

MIDCOAST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2023-2028





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, the Gathang-speaking people and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside in the MidCoast Council area. We extend our respect to elders past and present, and to all future cultural-knowledge holders.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

We are committed to engaging with our community in a meaningful way to make sure our community is at the heart of everything we do.

I am very pleased to be able to present the second Economic Development Strategy for the MidCoast Local Government Area.

Growth of a local economy creates new job opportunities and greater diversity of opportunity, which ultimately facilitates an improved quality of life and prosperity for residents. A strategy such as this is a critical tool that local government uses to drive local economic growth.

Through the implementation of this strategy, we will work with local businesses and business leaders aiming to stimulate growth, attract new residents and businesses and retain jobs, build opportunity, grow existing local industry sectors and diversify the economy.

The strategy, and its implementation, will work to align MidCoast Council and local business with a vision and a way forward for the region's growth that increases participation in the local economy. An improved local economy will help fortify businesses against future economic downturns and sudden shocks.

Enhanced opportunities and more jobs will improve the local economy and raise the standard of living of our residents. In turn, this will work to further attract a larger talent pool, thus feeding back into growth in the economy.

This Economic Development Strategy sets a vision and provides a framework for Council to work with the business community to deliver for the community over the next five years. To support the strategic direction outlined in this Strategy, a dynamic program of work will be developed and published annually. This approach ensures we remain agile and responsive to external pressures and the evolving needs of local businesses and industries. Funding to implement these works will need to be jointly provided by Council, State and Federal Governments (it will rely heavily on obtaining government grants), as well as our local business partners.

The creation of this strategy was a collaborative project between MidCoast Council and the Economic Development Strategy Reference Group which included business chamber and community representatives. I wish to thank the people who provided their time and advice to help MidCoast Council develop this Strategy.

Claire Pontin
Mayor

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PREFACE

This Strategy is the second edition of MidCoast Council's Economic Development Strategy. Our vision remains that the MidCoast is where people choose to live, work and invest.

It is a five-year high-level document that sets the overall intent of MidCoast Council to:

- Collaboratively build the economic capacity of the MidCoast region to improve its economic future and the quality of life of its community, and
- Do this by working with local businesses and the broader business community.

The Strategy builds on the NSW Government's Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS), 2023 update, by reinforcing the key objectives of Attract and Grow.

Setting the Scene, describes the economic landscape of the MidCoast Region and sets out our Opportunities and Challenges. This section also provides specific details.

Motivation explains the way that we will work to achieve economic development. It provides a framework of our core outcomes and links them to our key objectives of Attract and Grow.

We will work to attract skilled workers and professionals, investment, new businesses, visitors, residents, and events to the region.

We will work to grow and support businesses, collaborations and innovations, skill levels, and business culture.

A range of measures have been identified to evaluate the success of activities undertaken as a result of this strategy.

Our way forward includes a strategic implementation plan for the next five years.

The implementation plan provides a guide for the collaborative delivery of a range of projects and actions. These actions will be implemented over time in partnership between Council, government agencies, local business and industry representatives, private investors and the community.

Each year, Council will identify projects for delivery in the following financial year that will be included in Council's annual Operational Plan and budget. Therefore these documents should be read in conjunction with this strategy and the annual Economic Development Action Plan.

Each year, the Business Chambers and/or local businesses will deliver those projects more appropriately developed and delivered by the business community.

This will provide a level of flexibility to allow Council and other stakeholders to be responsive to changes in economic circumstances and/or industry needs. Each project, when identified in an annual Operational Plan, will have its own project plan to ensure appropriate internal governance in support of achieving strategic outcomes.

Progress and outcomes will be reported to stakeholders and the general community on a six monthly basis.

This document should also be read in conjunction with MidCoast Council's Destination Management Plan as tourism is a key driver of the MidCoast economy which needs to be managed sustainably.

OUR REGION - AN OVERVIEW

Home to over 98,500 people, the MidCoast offers our diverse community a wide range of economic and lifestyle opportunities.

The MidCoast contains 195 towns, villages and localities. Spanning an area of 10,052 km² MidCoast Council is the largest Council area in the Hunter covering 30.5% of the region and 1.25% of NSW. It is a large and diverse area, ranging

from beaches and coastline to mountains and hinterland, with green spaces and National Parks in between. This landscape is characterised by pristine waterways, striking scenery and an abundance of natural treasures.



01

SETTING THE SCENE

Unique to the MidCoast, there are two main population precincts, Taree and Forster-Tuncurry, each with differing economic drivers. Taree offers a wide range of regional services and facilities that are utilised across our region, including the Manning Base Hospital, Taree Regional Airport, education, sporting, entertainment and cultural facilities. Large tracts of industrial land also support a focus on industry. In contrast, Forster-Tuncurry centres around lifestyle, ideally located between the coast and lakes, both tourism and retirement living drive the economy. This has led to extensive shopping, entertainment and service facilities to support both residents and visitors.

There are also a number of rural and coastal centres that support the main population precincts – some are ‘satellite suburbs’, while others are self-reliant given their distance from the larger centres. These centres include Gloucester, Wingham, Stroud, Tea Gardens, Hawks Nest, Harrington, Old-Bar, Hallidays Point, Nahiack, Bulahdelah and Pacific Palms.

Rural centres, like Gloucester, play a significant role in our economy not only for industries but also the services they provide to their

surrounding residential catchments. In addition, there are many villages and localities, each with their own unique character and qualities.

A large portion of the MidCoast is National Park, State Forest and Nature Reserve. Much of the rural area is used for livestock farming, primarily dairy and beef cattle and the poultry industry. Oyster farming and fishing are important industries in coastal locations.

The region is also a key holiday destination. During the summer months the population swells with tourists coming to enjoy the regions pristine coastline and beaches, coastal lakes, lagoons and other environmental attractions. Popular year-round attractions include the Barrington Tops National Park and other National Parks and reserves.

The Gathang (Kattang) speaking people are the traditional owners of all the lands that cover the MidCoast.



DESTINATION BARRINGTON COAST

Destination Barrington Coast is famous for the forests, waterways and beaches. There are 15 national parks plus 63 state forests, nature reserves and conservation areas. The lands are watered by 38 rivers including the Manning River, the only double delta river system in the southern hemisphere, as well as the state's tallest single drop waterfall at 200m, Ellenborough Falls. Forster–Tuncurry is the key visitor hub, while Gloucester is the closest town for adventures in the Gondwana Rainforests of Barrington Tops. The coastal townships experience hyper-seasonality, and as such, regional dispersal and increasing low season travel are key priorities.

Offering a wide array of events and experiences in a diverse landscape, the MidCoast region (marketed as the Barrington Coast) receives over 2.22M¹ visitors every year. In 2024, tourism generated \$849M¹ towards the local economy. The daytrip visitor was the largest market, increasing by 7.7%¹ in 2024. There are 3,337²

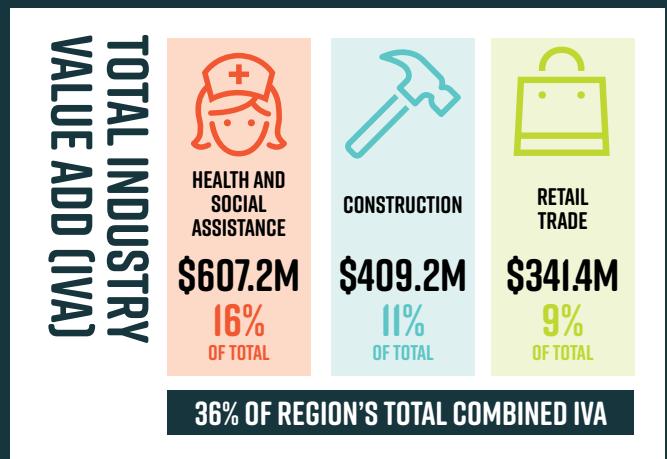
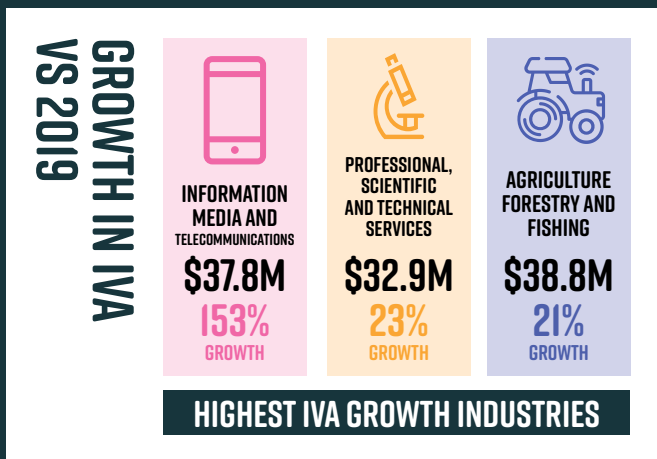
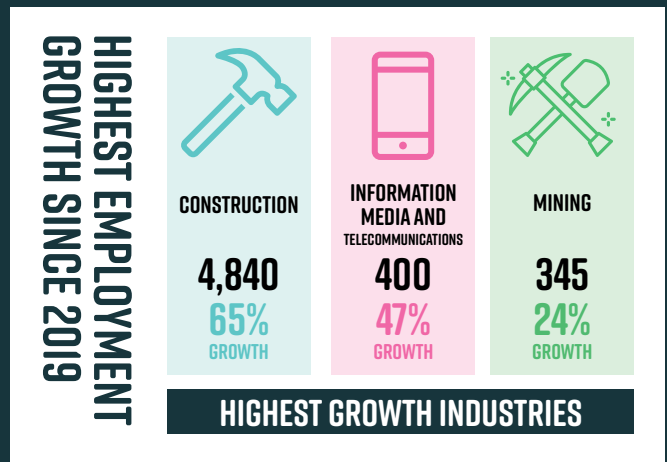
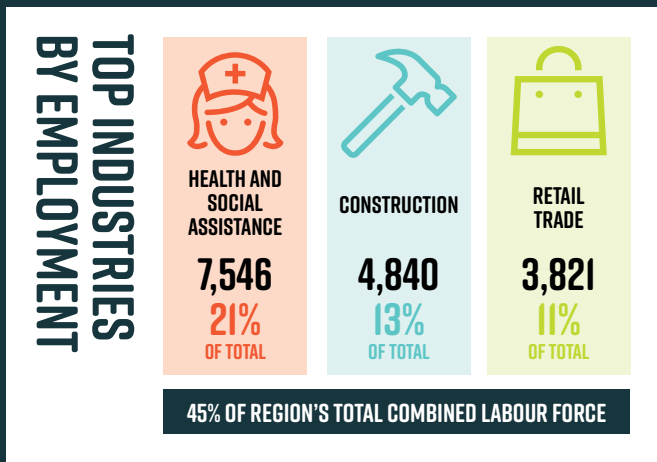
persons employed in the tourism sector valued at \$360M², or 9.4%² of total industry. The main reason for travel to the MidCoast is for holiday and leisure¹, with the majority of guests staying in hotels and motels, closely followed by caravan parks and commercial camp grounds¹. Social activities¹ is the most common activity that guests partake in during their visit.

Tourism is a key component of economic development for the MidCoast, and as such has its own strategy to compliment the Economic Development Strategy. The MidCoast Destination Management Plan (DMP) sets the direction and prioritises the sustainable growth of the visitor economy to 2030 and beyond. The focus points of the DMP are to enable a broad base of support for the visitor economy; increase the supply of paid visitor experiences and events; and increase low and shoulder season travel, as well as mid-week visitation.

Source: [1] Tourism Research Australia, 2024 Calendar Year Data for MidCoast Council. [2] Economy ID: Tourism | MidCoast | economy.id.



OUR ECONOMY - THE FACTS AND FIGURES



* IVA (Industry Value Added) and GRP (Gross Regional Product) differ in that IVA measures the value industries add, calculated as total output minus intermediate goods costs. GRP, however, includes IVA plus rents and imputed rents, which contribute to the economy but aren't linked to specific industries. This inclusion explains why GRP is always higher than total IVA, as shown in the diagram and the report.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The following opportunities and challenges for the MidCoast region compliment those identified in the MidCoast Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) 2023 update, developed by the NSW Government.

OPPORTUNITIES

Profile and locality

The MidCoast is recognised as a highly sought-after region of choice, attracting skilled residents and businesses that bring new ideas and technology. This shift has begun, and we have the opportunity to build on this change.

Collaboration and partnerships

With positive engagement between the business community and Council, there is an opportunity to build clearly visible Council and community leadership with a shared strategic vision. Now is the time to ensure that 'Can Do' and 'Make it Happen' are key philosophies that drive outcomes for the region.

Economic diversity

We have a diverse economy with pockets of excellence. A focus on maintaining this diversity whilst enhancing our strengths will drive strong flow on effects throughout the region.

Population growth

We have one of the largest Local Government Areas (LGAs) in coastal NSW with room to grow. Ensuring our population grows above current benchmarks and projections in the right locations can drive significant growth.

Planning and Land Use

The development of one set of planning controls is currently being reviewed by NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for the final stage of the project. Once approved, this will streamline development applications using a more consistent and robust planning approach.

Transport connections

The Pacific Highway, a national route, connecting Sydney and Brisbane, runs North South through the region, providing ready access to the Port of Newcastle, Newcastle Airport, Port Macquarie Airport and to Sydney and Brisbane markets.

The North Coast railway line provides passenger and rail freight services between Sydney and Brisbane, and the Taree Regional Airport has the ability to provide both passenger and freight services.

There are also important transport routes through Gloucester on the western edge of the MidCoast which link the New England and Hunter regions.

Infrastructure

With the development of a strategy that drives clearly targeted long-term growth, there is now the ability to build the infrastructure needed to support attraction and growth and to have this infrastructure strategically planned for and delivered ahead of time.

Natural environment

The MidCoast is home to extensive diversity in its natural environment. This environment provides ecosystem services and resources that are valuable to our economy. Quality management and enhancement of our landscapes provides amenity and recreation, liveability and wellbeing. Sustainable growth and prosperity can be achieved by encouraging the business community to understand and embrace the relationship between the economy and the environment as an economic driver.

ECO Accreditation

The MidCoast achieved ECO Destination Certification in 2025, making it the fifth destination in New South Wales and the 13th in Australia to receive this distinguished recognition. This achievement highlights the region's commitment to adhering to global best practice sustainable tourism. By embracing global best practices, the MidCoast is not only protecting its extraordinary natural landscapes but also strengthening local businesses' role in sustainable tourism.





CHALLENGES

Realising many of the region's economic opportunities depends on its attractiveness to residents, businesses and visitors. While the region has strong existing endowments, it is important to identify the challenges and mitigate these to maximise potential.

The key barriers to maximising the economic success of the region and to achieving business growth and success are identified as the following:

Planning and land-use regulations

Difficulties in obtaining planning and development approvals and inconsistencies in land-use regulations have been identified as key issues that inhibit population growth, the establishment of new businesses and strategic existing business growth.

Secondary education

In some areas of the MidCoast region access to secondary education choices is limited.

Tertiary education (including apprenticeship opportunities)

Students in our region do not have a traditional campus for university education.

The following education providers have a presence in our area (either as a partnership with Taree Universities Campus or stand-alone):

- TAFE NSW
- University of New England
- University of Newcastle
- Charles Sturt University

While our TAFE and other tertiary educators have a suite of options, there are significant gaps which require students (particularly apprentices in industries which will deliver growth) to travel to Port Macquarie or Newcastle for courses and training.

Infrastructure and utilities

Roads – The poor state of road infrastructure is identified as a key disadvantage to the development and the attractiveness of the area for both residents and businesses.

Telecommunications – As is the case in many other areas, there are issues with the roll-out of NBN. Poor mobile and internet coverage are also a weakness in both urban and rural areas including on major arterial roads where remote workers require consistent access to coverage.

Water – A large body of work is currently being undertaken to secure the region's water supply even though the quality of drinking water is a regional strength

Freighting

The North Coast railway line connects Sydney and Brisbane with both passenger and freight services. However, the nearest rail freight terminal is in Newcastle. Similarly, airfreight services are only available via Newcastle, adding significant transport costs.

Transport options

A lack of public transport options is a significant barrier for youth employment and higher education.

Labour force

Employers struggle to engage employees who have the full range of soft skills (employability skills such as: good communication, motivation, initiative and reliability).

Access to skilled labour and professionals is identified as a key challenge.

Hospital facilities

Currently there is a perception that our regional hospital/health facilities are not sufficient, which can deter some people from moving to the area.

Housing affordability and supply

The limited availability of residentially zoned land in appropriate locations is creating a housing supply bottleneck, in turn impacting access to affordable housing across the region. This means it is hard to attract new workers to the region to fill professional and highly-skilled job vacancies.



SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC ZONES

Due to the MidCoast’s large and varied geography, diverse townships and dispersed population/business base, it is important to analyse the strategic economic strengths, barriers to growth and opportunities at a sub-district level. The following summary is modelled on the districts identified in the Hunter Regional Plan 2041. (The name of the corresponding

districts referenced in the Hunter Plan is included in brackets below. Refer to Appendix A for maps).

Future work on this strategy should consider the clarification of the identities of our towns and villages as well as our regional economic zones.

COASTAL DISTRICT		
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-based assets (rivers, lake systems and the ocean) • Nature based assets (national parks) • Tourism assets & Experiences • Access and proximity to extensive shopping, open space, entertainment and service facilities • Access and proximity to Pacific Highway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ready for sale” residential and employment land • Lack of services in smaller townships • Remote and isolated townships • Youth retention • Hyper-seasonality • Property prices • Historic paper sub-divisions • Sustainability of communities balancing growth with community expectations • Non-navigable waterways and siltation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off-peak visitor attraction • Leveraging the aquaculture industry • Enhancing infrastructure for tourism and recreation • Increasing the residential population • Growth that is attractive to residents as well as necessary for ongoing community services • Increasing tourism and economic activity along rivers, lakes and waterways
FORSTER-TUNCURRY (FORSTER-TUNCURRY REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT GROWTH AREA)		
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-based assets (lake systems & ocean) • Tourism assets & experiences • Lifestyle attraction • Shopping & employment precincts • Strong business community connections and collaboration • Access and proximity to Pacific Highway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability for new skilled workers to find accommodation – rental or purchase • “Ready for sale” residential and employment land • Youth retention and attraction • Clear pathways for youth employment • Hyper-seasonality – impacts business viability and staff retention • Siltation and water quality • Lack of a public hospital • Lack of an accessible higher education facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New business and innovative growth through tourism expertise or local collaboration • Leveraging the aquaculture Industry • Town centre activations • Enhancing infrastructure for tourism and recreation • Encouraging off-peak visitor attraction • Integrated Urban Release Areas • Identification of the next strategic business growth strategy beyond pure tourism numbers • Investment in public health and education facilities

MIDCOAST HINTERLAND (BARRINGTON DISTRICT)

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature based assets (Gloucester Tops, Barrington Tops; Ellenborough Falls, National Parks, rivers and waterways) • Gloucester's role as a regional service centre • Strong industry representation (agricultural and emerging technology) • Rural tourism assets & experiences including vibrant country towns • Location – entry way to the New England, access to the Hunter • Heritage (Gloucester, Stroud, Wingham) • Service provision on major highways and transport routes (Bulahdelah, Stroud, Gloucester) • Lifestyle attractions due to being remote and isolated with low population • Access and proximity to Pacific Highway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote and isolated townships • Infrastructure development costs relating to water services and electrical supply • Youth retention • Protecting drinking water catchments • Current land uses and historic development patterns prohibiting employment growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Gloucester's role as a tourist base for Gloucester Tops and the Barrington Tops • Enhancing the character of rural towns and villages • Attracting population driven businesses (retail, personal services, service-industrial) • Encouraging further tech and innovation growth in Agriculture • Supporting growth in the visitor economy • Growing jobs within rural industries • Supporting rural enterprises and the agricultural sector • Increasing visitor dispersal from coastal areas • Enhancing and raising the exposure of the Gloucester Sale Yards

TAREE (TAREE REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT GROWTH AREA)

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to the Pacific Highway • Access to tertiary education via Taree Universities Campus, University of New England, and NSW TAFE • Taree Airport • Taree's role as a regional service centre • Cultural services (MEC & Manning Regional Art Gallery, museums) • Health Care Infrastructure • Taree Recreational Ground and sporting facilities • Mountain Bike Trails, Riverside parks and walkways • Railway access • Centre of excellence in disability services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of skilled workers • Youth retention • Inter-generational unemployment • Housing shortages • Ensuring the regional sporting facility is maintained to a regional standard (recycled water and irrigation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Gateway activation and commercialisation • Facilitating growth of the Taree Airport Business Park • Supporting education facilities – Taree Universities Campus, TAFE, University of Newcastle, University of New England • Developing a regional sports hub and associated visitor and event attraction • Enhancing cultural facilities and events • Urban release areas and redevelopment sites • Increasing the usage of riverside parks and walkways • Supporting the development and expansion of Health Care infrastructure

OUR VISION

The MidCoast is where people choose to live, work, visit and invest.

OUR MISSION

To collaboratively build the economic capacity of the MidCoast region to improve its economic future and the quality of life of its community.



02

MOTIVATION

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS?

Successful economic development involves change. Change through both the introduction of the new, and the enhancement of the existing. Often the two go hand in hand.

In order to create the desired change and stimulate economic growth, we need a clear strategy and targets to be able to introduce new residents, new businesses, new investors and new visitors. We also need to help our existing businesses to develop, through new ideas, new investors, skilled workers and appropriate competition.

At a simplistic level this equates to identifying and embracing two key objectives – Attract and Grow.

It is important to align our direction with that of the State Government given the grant funding opportunities that are available both now and into the future. The three core outcomes identified in the NSW Government's Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS), 2023 update, are as follows and link to our key objectives of Attract and Grow:

1. Strengthening the region's infrastructure and service offerings to attract and retain businesses, residents and visitors (attract/grow)
2. Invest in workforce development and create opportunities for local businesses to invest and grow (grow)
3. Actively pursue opportunities to bring investment, businesses and skilled workers to the region (attract)

To attract and grow, the MidCoast has already begun a meaningful transformation. A positive shift in mindset is evident across the region, and we will continue to build on this momentum. Each project now reflects a community that is enthusiastic about the unique strengths of our region, confident in our collective ability to achieve ambitious goals, and excited about the opportunities for growth and the people, ideas and investment we continue to attract. This Strategy recognises and celebrates the progress made – and commits to sustaining and amplifying this energy. Strong regional leadership will continue to be vital in championing key strategic projects and ensuring our shared vision is realised.

The 2025 MidCoast Economic Outlook provided insights into the performance of specific industries. Industries were broken down into four industry segments – economic pillars, dynamic growth sectors, high-potential industries, and industries facing challenges. Our focus will be to retain, grow and attract new businesses in these industry sectors.

Description of industry segmentation

ECONOMIC PILLARS	DYNAMIC GROWTH SECTORS	HIGH-POTENTIAL INDUSTRIES	INDUSTRIES FACING CHALLENGES
<p>These industries represent a significant share of the MidCoast's total economy, having experienced strong historic growth and expected to continue growing into the future. They are crucial for maintaining and enhancing the MidCoast's economic prosperity. While they face certain challenges, there are opportunities to secure their competitiveness moving forward.</p>	<p>These industries are embryonic or moderately sized but exhibit strong potential for growth, driven by a combination of local and broader factors. Leveraging these industries is vital for boosting the MidCoast's potential for innovation and dynamism.</p>	<p>These industries are generally moderately sized and make significant contributions to the MidCoast's economy. However, they have been affected by economic headwinds that are challenging to manage at the local level. They are reliable economic contributors that do not necessarily need to be on Council's immediate priority list for intervention.</p>	<p>These industries have experienced notable economic decline and have faced project shutdowns in the MidCoast or have been adversely impacted by broader economic headwinds. Preserving these industries is more challenging, requiring careful consideration and strategic planning.</p>

Industry segmentation in the MidCoast

ECONOMIC PILLARS	DYNAMIC GROWTH SECTORS	HIGH-POTENTIAL INDUSTRIES	INDUSTRIES FACING CHALLENGES
Construction	Information, Media and Telecommunications	Transport, Postal and Warehousing	Mining
Health Care and Social Assistance	Manufacturing	Accommodation and Food Services	Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	Art and Recreation Services
	Administrative and Support Services	Retail Trade	Wholesale Trade
	Education and Training	Financial and Insurance Services	
		Public Administration and Safety	
		Other Services	

The following framework brings together the core outcomes identified above and links them to the key objectives of Attract and Grow, by identifying nine strategic actions which underpin the delivery of this strategy.

ATTRACT

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Attract skilled workers and professionals

Market the region to skilled workers and professionals

2. Attract investment to the region

Develop an approach to investment attraction that supports medium and large-scale investment and seeks to align opportunities for this investment

3. Attract new businesses to the region

Create the assets, incentives and strategy required to present the region to new strategic businesses

4. Attract visitors to the region

Strengthen the appeal of the destination to existing markets and identify new target markets to support the sustainable growth of the visitor economy (actions and measures are identified in the MidCoast Destination Management Plan)

5. Attract residents to the region

Utilise the region's assets to attract residents to be part of our vibrant, connected communities

6. Attract events to the region

Attract and support events that capitalise on the strengths of the region to drive visitation and create vibrant and connected communities

GROW

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

7. Support business growth, collaboration innovation, and the development of new enterprises

Maintain a strong connection with the business community and an understanding of their needs. Collaborate to encourage innovation and competitiveness

8. Increase skill levels of businesses and residents

Provide a supportive environment for the development of the region's existing businesses and workforce including our youth

9. Improve local business culture

Provide an environment that generates confidence and enthusiasm within the region's business community

When assessing projects, this framework will be further used to support clear alignment.

To support this approach, the following questions will also be used to determine if support should be given to a project:

- Does this project grow the right type of business in the right location for our LGA?
- Will this project practically realise growth for local businesses?
- Will this project bring about genuine attraction of investors, visitors, businesses, residents and which is it focused on?
- Will this project support a change of mindset and support the culture change that will deliver business growth and make the region attractive?

HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

Ultimately, the success of any strategy can only be determined if it is measured. This raises the questions – what does success look like? and, what are the indicators of success?

An overarching set of measures (shown below) will provide the broad indicators of the success of this strategy. These broad indicators have been chosen as they are: consistent across the sectors; measurable with clear data that is available and regularly supplied. They will

indicate the success of an effectively delivered economic development strategy.

It is important to acknowledge that while we can target these outcomes, there are many other economic and environmental impacts that will bear upon these measures that are outside the control of MidCoast Council. General global and national economic factors may play a larger role than the actions undertaken within the MidCoast.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	BASELINE	TARGET
Total Economic Output	\$6.64 billion National Institute of Economic and Industry Research NIEIR 2022	Increase
Gross Regional Product	\$4.08 billion NIEIR 2022	Increase
Number of Residents	97,090 Estimated Residential Population, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia 2022	Increase
Proportion of residents aged 18–25yrs	5,111 Service Age Groups, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021	Increase
Dwelling Approvals	389 Local Development Performance Monitoring (LDPM) FY2021	Increase
Unemployment Rate	4.1% Small Area Labour Market, December 2022	Maintain in line with state average
Business Confidence	-50.8 Business NSW Business Confidence Index result for NSW, June 2025	Maintain
Registered Businesses	7,314 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries & Exits 2022	Increase

There are more detailed measures outlined below against each of the strategic objectives. As each project is developed, it will include a clear project plan with a specific set of measures for success. These measures will provide clarity in what we are trying to achieve, as well as accountability for the outcomes that are delivered.

ATTRACT

STRATEGIC ACTION	MEASURE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	BASELINE	TARGET
1. Attract skilled workers and professionals	Proportion of residents with university qualifications	Increase in proportion of persons aged 15+ with university qualifications	12% Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021	Increase to 14%
	Proportion of residents with vocational qualifications	Increase in proportion of persons aged 15+ with trade qualifications (certificate)	25% Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021	Increase to 26%
2. Attract investment to the region	Funding from State and Federal Government for priority economic development projects	Number of grant applications submitted for priority projects	Number and value of grants as reported in the MidCoast Council Annual Report	
		Value of grants received for priority projects identified in the economic development strategy		
3. Attract new businesses to the region	Number of businesses	Increase in the number of registered businesses	7,314 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries & Exits 2022	Increase
4. Attract visitors to the region	Measures are documented and reported via the MidCoast Destination Management Plan			
5. Attract residents to the region	Increase in number of residents	Increase in estimated population	97,090 Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Residential Population 2022	Increase
6. Attract events to the region	Attraction of strategic events in shoulder / off-peak periods	Secure major events for the region within 5 years	Number of enquiries received / events secured or held	5 events identified 2 events secured

GROW

STRATEGIC ACTION	MEASURE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	BASELINE	TARGET
7. Support business growth, collaboration and innovation and the development of new enterprises	Market value of all final goods and services produced in a region	Gross Regional Product	\$4.08 billion National Institute of Economic and Industrial Research 2022	Increase
	Number of businesses	Increase in number of registered businesses	7,314 Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries & Exits 2022	Increase
8. Increase skill levels of businesses and residents	Industry feedback on changes in staff skill level	Industry reports an increase	To be established Business survey or business consultation (mechanism to be agreed)	TBD
8. Improve local business culture	Positive sentiment regarding the future	Feedback from business regarding factors such as economic outlook, cost forecast and growth forecast	Conduct regular 'check-ins' with the business community to assess business sentiment.	TBD

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The following strategic implementation plan provides a guide for the collaborative delivery of a range of projects and actions. These actions will be implemented over the five-year life of the plan and longer in partnership between Council, government agencies, local business and industry representatives, private investors and the community.

The implementation plan aligns with NSW Government planning priorities, namely the Regional Economic Development Plan (update 2023) and existing Council strategies and plans such as the Cultural Plan and the Destination Management Plan.

To remain agile and responsive to external pressures and the evolving needs to local businesses and industries, projects and actions focusing on achieving the strategic direction of the Strategy will be developed based on priorities and available resources and will be clearly identified in Council's Operational Plan. This allows government agencies, local business and industry representatives, private investors and the community to have input and provide comment on the actions identified. Progress and outcomes will be reported to stakeholders and general community on a 6-monthly basis in line with operational plan reporting.



03

OUR WAY FORWARD

The Economic Development Strategy will be implemented through a broad network of partnerships involving various stakeholders, including State and Federal government agencies, local businesses and industry representatives, private investors, and the community. Given this collaborative approach, it is essential to clearly define the role that Council will undertake in leading, supporting, and coordinating these efforts. Council's role will be defined by the nature and scope of each project.

These roles are described below:

ROLE	DESCRIPTION
Advocate	Council makes representations to State and Federal government, industry and other sectors to achieve the best possible outcomes for the MidCoast community.
Capacity Builder	Council works with business, community groups and agencies so the community can become self-sufficient in order to meet local needs. Council will mentor and/or assist business and community groups to obtain the necessary resources through partnerships with other agencies.
Deliverer	The project is delivered either wholly or partly in conjunction with business, community groups and agencies.
Funding Provider	Funding is provided either wholly or partly to deliver infrastructure, services, facilities and programs that meet the needs of the community.
Leader	Key community issues are identified, and local and external stakeholders are mobilised to respond where appropriate. If Council leads it plans and provides direction through policy and practices.
Partner	Partnerships are developed with business, the community, private and government organisations to deliver benefits for the community.
Planner	Research is undertaken, information is collected and consultation with community stakeholders is used to develop and evaluate ways to resolve identified issues. This work is undertaken from a whole of community perspective.
Regulator	Council has a statutory role in approvals and mandatory inspections, provides enforcement or penalties for breaches of regulations.

ATTRACT

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	IMPLEMENTATION AREAS
1. Attract skilled workers and professionals	1.1 Develop and partner with key stakeholders on projects that support the attraction of a skilled, motivated, accountable and high-performing workforce 1.2 Encourage development, including major capital works projects, that will increase the region's attractiveness to sea/tree change professionals and other skilled workers
2. Attract investment to the region	2.1 Partner with State and Federal Government and other funding bodies to attract and facilitate investment 2.2 Develop a coordinated approach to attract private investment to the region
3. Attract new businesses to the region	3.1 Enhance and expand business infrastructure that will be drivers for growth 3.2 Leverage the expansion of the Newcastle Airport 3.3 Identify and harness opportunities to attract specific businesses or business sectors to the region based on identified need and regional strengths 3.4 Actively support new businesses with advice and other services
4. Attract visitors to the region	4.1 Support the delivery of strategic actions identified in the MidCoast Destination Management Plan
5. Attract residents to the region	5.1 Collaborate with the Destination Marketing team to inspire residents to explore and enjoy experiences available in their own backyard 5.2 Support projects that enhance infrastructure and strengthen connections to key community assets and attractions, enriching liveability and regional appeal.
6. Attract events to the region	6.1 Attract and support strategic events that highlight the region's strengths, drive visitation, and foster connected communities, with a focus on increasing off-peak and seasonal event activity.



GROW

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	IMPLEMENTATION AREAS
<p>7. Support business growth, collaboration innovation and the development of new enterprises</p>	7.1 Create and encourage internal awareness of Economic Development
	7.2 Maintain and enhance Council's relationship with all business chambers and other regional organisations
	7.3 Encourage partnerships to enable business to leverage each other and other groups
	7.4 Engage with the economic pillar, dynamic growth, and high-potential industry sectors
	7.5 Encourage the development of employment hubs to support growth and innovation in specialised industry groups
	7.6 Identify and support innovative businesses located in the MidCoast
<p>8. Increase skill levels of businesses and residents</p>	8.1 Engage with industry and key stakeholders to identify skills and education gaps and collaborate on targeted initiatives that address these workforce needs.
	8.2 Strengthen the capacity of our young people to participate and thrive in community life
<p>9. Improve local business culture</p>	9.1 Develop a coordinated approach to monitor business sentiment in the region
	9.2 Support and help grow local and regional business networks
	9.3 Strengthen business connections through programs and partnerships with business industry representatives, other tiers of government and regional organisations to facilitate information sharing and provide business support





04

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Sub-Districts Maps (source: Hunter Regional Plan 2041)

Barrington District

(Note map includes Dungog LGA; however, this region is not part of the MidCoast Economic Development Strategy)

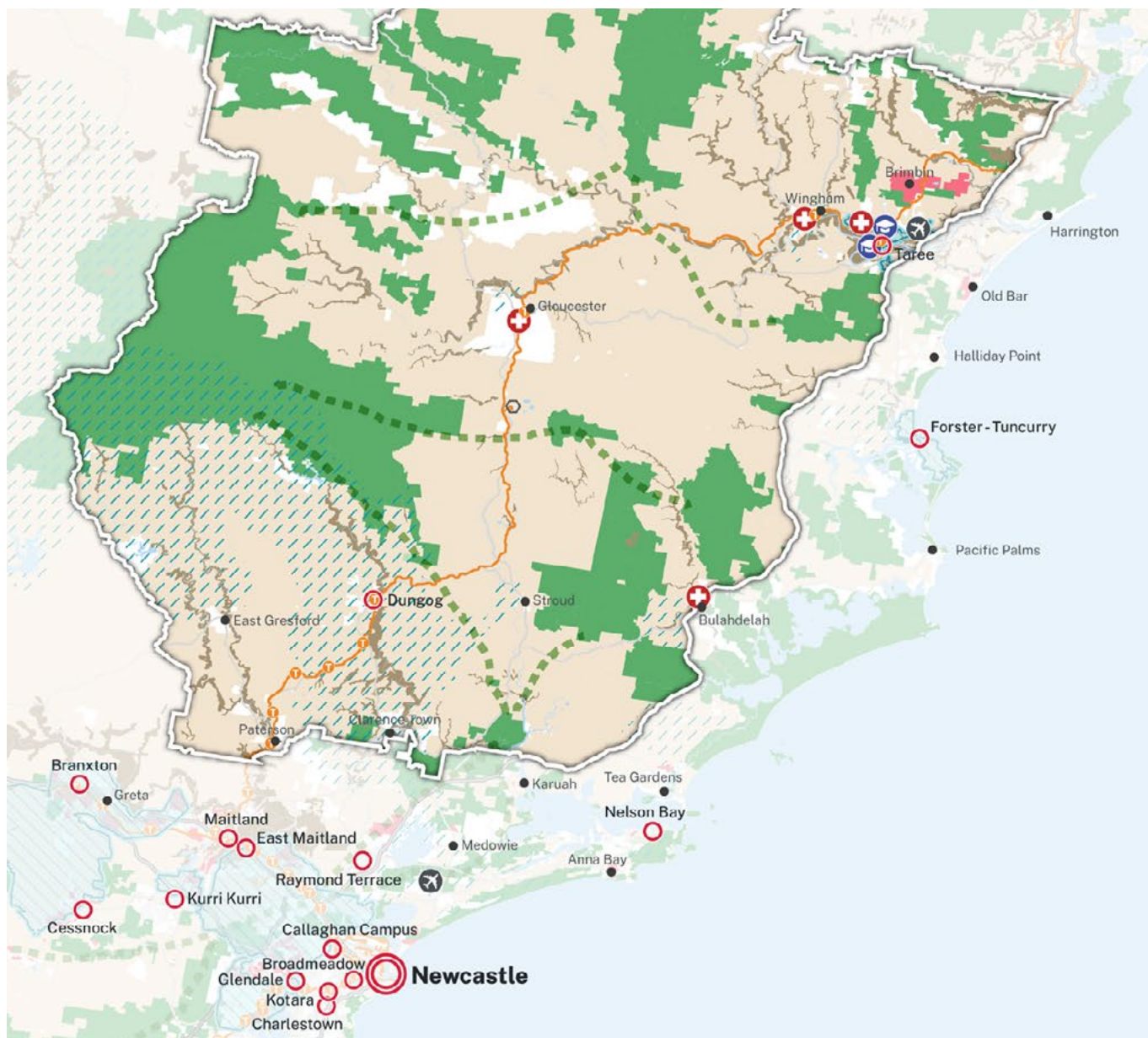


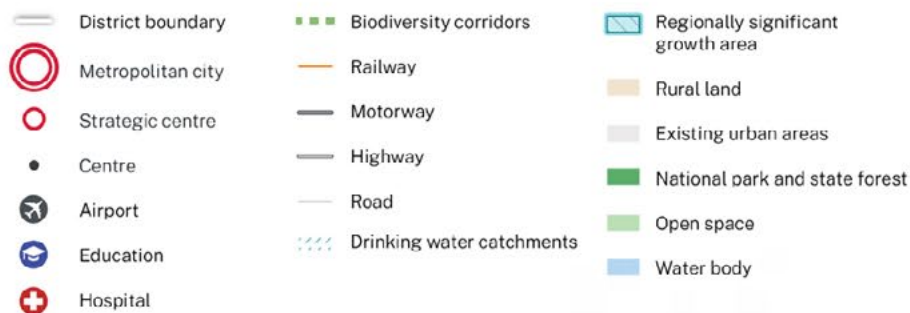
Figure 37: Barrington district



Coastal District



Figure 39: Coastal district



Taree regionally significant growth area

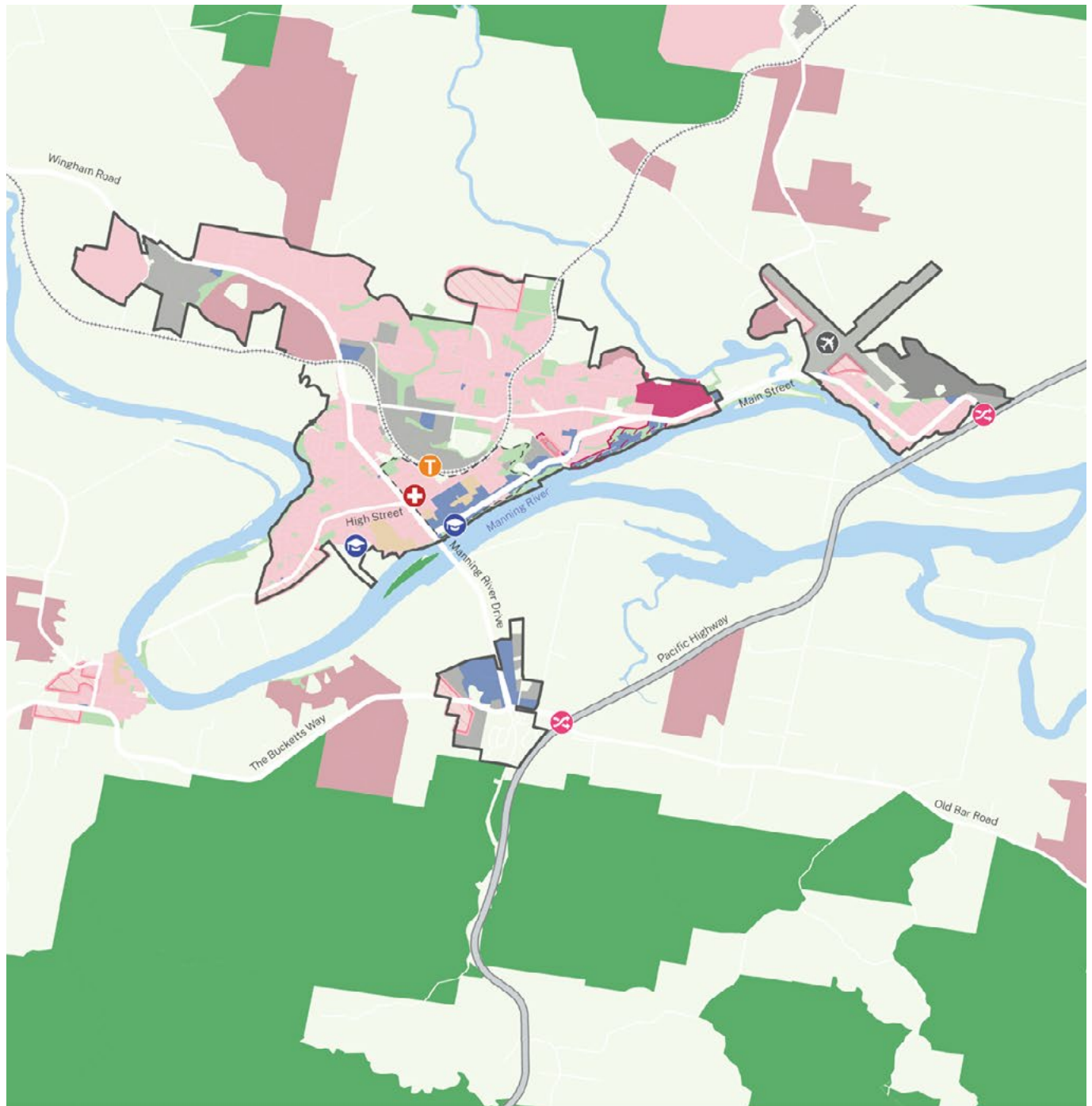


Figure 38: Taree regionally significant growth area



- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| — Taree urban footprint | Employment precinct | Railway | National park and state forest |
| - - - Manning Health/Taree CBD precinct | Heritage conservation area (EPI) | — Highway | Open space |
| Business land | Urban release area | Train station | Water body |
| Industrial land | Redevelopment site | Taree Regional Airport | |
| Residential land | Taree regional recreation centre | Education | |
| Existing rural residential | Northern Gateway Transport Hub | Highway interchange | |
| | | Taree Hospital | |

Forster-Tuncurry regionally significant growth area

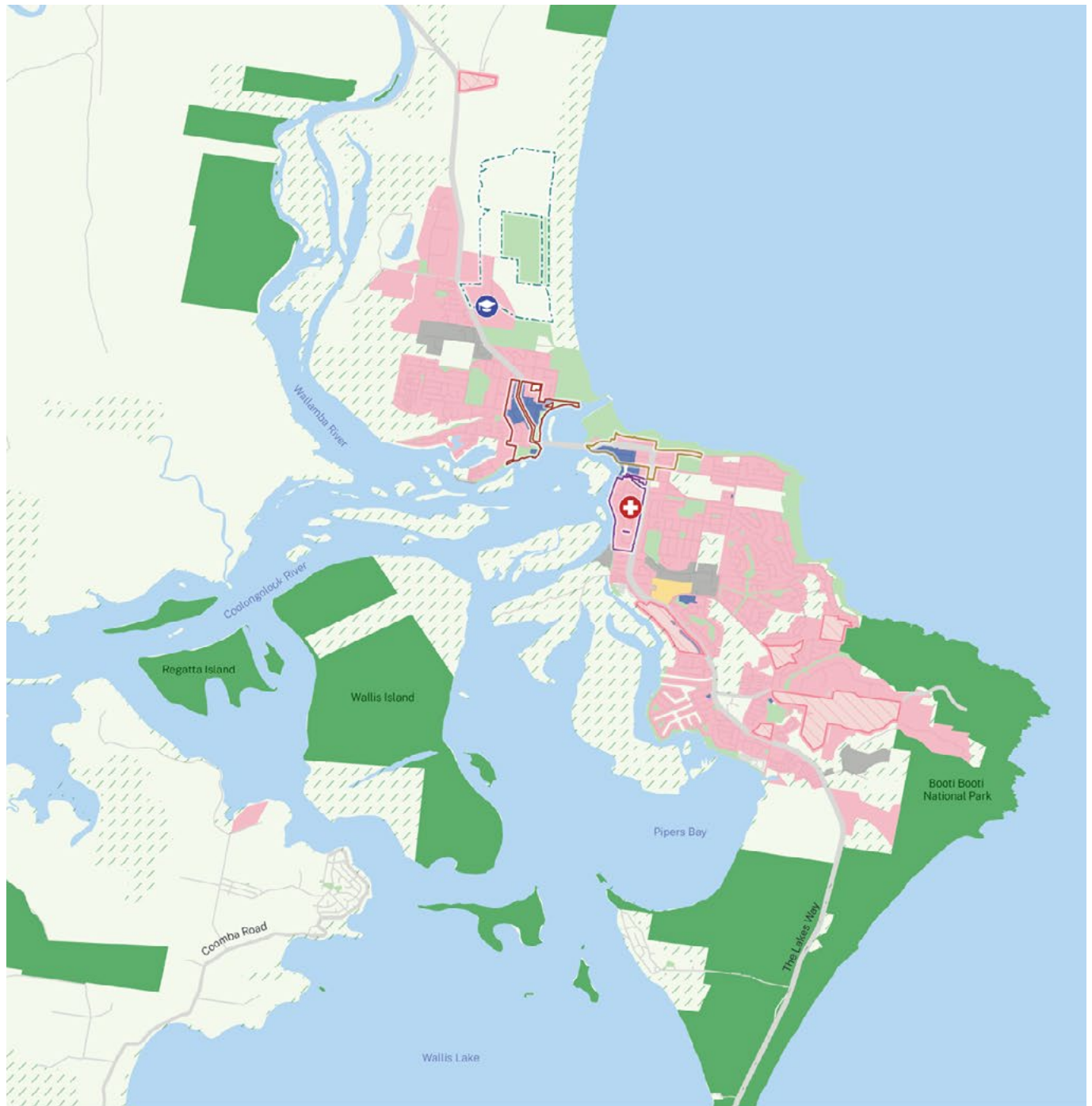


Figure 40: Forster regionally significant growth area



Business land	North Tuncurry urban release area	Education
Industrial land	Forster town centre and Main Beach	Hospital
Residential land	Tuncurry town centre and lake foreshore	National park and state forest
Forster Shopping Village	Lakeside residential	Open space
Urban release area	Road	Water body
Conservation zone		

Appendix B – Related Plans

- MidCoast Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update (Department of Regional NSW)
- MidCoast Cultural Plan 2036
- MidCoast 2025–2035 Community Strategic Plan
- MidCoast Council’s Delivery Program 2022–2026 and Operational Plan 2025–26
- MidCoast Destination Management Plan 2017 2030

Appendix C – Glossary

Gross Regional Product	The total value of final goods and services produced in the region over the period of one (1) year
Gross Value Add	An indicator of how productive each industry sector is at increasing the value of its inputs
Total Economic Output	The amount of goods or services produced in a time period by the local economy
Visitor Economy	Encompasses anyone who provides or promotes services to the region’s domestic and international visitors
Employment	Employment data represents the number of people employed by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region

Appendix D - The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework

The IP&R framework was first introduced by the Office of Local Government in 2009. It is based on the idea that Council planning should be linked directly to community priorities. The framework is made up of several different plans that work alongside each other.

For more information visit:

<https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/integrated-planning-and-reporting/>

