

Northern Rivers Regional Economic & Environment Plan **2040**

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ProspER

NORTHERN RIVERS

Project Acknowledgements

This Project is proudly funded by the NSW Government.

ProspER Northern Rivers has been developed by Business NSW Northern Rivers in partnership with Southern Cross University, drawing on extensive engagement with business, industry, government, community and regional leaders from across the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire.

ProspER acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters and skies across the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Plan was initiated with support from the NSW Government to provide a long-term regional economic and environment plan for the Northern Rivers. It responds to a period of significant disruption, change and renewal across the region, while recognising the opportunity to shape a stronger, more connected and more resilient future. Grounded in a wellbeing economy approach, ProspER provides a whole-of-region framework for sustainable economic development across people, place, environment and enterprise.



For more detail on ProspER Northern Rivers and access to engagement reference material, reports and data please go to the project webpage.

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Message from the Minister, The Hon. Janelle Saffin MP

The Northern Rivers with Tenterfield Shire is a region defined by its strength of community, richness of environment, and depth of enterprise. It is a place where people care deeply about the future not only for themselves, but for the generations that will follow.



ProspER 2040 reflects that spirit.

This Plan is the result of an extensive, business and industry led process, bringing together business leaders, local government, education partners, First Nations voices

and regional business leaders to shape a shared vision for the future.

It recognises that prosperity in the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire must be built differently: grounded in people, place and long-term stewardship.

Across the region, businesses have demonstrated resilience, adaptability and commitment in the face of significant challenges, from natural disasters to workforce pressures and infrastructure constraints.

This Plan does not shy away from those realities. Instead, it responds with practical, place-based actions, industry opportunities and a clear pathway to strengthen the region's economic, community and environmental foundations.

Importantly, ProspER positions the region not just to recover, but to lead.

Through its focus on enabling infrastructure, workforce capability, housing, investment attraction and industry transformation, the Plan sets out a framework to support sustainable growth. At the same time, it embraces a regenerative approach which recognises economic success and environmental health must go hand in hand.

The Plan also highlights the power of collaboration. No single organisation or level of government can deliver this vision alone. Its success will rely on continued partnership across communities, industries and governments and on the shared commitment to act.

The NSW Government is proud to support this work and to partner with the Northern Rivers in delivering on its priorities. The recommendations and catalyst projects identified in this Plan will help guide future investment, policy alignment and regional development efforts.

ProspER Northern Rivers 2040 is both ambitious and grounded. It reflects the unique character of the region – a collection of towns and communities whose collective strength is far greater than the sum of its parts.

I thank all those who have contributed to this important work and look forward to seeing the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire continue to thrive as a place of opportunity, resilience and shared prosperity.

The Hon. Janelle Saffin MP

Member for Lismore, Minister for the North Coast, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery



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Getting the Balance Right



Just as people **thrive** when their **foundational** needs are met and their potential is **enabled**, regions thrive when a strong **economy** and a strong **place** grow together, each strengthening the other, **grounded** in a healthy environment, and building **value** that stays in the region for **generations** to come.



ProspER is a regional business and industry led plan for the future of the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire, grounded in what the region identified as genuinely needed to live up to its potential and set a foundation of success for the next generation.

It is a plan independent of election cycles, shaped through direct engagement across our communities and industries, and tested honestly against the region's strengths and weaknesses.

This business and industry leadership is what makes it a different kind of plan.

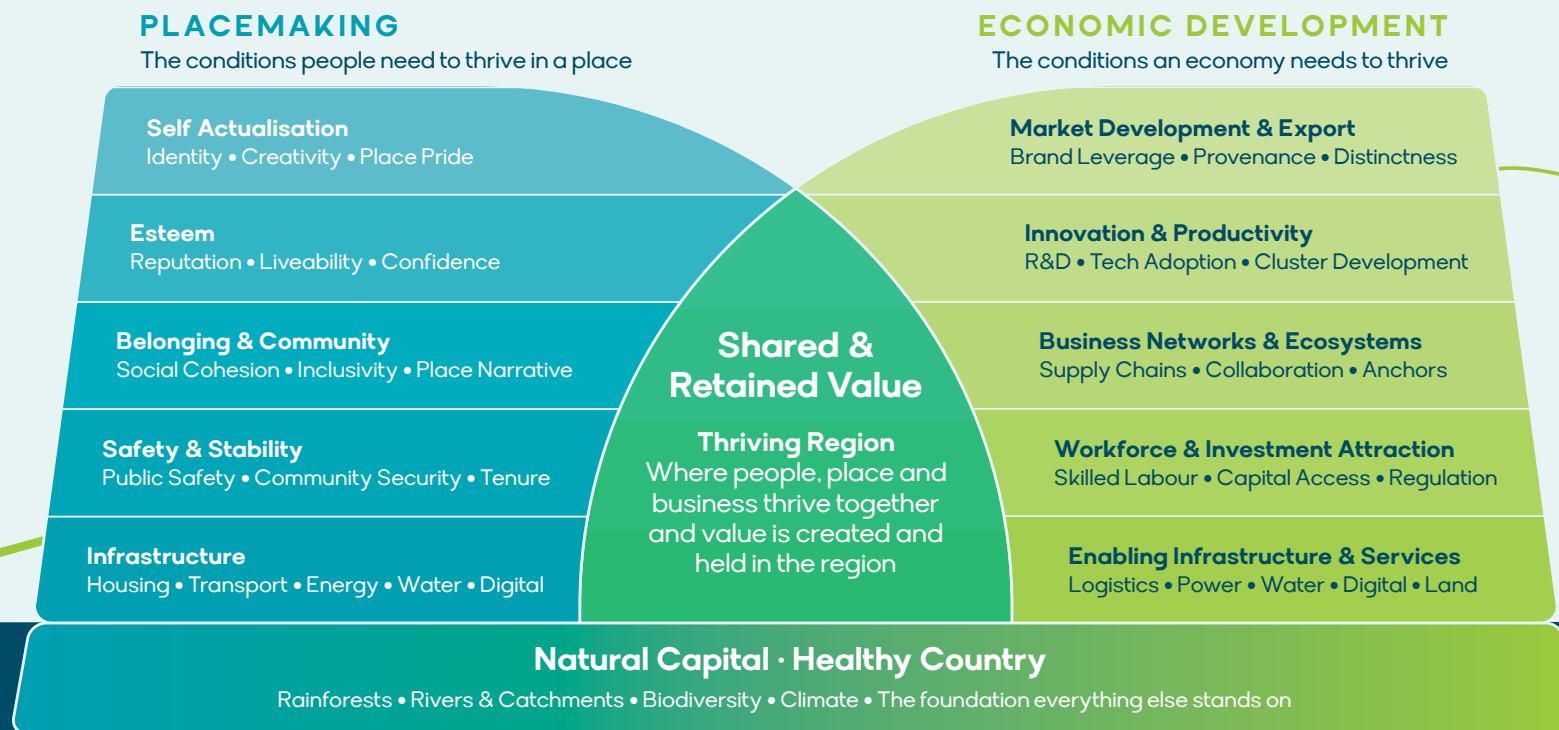
However, this is not a business only plan and delivering outcomes will be a shared effort. The recommendations and strategic intent in ProspER can only be brought to life through genuine collaboration across business, industry, community and all levels of government and their agencies. A strong future for the region is something we build together.

The Place and Business Co-dependency Framework shows why:

In the Northern Rivers, a strong economy and a strong place have always depended on each other.

Place and Business Co-dependency Framework

Whether viewed through the lens of place or economic development, the framework shows one regional system: people, communities, business and investment thrive together when strong foundations are in balance, with Natural Capital and Healthy Country forming the ecological base of long-term prosperity.



ProspER rests on a simple idea:

a strong place and a strong economy are not competing priorities. They are part of the same regional system.

The things that make the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire good places to live, including housing, connection, safety, identity, services and a healthy environment, are also the things that make the region a good place to invest, employ and grow.

This is why ProspER's ten Domains of Action span both place and economy, from HealthiER and TogethER through to TransformER and EnablER. When the balance is right, each strengthens the other. When the balance is wrong, the region feels the pressure on both sides.

A thriving region is not only one where value is created, but one where value stays, recirculates and is held in the region for the benefit of people, communities, business and future generations.

ProspER Vision

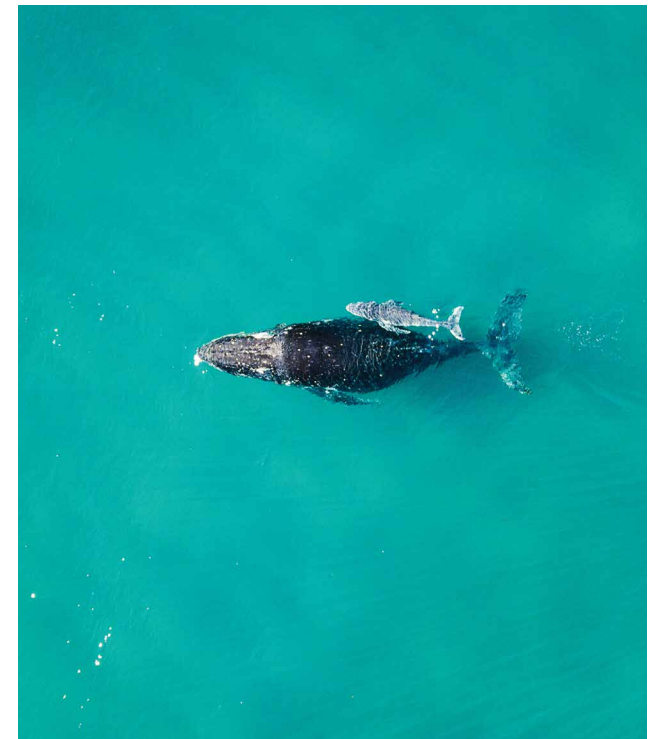
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE NORTHERN RIVERS | 2040

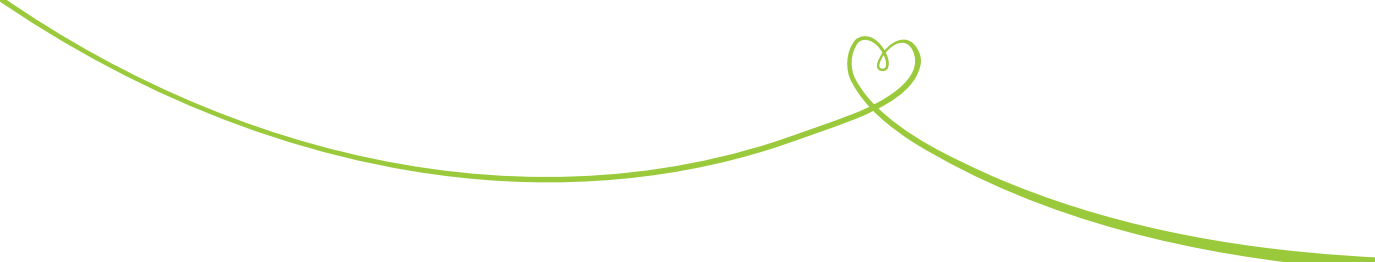
A connected and collaborative Northern Rivers where people, places, communities and enterprise prosper together to create a regenerative and resilient future for all.

People. Planet. Place.

ProspER Northern Rivers with Tenterfield is a Regional Economic and Environment Plan to 2040, built around People, Planet and Place, and the importance of getting the balance right.

ProspER adopts a wellbeing economy approach where long-term economic prosperity and investment support strong communities, healthy environments and connected places.





Foundations of the Plan

PEOPLE

ProspER begins with people.

The Northern Rivers is a region defined by strong communities, deep local identity and a shared care for place. People live here not only for work, but for connection to family, to community, to landscape and to lifestyle.

Across towns, villages and hinterland communities, the regional economy is built on people who create, make, care, grow, teach and lead. Small and medium-sized businesses are central to this story, shaping both economic activity and social life.

In recent years, the Northern Rivers has faced profound disruption. Climate events, housing pressure, workforce shortages and rising costs of living have tested the resilience of households, businesses and communities alike. These challenges have reinforced a simple truth:

Long-term economic resilience depends on the wellbeing of people.

Health in this region is not only about services. It is shaped by secure housing, meaningful work, connection to place, cultural continuity, strong social networks and the ability to participate in shaping the future.

ProspER places people first because a thriving regional economy is one that supports people to live well – today and for generations to come.

PLANET

The wellbeing of people in the Northern Rivers is inseparable from the health of Country.

From rainforest escarpments to river floodplains, from productive farmland to coastal wetlands, the region's landscapes function together as a living system that sustains life, livelihoods and resilience.

At its ecological heart sits the **Big Scrub**, once one of the largest lowland subtropical rainforests on Earth. Though only fragments remain, the Big Scrub continues to regulate climate, water and biodiversity across the region. Alongside the Border Ranges, river systems, floodplains and estuaries, it forms what is often described as the **lungs of the Northern Rivers**.

When Country is degraded, the impacts are felt by people and businesses through flooding, heat stress, ecosystem loss and repeated recovery.

When Country is healthy, the region is more resilient, productive and attractive for communities, enterprise and investment.

Healthy Country is not an optional extra. It is **core infrastructure for wellbeing, resilience and long-term prosperity**.

ProspER recognises that caring for living systems is not separate from economic development, it is fundamental to it.

PLACE

The Northern Rivers is not defined by a single centre, it is shaped by a network of places, each with its own identity, character and contribution.

Coastal communities, regional cities, productive valleys and hinterland towns together form a region that is diverse, interconnected and deeply grounded in place.

People move between these places to live, work, learn and do business – sharing infrastructure, services, ecosystems and opportunity.

But place in the Northern Rivers is more than geography. It reflects how communities see themselves, what they value and how they choose to grow. Identity is important here and representative of place and tightly held values of place.

There is a strong expectation that growth should respect the character of towns and villages, strengthen connection to landscape and community, and contribute to long-term liveability. This shapes how development is approached and how change is managed across the region.

Located on the NSW–Queensland border, the Northern Rivers benefits from proximity to major markets while retaining a distinct identity grounded in place and community.

Place is where people, Country and enterprise come together and where decisions about the future are made.

Understanding the Region

GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS



The Northern Rivers Story

The Northern Rivers is a region of more than 100 towns, villages and regional cities across seven local government areas in the north of NSW, bordering Queensland.

It is a region with a long-standing reputation for people protecting what matters and promoting what is possible. People who live in the Northern Rivers, and those who visit, are deeply connected to its lifestyle, landscapes, communities and sense of place. They are not afraid to stand up for the way of life that makes this region distinctive, or to advocate for the investment and support needed to help it meet its full potential.

The Northern Rivers local government areas of Tweed Shire, Byron Shire, Kyogle, Ballina Shire, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Clarence Valley each have their own identity, economy and way of life, shaped by landscape, history, community and culture.

The strengths of each town, village and city can stand on their own. Just as importantly, when viewed together, they form a region defined by environmental value, economic resilience, adaptation and long-term potential. The Northern Rivers is a strong regional place brand that is leverage for business, visitation and investment alike. The region is a network of distinctive places whose differences, when understood and aligned, create greater impact for current and future generations.

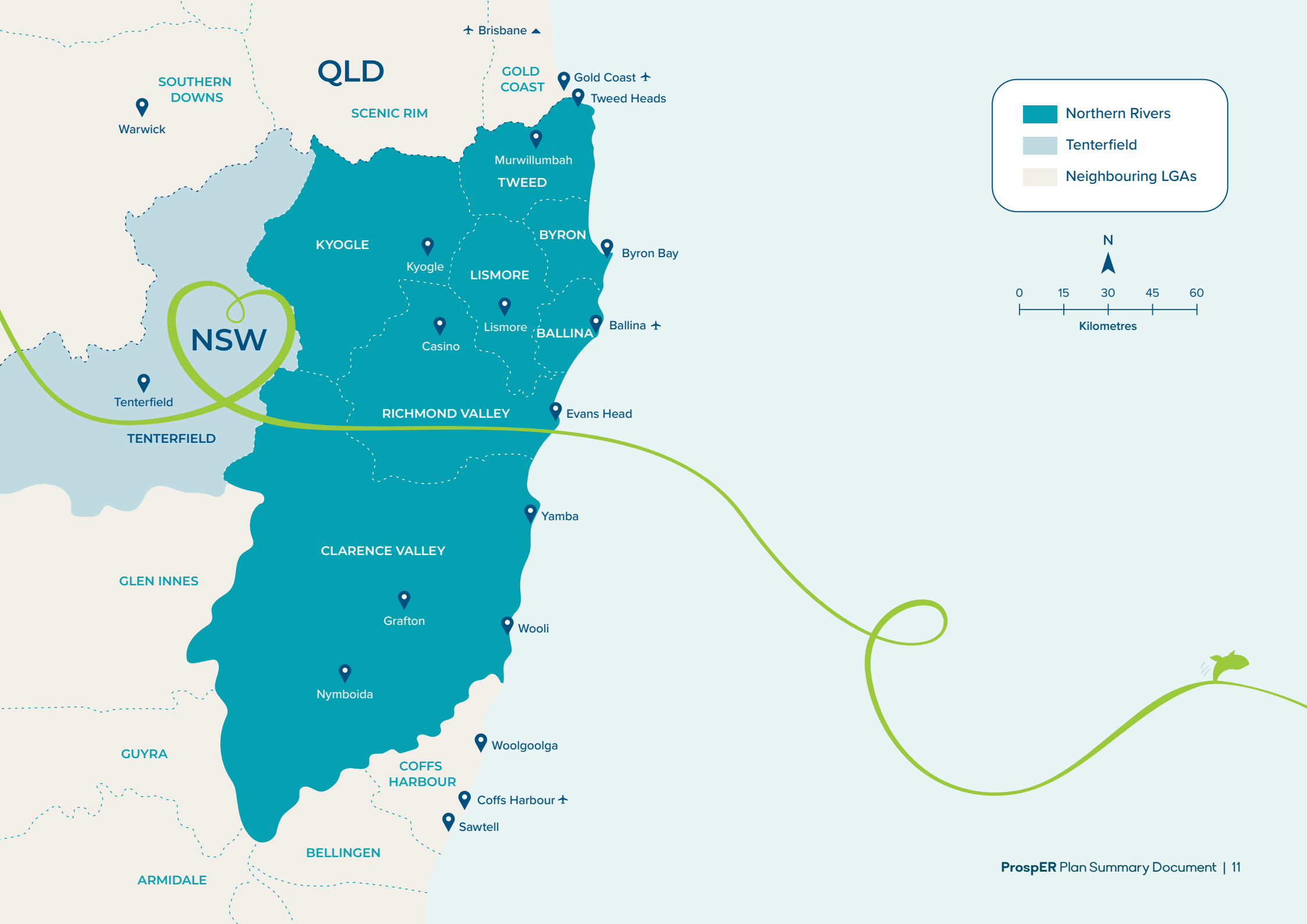
The opportunity for the Northern Rivers is to leverage the advantage that comes from combining these complementary strengths.

The region works best as a system, not as a collection of competitors. Growth, jobs, skills, housing, services, investment and lifestyle are shared across boundaries and carried by different places in different ways. When these roles are better understood and better connected, the Northern Rivers becomes more competitive for investment, more attractive to skilled people, and more resilient over time.

The storylines of place are connected here. One place strengthens another. Each has a role to play in sustaining resilience, opportunity and identity. Being stronger together means being more impactful together – for people, planet and place.

ProspER recognises this reality. It seeks to back each place to do what it does best, while strengthening the connections between them by aligning intent. This is how the Northern Rivers can move forward with confidence and set the next generation of Northern Rivers people up for success.

The inclusion of Tenterfield in the ProspER Plan adds an important and enriching dimension. As a neighbouring local government area adjoining the Northern Rivers to the west, and connected across West Bundjalung Country, Tenterfield brings its own history, economy, landscape and strategic role. It is both a gateway and a collaborator, with shared opportunities to strengthen connections, support resilience and raise the region's collective impact.



Aligning as a Region – the Northern Rivers advantage

GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

ProspER is not about choosing one place, priority or opportunity over another. It is about backing the distinct identity and role of each LGA, town and village, while strengthening the connections between them.

This is where the Northern Rivers advantage lies: in a connected region of complementary places, each proud of its own story and contribution, and stronger together than any one place could be alone.



Tweed Shire

Golden Green
Gateway,
a moment
to exhale



Byron Shire

Icon. Worthy.
Stewardship.



Ballina Shire

Family. Trendy.
Friendly.



Kyogle

Adventure Us.
Culture All.



Lismore

Same Heart,
New City.



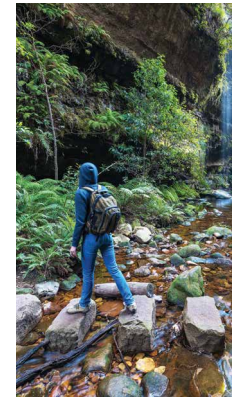
Richmond Valley

Salt & Earth.
People & Place



Clarence Valley

Vast in scale,
rich in character



Tenterfield

Advance
Tenterfield Fair

Each Northern Rivers LGA has its own story, identity and contribution to ProspER Northern Rivers. The place phrases shown here are drawn from ProspER place-story work. Explore the full place stories on the project website.

Regional Data Snapshot

Northern Rivers

Emerging Industries: **Health Care**

Construction

Professional, S&TS



318,848
People



32,138
Businesses



144,402
Local Jobs



Seven Local Areas
Key and emerging areas shown below.

Northern Rivers totals shown for the seven Northern Rivers LGAs. Tenterfield Shire is recognised as a connected ProsperER partner geography.

Tweed

99,793
PEOPLE

8,985
BUSINESSES

42,092
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Health Care & Social Assistance
(24.4%)

Top Industry by Businesses:
Construction (23.2%)

Emerging Industries: **Health Care**

Professional, S&TS

Wholesale Trade

Byron

37,826
PEOPLE

6,050
BUSINESSES

20,613
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Construction (14.3%)

Top Industry by Businesses:
Construction (15.7%)

Emerging Industries: **Accommodation**

Professional, S&TS

Health Care

Ballina

47,935
PEOPLE

5,181
BUSINESSES

22,188
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Health Care & Social Assistance
(18.7%)

Top Industry by Businesses:
Construction (20.3%)

Emerging Industries: **Health Care**

Professional, S&TS

Retail

Kyogle

9,582
PEOPLE

1,254
BUSINESSES

3,075
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (19.5%)

Top Industry by Businesses:
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (50.1%)

Emerging Industries: **Agriculture**

Construction

Health Care

Lismore

43,783
PEOPLE

4,433
BUSINESSES

25,889
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Health Care & Social Assistance (24.4%)

Top Industry by Businesses:
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (21.3%)

Emerging Industries: **Health Care**

Admin & Support

Professional, S&TS

Richmond Valley

23,892
PEOPLE

2,015
BUSINESSES

8,436
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Health Care (14.2%)

Top Industry by Businesses:
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (31.9%)

Emerging Industries: **Health Care**

Construction

Wholesale Trade

Clarence Valley

56,037
PEOPLE

4,319
BUSINESSES

22,109
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Manufacturing (13.7%)

Top Industry by Businesses:
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (25.2%)

Emerging Industries: **Health Care**

Manufacturing

Public Admin

Tenterfield

7,081
PEOPLE

1,010
BUSINESSES

2,219
LOCAL JOBS

Top Industry by Employment:
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing

Top Industry by Businesses:
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing

Emerging Industries: **Professional, S&TS**

Visitor Economy

Renewables

Inputs into the Plan

GROUNDING IN ENGAGEMENT, EVIDENCE
AND REGIONAL INSIGHT

**ProspER has been built from the voices,
insights and experience of the region.**

Its development has drawn on extensive engagement across industry sectors, targeted conversations with key groups including First Nations leaders and young people, place-based discussions across the region, input from government and community stakeholders, and findings from the region-wide Business Retention and Expansion Survey.

This was strengthened by scenario planning that explored the choices, risks and opportunities that may shape the region’s future, and by the ongoing guidance of the ProspER Advisory Board.

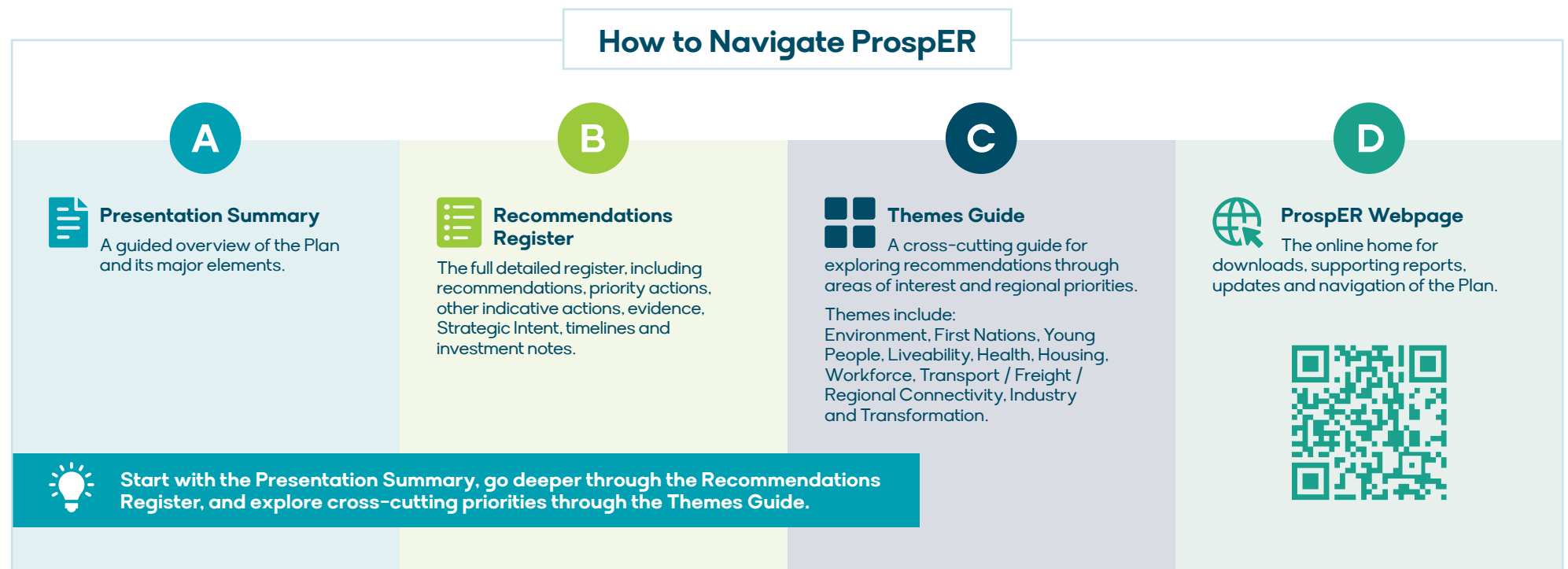
Together, these inputs have ensured the Plan is not theoretical or top-down, but grounded in local knowledge, informed by evidence and focused on the practical actions needed to support the Northern Rivers to 2040.

Industry Sector Analysis	Detailed engagement with key regional sectors including agribusiness, construction, manufacturing, health, knowledge economy, creative industry and visitor economy
Place-Based Insights	Understanding the economic role and opportunities of towns, villages and regional centres across the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield
Cross Cutting Regional Themes	Systems challenges and opportunities affecting all sectors and places including housing, infrastructure, workforce, energy and climate resilience.

Separate reports to support evidence base

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>► Business Retention Expansion Survey</p> <p>Globally recognised tool for understanding business operating environments</p> | <p>► Situation Analysis</p> <p>Key industry sector strengths analysis</p> <p>► Scenario Planning</p> <p>Place based (housing and resilience) and</p> <p>Industry Focus - Manufacturing and Makers as the foundation of prosperity</p> | <p>► First Nations</p> <p>Independent engagement and insights report</p> <p>► Young People</p> <p>Facilitated Engagement and Insights day</p> |
| <p>► Industry focus</p> <p>Roundtable reports and in-depth analysis of Manufacturing and Makers</p> | | |

The ProspER Framework



ProspER Principles

VALUES AND DECISION-MAKING COMPASS GUIDING
LONG TERM PROSPERITY FOR THE REGION





Eight principles underpin **ProspER** and they articulate how the region chooses to grow, what it values and how decisions should be made across councils, community, business and government for prosperity and wellbeing. They ensure that all decisions and actions are:

1. People First

The wellbeing, safety, opportunity and quality of life of our communities are central to regional prosperity. A region thrives when its people thrive, and this is the foundation of prosperity.

2. Place Matters

The region's landscapes, towns, villages, identities and natural assets shape how we live and how industries grow and our prosperity will depend upon protecting what makes the region unique.

3. Shared Value

Actions should create benefits that extend across business, community and environment and create value for all. This is an opportunity to build resilience, trust and long-term regional confidence.

4. Long-Term in Perspective

Designed for generational outcomes that strengthen us and consider future consequences, not just immediate pressures. Managing today's choices with tomorrow's needs in mind.

5. Fair Participation

All voices – from young people to elders, small business to major industry, towns to remote villages have a role in shaping the future. Our legitimacy and cohesion come from shared ownership of the future.

6. Regenerative Approach

The region's prosperity depends on the health of its environment and underpins identity, economy and wellbeing. Regeneration ensures our natural capital is strengthened not depleted.

7. Evidence and Foresight

Decisions should be informed by data, insights, modelling and a clear view of future risks and opportunities. A fast-changing world requires informed, agile and forward-looking choices.

8. Collaboration over Competition

Regional prosperity is strengthened through alignment, shared action and partnerships across LGA's, sectors and communities.

**Being greater
than the sum of the
parts is our region's
superpower**

Translating the Vision into Action

TEN DOMAINS OF ACTION GUIDING RECOMMENDATIONS

To translate ProspER vision into action, the Plan is structured around ten Domains.

These domains provide a clear and practical framework for understanding the region's priorities and guiding coordinated effort across sectors, communities and government.

Each Domain of Action represents a critical part of the regional system – from health and wellbeing to infrastructure delivery, economic transition, capability building and governance.

Together, they reflect the interconnected nature of the Northern Rivers, where progress in one area supports outcomes across others.

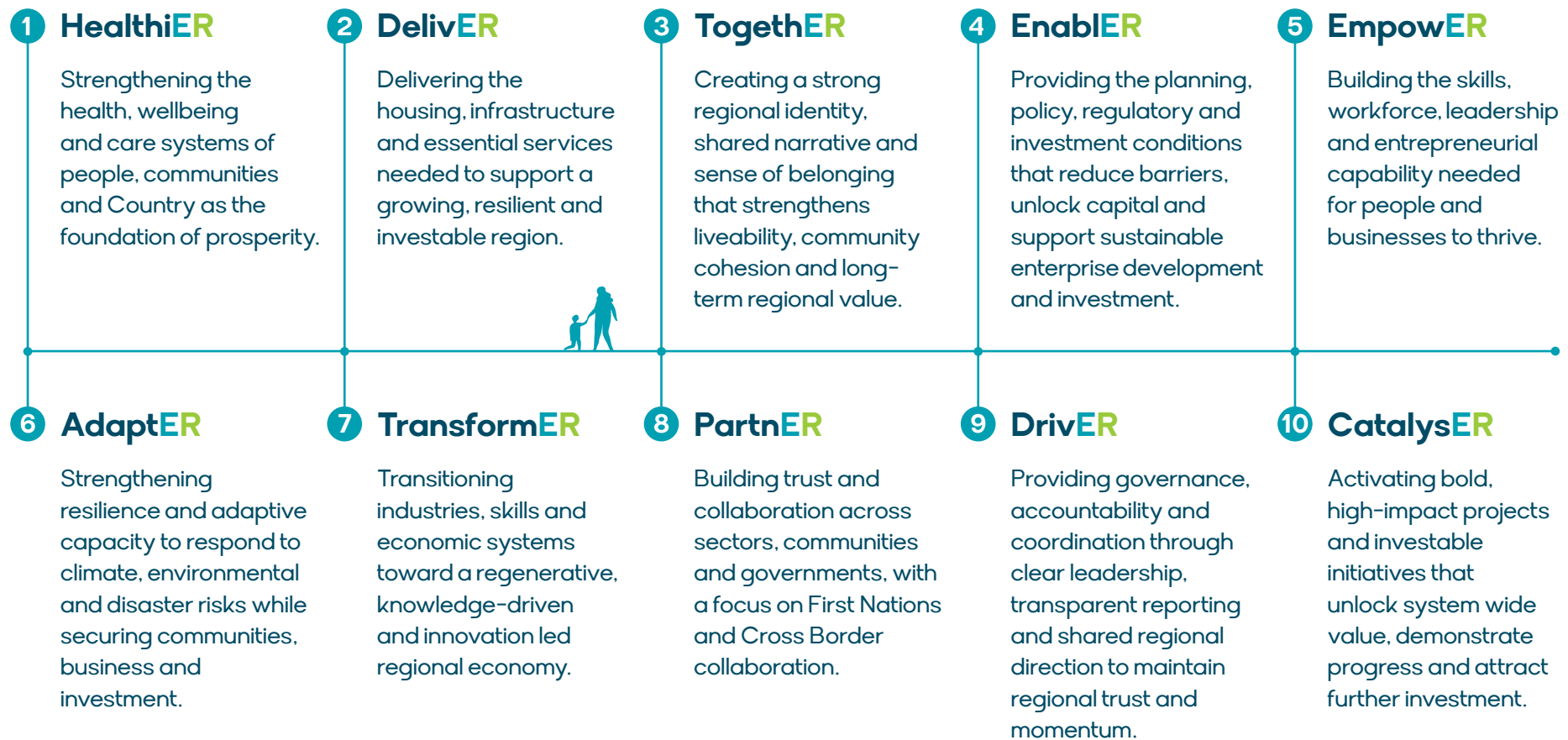
The Domains of Action provide the structure for moving from shared vision to coordinated effort, helping align recommendations, strategic intent, investment priorities and future initiatives.

“The Domains of Action show how ProspER moves from vision to shared action: connecting people, place, environment, enterprise and governance around the outcomes the region wants to achieve.”



Domains of Action

ProspER adopts a wellbeing economy approach where long-term economic prosperity and investment is the foundation of strong communities, healthy environments and connected places



Reading the Recommendations Register

The ProspER Recommendations Register provides the detailed structure behind the Plan. It includes each Recommendation aligned to its Domain, the Priority Action, Other Indicative Actions, Evidence, Strategic Intent, Timelines and Investment Notes

Throughout development of the Plan, stakeholders consistently highlighted that important work is already underway across government, industry, education and the community. In many cases, the recommendations reflect existing effort, emerging initiatives and long-standing priorities. This is intentional.

“The opportunity is not to start again. The opportunity is to **move forward together** with greater clarity, coordination and confidence.”

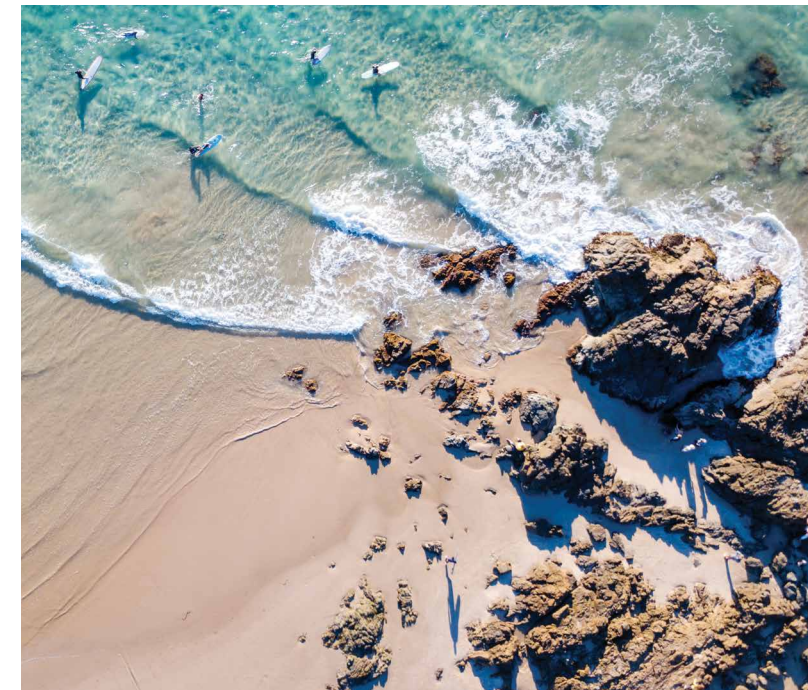
The recommendations are intended to be read as a shared regional agenda, not a standalone program of work. ProspER does not seek to replace local strategies, duplicate activity or compete with existing plans. Instead, it provides a regional perspective, shaped through business and industry engagement, that brings priorities together, identifies opportunities for alignment and highlights where working together may accelerate outcomes.

This first iteration establishes a shared regional direction informed by evidence, stakeholder engagement and business and industry priorities. It is not intended to represent a final or fixed state. As priorities evolve and opportunities emerge, some recommendations may require refinement, partnership, investment or new ways of working. In many cases, progress may come from connecting existing activity rather than creating entirely new programs.

Download the full Recommendations Register



Scan the QR code to access the complete register, including recommendation detail, evidence, actions, timelines and investment notes.



Strategic Intent

SUPPORTING THE VISION FOR 2040

ProspER is not only a set of recommendations. It is a statement of what the region believes is possible when people, places, communities, business, industry and government move with shared purpose.

The Strategic Intent Statements help bring that bigger picture into view.

They describe the outcomes ProspER is working toward: healthier people and Country, more homes, stronger workforce pathways, better infrastructure, thriving towns and villages, resilient businesses, future-focused industries, First Nations economic leadership, stronger partnerships and coordinated regional action.

“Strategic Intent keeps the Plan **focused on the outcomes** we seek, while allowing the pathway to **evolve as partnerships**, investment and opportunities emerge.”

They help show how individual recommendations connect to a larger regional ambition, and how practical action today can build toward the Northern Rivers we want to see in 2040.

Most importantly, they keep ProspER focused on impact: the change we are seeking for people, planet and place, and the lasting regional advantage that can be created when opportunity is aligned with action.



ProspER Strategic Intent Summary

Understanding the Strategic Intent Statements

The Strategic Intent Statements help tell the story of what ProspER is working toward.

Each statement captures the purpose behind a recommendation and the outcome it is designed to support. They do not replace the detailed actions, evidence, timelines or investment notes contained in the full Recommendations Register. Instead, they provide a clear and simple way to understand the change each recommendation is seeking to achieve.

Together, the Strategic Intent Statements show how the different parts of ProspER connect. Health, housing, workforce, infrastructure, environment, industry, First Nations leadership, cross-border collaboration and catalyst projects are not separate conversations. They are all part of the same sustainable regional future.

This section provides a high-level view of the Plan through the lens of intended impact. It helps readers see not only what is being recommended, but why it matters for people, places, communities, businesses and the long-term prosperity of the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire.

The Strategic Intent Statements will support conversations with partners, government, funders, industry and community stakeholders by making the purpose of each recommendation easier to see and discuss.

An illustration of a person in a yellow kayak on a teal river. In the background, there are dark green mountains and a few yellow birds flying in the sky.

Most importantly, they help keep ProspER focused on the bigger picture: turning opportunity into impact, and impact into lasting regional advantage.

Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

1. HealthiER

Strengthening the health, wellbeing and care systems of people, communities and Country as the foundation of prosperity.

01 Preventative Health & Wellbeing

Create healthier and more connected communities by building on local strengths, encouraging early intervention and reducing long-term pressure on regional health and care systems.

02 Healthy Country, Healthy People

Recognise healthy Country as a foundation of healthy people, so care for the region's rainforests, rivers and natural systems is understood and invested in as part of the region's health and wellbeing system.

03 Private Health Investment, Specialist Services & Health Enterprise

Increase access to specialist healthcare across the region by attracting complementary private investment and expanding services closer to where people live, while growing the research, innovation and enterprise capability that surrounds them.

04 Health Workforce Attraction and Retention

Make the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire places where health professionals can build long-term careers, contribute to community life and see a future for themselves and their families.

05 Care Economy Growth

Recognise the care economy as one of the region's most important future employment sectors and a critical foundation for community wellbeing and ageing with dignity.



Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

2. DelivER

Delivering the housing, infrastructure and essential services needed to support a growing, resilient and investable region.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 06 | Regional Housing Supply Acceleration | Build the homes the region needs to support workforce participation, business sustainability and long-term regional prosperity. |
| 07 | Housing Diversity & Choice | Provide practical and diverse housing options that support workers, families, older residents, young people and changing community needs to strengthen community sustainability, liveability and workforce participation. |
| 08 | Housing & Enabling Infrastructure | Deliver the critical infrastructure capacity needed to support housing growth, industrial activation and long-term regional investment confidence. |
| 09 | Regional Transport Connectivity | Strengthen regional movement, accessibility and economic connectivity by improving transport corridors that support people, businesses, freight, visitors and access to essential services. |
| 10 | Essential Services and Community Infrastructure | Ensure the region has the schools, childcare, health access, community facilities and essential services needed to support growing communities, workforce participation and long-term regional confidence. |

Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

3. TogethER

Creating a strong regional identity, shared narrative and sense of belonging that strengthens liveability, community cohesion and long-term regional value.

11

Liveability, Public Spaces & Community

Create places where people feel connected, active and proud to live by investing in public spaces, community infrastructure and the everyday places that shape wellbeing and belonging.

12

Walkability, Recreation & Nature Access

Encourage healthier lifestyles and stronger connections to place by making it easier for people of all ages and abilities to walk, ride, recreate and enjoy the region's natural landscapes, waterways and everyday public spaces.

13

Arts, Culture & Community Expression

Celebrate the region's creativity, diversity and cultural identity through arts, storytelling and community expression that bring people together, strengthen belonging and give voice to the many stories of place.

14

Nature-Based & Cultural Tourism

Deepen the connection between visitors and the region's nature, culture and Country through experiences grounded in stewardship, learning, respect and connection.

15

Food, Provenance & Regional Experiences

Position the region's identity as a place of quality food, agriculture and authentic experience by connecting visitors more closely to producers, landscapes and stewardship, leveraging the Northern Rivers place brand provenance stories.

16

Creative Industries, Culture & Regional Identity

Grow the creative economy by backing creative enterprise, Aboriginal artists and cultural visibility, while celebrating the stories, ideas and identity that give the region its distinctive spirit.



Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

4. EnabLER

Providing the planning, policy, regulatory and investment conditions that reduce barriers, unlock capital and support sustainable enterprise development and investment.

17 Housing Delivery Reform

Accelerate housing delivery through a coordinated regional system that aligns planning, infrastructure, approvals and investment with community and reflects the distinct needs of regional towns, villages and centres.

18 Diverse Housing Pathway

Unlock more diverse, affordable and resilient housing choices through new models, partnerships and investment pathways that help people live, work and stay in the region.

19 Industrial Land & Servicing

Ensure the region has development-ready, flood resilient, employment land capable of supporting investment attraction, business expansion, manufacturing capability and future industry development that aligns with the region's strengths.

20 Freight & Logistics Efficiency

Enable Northern Rivers and Tenterfield businesses to move goods more efficiently to regional, national and international markets while improving supply chain reliability, export capability and regional competitiveness.

21 Local and Regional Procurement Participation

Increase regional participation and long-term regional value by strengthening procurement pathways and enabling local businesses and industry to contribute to and benefit from government and publicly supported investment.

22 Regional Investment Intelligence & Opportunity Platform

Provide investors, governments and regional partners with clear, accessible intelligence about the Northern Rivers, so decisions are made with confidence and opportunities are easier to see, support and activate.

- | | | |
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| 23 | Regional Investment Facilitation & Concierge Service | Make the Northern Rivers easier to invest in by connecting people, projects and opportunities through a coordinated and collaborative regional facilitation service that helps good ideas find the right pathway, partners and support. |
| 24 | Advancing Digital Connectivity | Create a more connected, resilient and future-ready region by improving access to reliable digital infrastructure that supports business, learning, remote work, service delivery and future economic opportunity. |
| 25 | City, Town & Village Centres | Strengthen city, town and village centres as places where business, community life, creativity and local identity come together to create vibrant, welcoming and economically active communities. |
| 26 | Eco Accommodation & Sustainable Visitor Infrastructure | Grow visitor experiences that reflect the Northern Rivers' landscapes, values and sense of place while supporting appropriate investment, regional dispersal, long-term environmental stewardship and sustainability. |
| 27 | Accommodation Renewal & Quality Uplift | Lift the quality, character and diversity of regional accommodation so visitor experiences better reflect the Northern Rivers, support longer stays and strengthen local business viability. |
| 28 | Cross Border & Regional Mobility | Better connect people, places and opportunity through regional and cross-border mobility that improves access, participation and everyday liveability across the Northern Rivers. |
| 29 | Creative Production Infrastructure | Enable the spaces, studios and infrastructure creative people need to make work, grow enterprises and build the Northern Rivers' reputation as a region of creativity, production and cultural innovation. |



Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

5. EmpowER

Building the skills, workforce, leadership and entrepreneurial capability needed for people and businesses to thrive.

30	Workforce Pathways & Industry Connections	Create clearer and more accessible pathways into meaningful regional employment and participation by strengthening connections between industry, education, training and local career opportunities.
31	Young People Participation & Regional Futures	Give young people a genuine voice in influencing regional decision-making and shaping the region's future, while strengthening leadership, belonging and long-term connection to place.
32	Young Professionals & Talent Retention	Retain and attract emerging talent by strengthening career opportunity, professional connection, leadership pathways and belonging, so people can build meaningful lives, careers and contribution in the region.
33	Future Skills & Workforce Adaptability	Prepare people, businesses and communities to adapt confidently to change and participate in future opportunities through practical skills, lifelong learning and industry-connected capability.
34	Entrepreneurship & Business Capability	Build the confidence, capability and support networks needed for people and businesses to start, adapt and grow enterprises that contribute to regional prosperity.
35	Leadership, Stewardship & Regional Capability	Build the leadership, stewardship and institutional capabilities needed to sustain regional collaboration, strengthen succession and shape the long-term future of the region for people, planet and place.

Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

6. AdaptER

Strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to respond to climate, environmental and disaster risks while securing communities, business and investment.

36 **Climate Adaptation & Resilient Infrastructure**

Build a more adaptive and future-ready region by embedding climate and disaster resilience into infrastructure, planning and investment decisions that protect communities, support business continuity and strengthen long-term regional prosperity.

37 **River & Catchment Health**

Restore the health of the region's rivers and catchments as living systems that sustain culture, Country, agriculture, community wellbeing and long-term regional prosperity.

38 **Renewable Energy Pilots**

Demonstrate how locally generated, stored and distributed energy can improve resilience, reduce vulnerability and create long-term economic and community benefits.

39 **Energy Reliability & Continuity**

Ensure the region has reliable, resilient and future-ready energy infrastructure that supports communities, essential services, housing growth, business continuity and long-term economic development.

40 **Water Security, Efficiency & Environmental Capacity**

Strengthen the water systems, infrastructure and environmental capacity that support communities, business, agriculture, liveability and long-term prosperity, while protecting the natural systems the region depends on.



Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

7. TransformER

Transitioning industries, skills and economic systems toward a regenerative, knowledge-driven and innovation led regional economy.

41

Advanced Manufacturing & Production Capability

Build a more productive, resilient and future-focused manufacturing sector by accelerating innovation, technology adoption and regional production capability, turning emerging strengths into higher-value products, stronger supply chains and long-term economic opportunity.

42

Value-Added Agriculture, Food & Bio-Based System

Increase regional value capture and industry resilience by expanding local processing, product innovation and market development linked to regenerative agriculture, bio-based products, export growth and future manufacturing opportunities.

43

Circular Economy & Clean Technology

Move circular economy and clean technology from principle to practice by supporting businesses to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency, lower emissions and create new regional value from materials, by-products and emerging technologies.

44

Northern Rivers Knowledge & Regenerative Economy

Build lasting economic value for the region by growing knowledge-based, regenerative and future-focused industries into a genuine growth sector alongside the region's traditional strengths.

45

Digital, Professional & Technical Services

Grow the Northern Rivers' digital, professional and technical services sector as a high-value contributor to employment, innovation, business productivity and economic diversification.



46

Innovation & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Create stronger pathways from ideas, research and regional challenges through to scalable enterprise, investment readiness and future industry growth across the region.

47

University-Industry & Applied Research Collaboration

Translate regional education, research and industry capability into stronger workforce outcomes, applied innovation, commercialisation and future enterprise opportunities.

48

Native Foods & Botanicals Development

Support Indigenous-led enterprise development and cultural stewardship by building a native foods and botanicals industry grounded in Country, cultural governance and long-term economic participation.

A photograph of two fishermen standing on a wet beach at sunset. The fisherman in the foreground is wearing a dark jacket and a white cap, holding a long fishing rod that arches over the water. The second fisherman is slightly behind him, wearing a light-colored jacket and green pants. The ocean waves are breaking on the shore, and the sky is a mix of orange and blue. A large rock is visible on the left side of the beach.

“A thriving region is not only one where value is created, but one where value stays, recirculates and is owned here.”

Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

8. PartnER

Building trust and collaboration across sectors, communities and governments, with a focus on First Nations and Cross Border collaboration.

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| 49 | First Nations Economic Development Group | Create stronger and more coordinated pathways for First Nations leadership, economic participation and decision-making across regional development, investment and enterprise initiatives. |
| 50 | First Nations Enterprise & Cultural Stewardship | Support long-term First Nations economic participation by strengthening enterprise opportunities connected to culture, Country, stewardship, procurement and regional industries. |
| 51 | Cross-Border Economic Partnership | Leverage the Northern Rivers' and Tenterfield Shire's proximity to South East Queensland to create stronger economic partnerships, improve regional competitiveness and deliver better outcomes for businesses, workers and communities. |
| 52 | Cross-Border Systems & Workforce Alignment | Reduce cross-border barriers that impact businesses, workers and communities while improving regional access to jobs, services, training and economic opportunity. |

Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | RECOMMENDATION FOCUS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

9. DrivER

Providing governance, accountability and coordination through clear leadership, transparent reporting and shared regional direction to maintain regional trust and momentum.

53

ProspER Governance & Implementation Framework

Give ProspER a clear structure for accountability, shared leadership and decision-making, so partners understand their roles and can work together with confidence.

54

Regional Coordination & Shared Delivery

Turn ProspER's shared priorities into coordinated delivery by helping partners align effort, reduce duplication and work together through practical implementation pathways.

55

Regional Monitoring Reporting & Adaptive Review

Make ProspER's progress visible, evidence-informed and accountable, so partners can track what is working, respond to what is changing and adapt the plan with confidence.

56

ProspER Regional Activation & Evolution Process

Keep ProspER visible, relevant and actively used as a living regional framework to 2040, building shared ownership, participation and confidence as regional priorities, partnerships and opportunities evolve.



Bringing the Plan to Life

DOMAINS OF ACTION | CATALYST PROJECTS | STRATEGIC INTENT STATEMENTS

10. CatalysER

Activating bold, high-impact projects and investable initiatives that unlock system wide value, demonstrate progress and attract further investment.

Turning strategic intent into visible regional impact

C1 Northern Rivers Health & Innovation Precincts

Turn the region's existing health infrastructure into a connected platform for specialist services, research, workforce development and health enterprise, strengthening health outcomes while growing a future-focused regional industry.

C2 Northern Rivers Local Energy & Resilience Pilot

Prove that locally generated, stored and shared energy can reduce costs, improve reliability and strengthen resilience for regional businesses, communities and essential services, creating a practical model that other regional networks could replicate.

C3 Housing on the Ground Demonstration Network

Turn regional housing ideas, design scenarios and post-flood rebuilding knowledge into delivered housing precincts that demonstrate how regional Australia can build faster, smarter, more resiliently and at greater scale.

C4 Northern Rivers Regional Trade Training Centre

Build a flagship Trade Training Centre that turns the region's housing, infrastructure and renewable energy pipeline into a genuine, future-facing career pathway, attracting young people into skilled trades and meaningful careers in the Northern Rivers.

C5 Northern Rivers Food, Fibre & Regenerative Industries Hub

Position the Northern Rivers as a recognised regenerative agribusiness region by strengthening local processing, manufacturing, export capability, native food development and enterprise pathways that capture more value from what the region grows and creates.

C6	Northern Rivers EDGE	Demonstrate how a regional economy can build long-term prosperity by connecting enterprise, discovery, growth and environmental stewardship into a visible pipeline of future-economy ideas, enterprises and opportunities.
C7	Northern Rivers Film & Content Foundations	Turn the region's creative talent, production track record and screen infrastructure potential into a sustained screen and content industry that creates jobs, grows local enterprise and strengthens the Northern Rivers' national creative profile.
C8	Northern Rivers Rail Trail Completion & Activation	Complete the Northern Rivers Rail Trail as a signature 132km regional asset that links communities, activates town centres, supports business growth and delivers lasting economic, social and place value.
C9	Lifting the Stars Accommodation & Visitor Economy Revitalisation Initiative	Lift the quality, diversity and investment readiness of accommodation and visitor infrastructure across the region to increase visitor yield, support regional dispersal and strengthen long-term economic value.
C10	Transformational Demonstration Projects – The ProspER Demonstration Engine	Create visible, region wide, place-based demonstrations of new planning, governance, investment and delivery models that accelerate regional outcomes, reduce institutional friction and build confidence in collaborative approaches to economic and community development.
C11	Brisbane 2032 Regional Transformation Initiative	Use Brisbane 2032 as a catalyst to strengthen regional business capability, cross-border collaboration, workforce readiness, visitor economy growth and long-term economic positioning across the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire.
C12	Northern Rivers Strategic Investment Campaign	Use the Northern Rivers NSW brand as a platform for a stronger investment attraction campaign that lifts the region's national visibility, showcases catalyst projects and connects enterprise, talent and capital to long-term regional opportunity.

Acknowledgements and Invitation

ProspER has been shaped by the generosity, insight and ambition of many people across the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire.

We acknowledge and thank the ProspER Advisory Board for their guidance, leadership and commitment throughout development of the Plan. And a special thank you to Dr Katherine Trebeck for her knowledge and guidance on wellbeing economy principles.

We also thank everyone who contributed to the development of ProspER through engagement roundtables, forums, workshops, place-based conversations, sector discussions, the Business Retention and Expansion Survey, Scenario Planning sessions and the Young People Advisory Council.

Your contributions have helped shape a Plan grounded in regional knowledge, practical experience and shared ambition. You brought forward the big ideas, the hard truths, the lived experience and the opportunities that matter. You helped identify the challenges holding

the region back, and the potential that can be unlocked when people, places, business, industry, government and community work together.

ProspER is stronger because of this contribution.

This Plan is not the end of the conversation. It is an invitation to continue working together: to build partnerships, align effort, attract investment, test ideas, progress priority actions and bring the Plan to life.

The opportunity now is to move forward with clarity, coordination and confidence, and to work together toward the ProspER Vision:

A connected and collaborative Northern Rivers where people, places, communities and enterprise prosper together to create a regenerative and resilient future for all.

To discuss opportunities for ongoing participation, collaboration or partnership, please contact Jane Lavery, Regional Director, Business NSW Northern Rivers, at jane.lavery@businessnsw.com or **0419 260 220**.

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Acknowledgement of Country

Across the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire,
Country is living, connected and enduring.

**ProspER acknowledges the Traditional Custodians
of the lands, waters and skies across this region.
We pay respect to Elders past and present, and to
all First Nations peoples who continue to care for
Country, culture, community and future generations.**

We acknowledge that First Nations knowledge,
enterprise, stewardship and leadership are foundational
to the identity and future of this region.

ProspER is grounded in the understanding that people,
planet and place are connected, and that the long-term
prosperity of the Northern Rivers depends on healthy Country,
strong culture and shared responsibility for the future.



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