements (including upgrading, maintenance and renewal). Optimising the use of existing infrastructure, particularly where it is underutilised, such as existing sealed roads, will reduce the long-term costs to the community.

Box 3:

Examples of rural diversification opportunities

Aquaculture industry diversification – Investigate land-based aquaculture

There may be opportunities for growth in land-based aquaculture in suitable locations and where there is good access to hatchery facilities. There has to date been limited investigation into the opportunities for land-based aquaculture in Eurobodalla. Council could work with the NSW Government and the aquaculture industry to investigate opportunities for land-based aquaculture in Eurobodalla.

Equine industry diversification – Support development of an Industry Growth Strategy

The Rural Opportunities and Constraints Report discussed the equine industry in Eurobodalla and found that further analysis is required to identify the competitive advantages of the local area and the infrastructure required to support the industry.

The Equine Industry Scoping Report by RDA Far South Coast identifies the need for further information to develop an industry growth strategy. The RDA has established a working group of key industry stakeholders to guide this process.

Council can support this process in a number of ways, including providing information and advice where required to assist the working group and by reviewing zoning and land use provisions to ensure the range of equine related industries and activities are permissible with or without consent as appropriate.

Council resolved at the Ordinary Meeting held on 22 July 2014 to develop a business case and concept plan for the development of a regional equine facility. This has now been provided to the State Government for consideration.



Policy Direction 4:

Promote and grow rural tourism

Intent:

The intent of this policy direction is to encourage and support rural tourism activities, including accommodation, in appropriate locations having regard to agricultural, environmental and scenic values.

Application:

- Ensure development in rural areas has minimal impacts on any environmental, agricultural and scenic values that support rural tourism;
- Include rural-based tourism within broader tourism planning and promotional activities;
- Encourage rural-based tourism as a value-adding opportunity for primary producers and as an alternative land use opportunity where there will be minimal impacts on the existing or potential use of productive agricultural lands; and
- Include criteria for assessing rural-based tourism proposals in an appropriate planning instrument.

Rationale:

Eurobodalla has a number of environmental, agricultural and scenic qualities that attract people to live in and visit the Shire. The historic villages of Central Tilba, Tilba Tilba, Bodalla and Nelligen are prime examples. More broadly, elements of the coastal landscape, the farmland and the hinterland are all reasons why people choose to live and visit the Eurobodalla. To ensure these tourism attractors are retained, development in rural areas should have regard to the impact on important environmental and agricultural areas and scenic landscapes.

Rural-based tourism can take many forms and can include tourism attractions as well as accommodation. Types of

rural tourism attractions include the rural villages, heritage areas, scenic rural landscapes, trails through natural areas, horse-riding activities, bird watching activities, local food experiences and the like. Types of rural tourism accommodations include bed and breakfast establishments, farm-stay accommodation, rural cabins, holiday homes, village accommodation, eco-tourism accommodation or camping grounds.

ELEP 2012 permits all of the above types of rural tourism attractions and accommodations, with consent, in the RU1 and RU4 zones.

However, the Rural Opportunities and Constraints Report highlighted a lack of relevant research and information regarding the demand for specific types of rural tourism attractions or accommodation, and this may be a barrier for some landowners in developing proposals. Therefore, it is important for existing tourism planning and promotional activities to include a focus on rural-based tourism opportunities.

In encouraging growth in rural-based tourism, it is important to ensure that any such growth does not compromise the use of productive agricultural land for agricultural activities, either by replacing agriculture with tourism, or by causing land use conflicts. Rural-based tourism on existing farms should be seen as a value-adding opportunity for the land owner.

The Rural Opportunities and Constraints report also suggested criteria for identifying areas that may be suitable for rural-based tourism. Such criteria (see Box 4) should be considered for inclusion in an appropriate planning instrument.

Box 4:

Criteria for identifying areas suitable for rural-based tourism

Development of rural-based tourism should be assessed having regard to the following criteria:

- Avoid the most productive rural land, except where the tourism activity is value adding to existing agriculture and will not impact the future use of adjoining land for agriculture.
- Avoid land identified for future urban development.
- Focus tourism on land:
 - In close proximity to existing tourism products and infrastructure nodes;
 - In close proximity to National or State Parks, coastal parks or ocean beaches or linked to a tourism route or major access route identified in a tourism strategy;
 - That provides easy access to a major road, highway or tourism route;
 - That provides an attractive setting.



Policy Direction 5:

Promote sustainable resource use

Intent:

The intent of this policy direction is to ensure natural resources such as timber, minerals, soils and water are managed sustainably, providing long-term diversification opportunities for land holders and ensuring on-going resource availability for the broader community and economy.

Application:

- Collaborate with relevant Agencies to facilitate the provision of information to rural land owners on sustainable land management practices and standards;
- Provide for continued extractive industry in Eurobodalla and support operators of existing and new extractive industries to manage potential land use conflicts and environmental impacts.
- Collaborate with relevant State Agencies and land owners with regard to facilitating sustainable forestry activities on private land and sustainable forest management in State Forests; and
- Collaborate with relevant State Agencies and land owners with regard to managing the quality of water in aquaculture and drinking water catchment areas.

Rationale:

The continual drive towards more sustainable land management practices is led by rural land owners themselves, with the support of industry bodies and Government Agencies. Council can support this in a number of ways, such as through delivery of environmental programs (eg. pest and weed management, Landcare) and business workshops (eg. food packaging).

Extractive industry is important for the Eurobodalla economy, particularly in supplying local materials for the construction industry. While maintaining access to extractive resources is important, the potential conflicts between extractive industries and agriculture and the potential environmental impacts of mining activities need to be carefully managed.

The role of local government in the forestry industry and national parks is limited. However, Council can play a role in encouraging sustainable forest management on public and private land that protects areas of high conservation value and avoids adverse impacts on water quality.

Water quality and availability is important for all forms of primary production, but in particular for Eurobodalla's aquaculture industry. Good quality and supply of water also supports tourism and recreation in Eurobodalla and the health of the population through the drinking water supply.





Policy Direction 6:

Recognise and manage environmental hazards and values

Intent:

The intent of this policy direction is to ensure rural development and land use has minimal impacts on important natural hazards and environment values, having regard to the potential impacts of climate change.

Application:

- Recognise and provide for the sustainable management of high conservation value vegetation and important aquatic values in Eurobodalla;
- Collaborate with relevant State Agencies to define and map natural hazards and environmental values in Eurobodalla, and establish a validation process to ensure such mapping is accurate and up-to-date;
- Collaborate with relevant agencies and land owners to develop locally appropriate programs for protecting areas of high conservation value in Eurobodalla and for addressing natural hazards; and
- Collaborate with relevant Agencies to facilitate the provision of information to rural land owners to assist with adaptation to the potential impacts of future climate change.

Rationale:

The Rural Opportunities and Constraints Report identified a range of natural hazards (such as steep and erodible land, acid sulfate soils and extreme bushfire risk) and environmental values (both aquatic and terrestrial) in Eurobodalla and provided a summary of the potential impacts on rural lands from future climate change.

Mapping of natural hazards and environmental values provided with the Rural Opportunities and Constraints Report demonstrated that the existing cleared rural areas had minimal environmental constraints while the steeper, more vegetated rural areas were more likely to contain natural hazards and high conservation values.

Identifying known natural hazards and environmental values through mapping assists land owners to plan farm activities with all of the relevant information provided up-front. Council can assist land owners by working with the relevant State Agencies to ensure the mapping is regularly reviewed for accuracy and updated as appropriate. It is also important that environmental hazards and values are recognised in the planning system, including in the strategic and development assessment processes.

It should be noted that Council resolved on 22 July 2014 that *“overlays not be included in the Local Environmental Plan”* and that *“the Rural Lands Committee gives further consideration to....the options for the appropriate use of the overlays...in consultation with the Departmental advisors that currently site of the Rural Lands Committee.”*

Council can also work with relevant agencies and land owners to develop locally appropriate programs for addressing a range of natural hazards, such as bushfire hazard reduction and pest control, and to ensure land owners have relevant information to assist them in considering climate change when planning and implementing farm activities and diversification.



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by lush green fields, some of which are divided into smaller plots. There are several small, dark ponds or waterholes scattered throughout the landscape. A network of roads and paths winds through the fields. In the background, a dense line of trees separates the rural area from a more developed area with buildings and a river. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

Policy Direction 7:

Support rural residential living opportunities

Intent:

The intent of this policy direction is to facilitate opportunities for rural residential development to meet projected demand within the limits of sustainable development.

Application:

- Work with owners of land zoned for rural residential development to facilitate, where possible, appropriate development of that land; and
- Monitor the supply and development of land zoned for rural residential purposes through the annual land supply review process.

Rationale:

The South Coast Regional Strategy, 2006 states that existing rural residential zones have the capacity to meet the demands for rural lifestyle housing in the region to 2031. The Strategy also provides for limited additional rural residential housing on cleared land unsuitable for urban or agricultural uses and in accordance with an adopted growth strategy or structure plan. The Eurobodalla Settlement Strategy (ESS) is the current growth strategy/structure plan for Eurobodalla. The Rural Lands Strategy, when adopted, will supersede the rural lands elements of the ESS.

Land supply in Eurobodalla is reviewed annually in order to maintain an appropriate supply. In 2013/14 there were 469 vacant rural residential lots, 53 vacant lots in rural

villages and the potential for an additional 374 lots to be created in existing rural residential areas. The total supply therefore amounts to almost 900 dwellings. It is anticipated that the population of rural and rural residential areas of the Shire will increase by approximately 1000 people over the next 17 years, at a rate of 0.8% per annum. This generates the need for approximately 765 new dwellings. With a current supply catering for approximately 900 dwellings, there is minimal demand for additional rural residential land in the short to medium term.

To ensure the available supply of rural residential land can be developed to meet current demand, some further investigations may be required to determine the development capacity of undeveloped land zoned E4 Environmental Living or R5 Large Lot Residential. Council can work with the owners of this land to address relevant issues and facilitate appropriate development opportunities.

Any longer term planning for additional rural residential land should consider a number of locational criteria, including:

- Avoiding the most productive agricultural land;
- Proximity of the land to existing towns and settlements;
- The efficient use and economic provision of services and infrastructure; and
- Avoiding land of high conservation value or environmental risk.



