

## **Rural Land Strategy Issues Forums Feedback**

**A thematic breakdown of comments received at the Stage 2 Round 1  
Community Issues Forums held in May and June 2013  
at Tyalgum, Chillingham, Murwillumbah, Burringbar, Pottsville,  
Kingscliff, and Piggabeen.**



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## Introduction

More than 150 people attended the Community Issues Forums - at Tyalgum, Chillingham, Murwillumbah, Burringbar, Pottsville, Piggabeen and Kingscliff - to meet with Council officers and express their concerns, desires and expectations for the future of rural land in the Tweed.

Their comments have been summarised, grouped into themes (listed below) and forwarded to consultants EnPlan Partners to consider for inclusion in a Background and Issues Paper.

Feedback themes:

- Ageing population and potential to subdivide
- Alternative land uses, scale of enterprise
- Biophysical constraints, land capability, land classification
- Character, scenic amenity
- Conflict between adjoining land uses
- Council/government constraints
- Economic, financial
- Environment, vegetation management, biodiversity, clearing
- Flexibility
- General, procedures
- Heritage
- Infrastructure
- Incentives
- Lack of support, recognition and/or information
- Lot size, subdivision, dwelling entitlements
- Maintaining diversity of rural enterprises and consistency of built form
- Productivity
- Roadside stalls
- Social impacts, workforce
- Sustainability
- Tourism
- Villages, where to live, housing options, development
- Vision
- Invasive species

In addition to helping identify issues, community members made a range of suggestions about better managing the future of Tweed rural lands. These suggestions are listed in the final section Options, Actions, Suggestions.

## **Ageing population and potential to subdivide**

- As get old, get tired, productivity down, can't maintain property. Want children to come back but can't subdivide, therefore forced to sell.
- Need to bring young people into farming. Current controls don't take into account that while someone might own and live on a property, they might not be able to take care of it. Those who want to work on land, can't.
- Retirees have resources to put behind developing properties.

## **Alternative land uses, scale of enterprise**

- Need to understand that the Tweed will not have large-scale enterprises - excluding sugar cane - mainly because of the cost of land and a lack of return.
- Competition with rural markets in other regions.
- Agriculture is really only a 'theme' in Tweed Shire.
- Rural retreats.
- Need options for a diverse landuses.
- Need off-farm income.
- Tourism facilities are expensive.
- Tourists want to drive to rural villages, farm-door visits, cows and bushwalks; don't want five-acre subdivisions.
- Farm-stay option to value-add to existing rural.
- Future will be a mix of land uses and people.
- Don't want a bed and breakfast free-for-all. There are more than 80 B&Bs in Maleny and they're all going broke.
- Montville - not the style of development for the Tweed.
- Wind farming on the escarpment.
- Bamboo grower / small workforce sustainable product - does this model present opportunities for growth?
- Mushrooms for farmers markets, restaurants.
- Diversification / local distribution network.
- Canefarmers allowing farming land to be utilised for other uses.

## **Biophysical constraints, land capability and classification**

- Major landslips from rainfall (1.5m) in early part of 2013.
- Council has a one- metre cut and fill limit which applies to rural land to restrict excess earthworks.
- Land capability - concerned that may not reflect technology and future opportunities.
- Concerns about blanket zonings - boundaries don't necessarily conform to the quality of the land.
- Classification of state significance of land at locations such as Burringbar a concern.
- Ownership of good farming land - state significance. Cane land zoned as regionally significant - both types of land are protected.
- Water security is a big issue for the future.
- Farms 8ha of another farmer's 30 ha creek flats, which has no flood free land, and has irrigation restrictions.
- Soils are very poor in certain locations.
- Land can't be sold because it's too steep for housing.

- Where is the Biosphere concept applied?
- Land capability and strategy already done (DLWC Soil Landscape) (Sinclair Merz Knight 2002).
- Floodplain is good for farms - protect.
- Tyalgum okay for cattle.
- The ridges are not good.
- How can it be a food bowl when its cane and the rest is not good.
- Tweed Shire is not a rich agricultural area.
- Green doesn't equal quality.
- The best protein for cattle is available from pasture grown over the dividing range.
- Septic systems don't exist anymore; there is newer technology.
- Land Class - sugar cane and quality linked to use.
- Urban runoff / quality / quantity is an issue on adjoining rural land.
- Can't mechanise and compete with other productive areas because land in the Tweed is too steep and not viable.
- Piggabeen has never really been an agricultural area.
- The area is too rugged to compete with other broad-acre areas.
- Stream erosion in the Tweed is a natural process and requires attention.
- Capability mapping needs to be recognised as an approximation only at the scale that it is mapped. Need clear detail of how maps were developed.
- Concerned about chemical residue from cropping.
- Hobby farms all have riparian rights, creating an issue of water usage and availability.
- Need to know what new landowners want to do with their land first, if they want to irrigate, is the harvestable right sufficient for the landuse?
- Will land capability leading to subdivision (minimum lot size) changes?
- No to coal seam gas mining.

## Character, scenic amenity

- The drive into Pottsville is the worst view in the Tweed.
- Retain rural character.
- Encourage landscape amenity along the Tweed River - native planting along roadside, creeks and rivers. Better utilisation of landscape to enhance the Tweed's market edge to draw people to the area. Huge potential to draw tourists down from South East Queensland.
- Need to maintain character in 'similar' or 'in keeping with'.
- Maintain long views.
- Concern over lot size and its relationship to views from and to residential development such as Hundred Hills.

## Conflict between adjoining land uses

- As urban sprawl continues, farms become less sustainable and farming land is lost.
- Should be expansion and consolidation of existing villages, rather than ribbon development.
- Protection of rural land is important. Encroaching urban sprawl will push rural properties into rural-residential. Concerned that rural landholders will get driven out.
- Purchasers of land adjoining rural zoned land should accept existing right of farmers to retain their existing farming practices and not 'push' farmers out.
- Choice to buy should be based on an understanding of existing limitations of a property.

- Where adjoining a town or small lots – fencing by small landowners causes conflict when demanded farmer fixes fences.
- Need an information brochure advising 'non-rural' adjoining landowners of the rights of farmers.
- Option for advice in 149 Certificate.
- Don't want to change - don't want to be built out.
- Concern that Gold Coast will spread into the Tweed, such as Casuarina and Salt which is extending into the Kings Forest area. Impact of lights at night.
- Can activities on the farm continue because of close proximity to residential properties - spraying, noise and slashing?
- Developer should include buffers on their land, not on the rural property. Should be an option to share a buffer with neighbours.
- Need a buffer around Kings Forest.
- Our small dairy can't be converted into a building or barn but can have huge residential development on adjoining land.
- Spraying, tractors etc generate land use conflict between rural and urban land that should burden farmers.
- Domestic animals - urban vs. rural conflict.
- Buffer should be on 'developed' land.
- Broadacre farming concern about subdivision nearby because local communities complain about farming activities.
- Land use conflicts!! Residential development in rural land - weeds, noise and smell are issues where residential and rural meet.
- How you manage existing conflicts, prevent upcoming ones.
- Make provision for clear / sufficient buffers.
- Potential issues of residential and rural interface include spraying, noise and new residents in rural areas objecting to rural industries.
- Mounting conflict between residential amenity and farm uses; for example, difficulty moving cattle around different paddocks and across roads. Drivers have driven through herds rather than waiting, scattering cattle.
- Farmer making a percentage of his living. Concerned about rural lifestyle blocks which already surrounded property – new neighbours don't like cattle e.g. cattle get out.
- Conflicting uses e.g. saleyards, cattle dip, sugar cane, school etc but if saleyards close, transport to the nearest saleyards will be too expensive.
- Adjoining neighbours don't meet their duty of care.
- Now surrounded by tree-changers, were that themselves 25 years ago.
- Rural lifestyle lot owners not looking after land and causing conflict.
- Creeks/land ownership - conflict as land opened up to the public - maintenance of that land in worse hands when taken from the farmers.
- Some aspects of rural life could offend non-rural people e.g. want to spray, start cattle truck, dogs barking shouldn't become a constraint to undertaking genuine rural activities.
- New venturers into the area need to recognise adjoining properties and their existing use rights.
- Rural landowners want to retain the ability to work at hours suitable to their farming activities.
- Eco tourism shouldn't affect adjoining owners when spraying and baiting.
- Buyers beware - tourism providers need to do their research.
- Hours reflect the right to farm.

- New people moving to a block should know what the adjoining land uses are and shouldn't have influence over existing land uses - buffers.

## Council/government constraints

- Support needed for small local business in cost and paperwork - more help from Council Planners, need streamlining and minimisation of costs. Council constraints.
- NSW Safe Food sets quality assurance requirements. Why should Council then add further requirements?
- Processing requirements: e.g. cutting and bagging adds to cost, outside of Council, but Council applies additional requirements and possible duplication.
- Need a better balance between constraints, requirements, pricing and maintaining viability, getting a business started. Need to reduce duplication.
- Need an Economic Development Officer.
- Define a clear demarcation of State/Region/Federal responsibilities in supporting rural industries.
- Council and State Government have rural lands responsibility.
- Feel like beggars when go to Council to ask for support.
- Problem with Council in hygiene standard requirements.
- Would like to use Council kitchens for cheese making.
- Council doesn't do anything to help rural landowners.
- Council's workers quarters requirements were expensive and complex.
- Options to vary development charges for small area farmers.
- Bridge for proposed development had to be one in 100 years but Council bridges aren't built to the same standard.
- Reasonable job on roads but could be more economical.
- Some growth is acceptable, but which is sustainable – with managed development standards.
- Rates have doubled in the past seven to eight years.
- Council seems to want to get rid of cattle yards, selling assets that might be valuable in future, e.g. gravel quarries. Noise complaints, draws income to Murwillumbah, not just about the cost of operating. Need to look at the big picture, not just short-term financial gains.
- Too much red tape. Need to allow farming to be more dynamic, free of regulation.
- Why have no Councillors attended the forums?
- Newcomers should pay higher rates because they generate the needs.
- Council should assist long-term owners of farm land to benefit from the land by selling small parts of the farm or value adding.
- Hindered by red tape and approvals process.
- Too much red tape for various approvals, especially for 'value adding' enterprise.
- Restrictions are too onerous.
- Rates penalties are too high, especially during drought.
- Regulations restrict mobile slaughter facilities - NSW stricter than any other state.
- Local farmers' market conditions were too demanding. Council inspector didn't allow hand written labels, recycled jars. Fees to get to Council to check commercial conditions are too much.
- Can't even put up a sign about koalas crossing.
- Council wanted me to fence the creek - will they be there to repair it when it washes away?
- Working around regulation. Need to work together
- Council will let you put a dwelling as long as it's connected by a path.

- Once applications go into Council, 'do-gooder' neighbours complain. That's why people do their own changes without Council authority.
- People don't abide by their development applications, 'one rule for some people'.
- Workers cottage was approved 15 years ago and still used for that. Not policed.
- Annual land rates at Byangum are \$9,000, was too expensive. Are any further land tax subsidies available?
- Need codes to enforce acceptable standards. The owner of the property should be in control of the code.
- Flexibility is needed in the planning process. Planning is one of the two main issues facing farmers.
- Two biggest threats - lack of flexibility in Tweed Shire Council controls and economics.
- Hampered by environmental red tape.
- Need locality local planning / each area is different - rural - differential rating dropping it would kill off agriculture.
- Council taking over properties, not consulting, rezoning without notification, e.g. turned land into corridors. Only hear about changes via the grapevine.
- Lots of rules and regulations, need to pay for own water from dams to Department of Water Resources.
- Council threatens rural farming.
- As soon as want to do something, Council has a lot of restrictions.
- Hampered by huge upfront contributions before having a single customer.
- Cudgen doesn't want to be a suburb - State Government controls ensured protection of agricultural land.
- Landowners are reluctant to ask for advice from Council because they fear they will be told they can't proceed - rather than receiving assistance.
- Council imposes extreme requirements for contributions.
- Need more carrot, rather than stick, e.g. reduced rates for environmental land.
- Council threatens farming.
- Rural workers dwelling of interest - contributions have ruled out - Council red tape - zoning - environmental protection.
- Bureaucracy - forums, fees, baiting, rules and being governed by outside factors.
- Rumour of auditing so landholders meet certain standards.
- EPA audit all Meat Livestock Association (M&LA) members, auditing such things as chemical use, must prepare a management plan, chemical plan, keep a feed register, and notification of potential contamination sites.
- Lots of paperwork for small landowner.
- Council letting land management go, while landowners work hard, i.e. roadsides and public bushland.
- Crown and Council land should be accessible for recreation i.e. bushwalking.

## **Economic, financial**

- Lots of landowners are have low incomes.
- Need to do two farmers markets per week but not seven days a week. Need to get retail price for produce.
- Running out of land for economically viable farming - land is overvalued.
- Land values is a primary constraint.
- Out of 156 acres, only have 100 acres that pay rates.
- Economics of staying on the land becoming harder.

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- Bigger issue is the return on land price, e.g. 10 acres costing \$600,000.
  - Need community economic development strategy for local produce.
  - Returns for farmers from farmers markets - is it viable?
  - Farming is not a very productive income.
  - Can't make a living from supply agreements with chicken farmers and Condong Sugar Mill.
  - Farming can only exist if we are making money. Federal legislation and imports are detrimental to industries and their workforce.
  - No subsidies for agriculture in Australia, which greatly affects its ability to compete with imports.
  - Vision of having a sustainable farm - economically and its farming practices. Want to pass on a viable and fertile business.
  - Labour protection in Australia is making it difficult to compete with overseas markets, e.g. labour in Mexico is a fraction of the cost, which is pricing out Australian produce. We simply can't compete with overseas labour rates.
  - More and more farmers need off-farm income to survive, more and more difficult to rely entirely on farming practice to pay the bills.
  - Third and fourth-generation farmers can't afford to fix/build new fences.
  - Previously heavily invested in bananas but had to walk away - too hard to compete with north Queensland. North Queensland bananas grown on flatter country - easy to farm and more of them.
  - Can't afford to employ staff on a more full-time basis.
  - Significant price differential from farmers to market place. Farmers always getting the raw end of the deal, e.g. sells lettuce for 20 cents in bulk but being sold for \$3 at local co-operative. Farming doing the hard work but not benefitting financially from it.
  - Farm set up to produce premium quality vegetables for vegans - fully organically certified. Found a good market - Macro Health Foods in Bondi. Initially a good relationship, bought all produce, split transport costs and paid in good turnaround. Transportation now an issue and also wanted a 15 per cent discount if farmer wanted to be paid in seven days, otherwise a standard 90-day account. No cash flow makes it very difficult, on top of additional transport costs. No longer viable.
  - Seems to be lots of grant money around for gallery and museum extensions but nothing to help the struggling agricultural industry.
  - If your land is worth a certain amount, can't get a pension.
  - Rates based on valuations, even though if you were to try to sell, there's no way you would get the price of that valuation, e.g. \$3,500 for 12 months.
  - Smaller holdings potentially more profitable, easier to manage e.g. grow garlic, only way to make a good living is to value-add by turning raw garlic into other products.
  - Across the board, people are spending proportionally less on food than previously. In 1950, people spent 25 per cent of income on food; today it is only 10 per cent.
  - Fairer pricing for produce needed, e.g. farmer pays picker \$1 per kg, then sells for \$2.50 per kg (makes \$1.50 for six months growing and nurturing). Then supermarket sells produce for \$7 per kg, making considerable profit.
  - Never been entitled to drought relief. Doesn't give landowners access to capital needed during drought.
  - Seek more off-farm income during drought, downsize stock. Treat calves separately.
  - Value cheapened by lots of competition from outside suppliers.
  - Local markets verify produce and its source, check registrations for trailer, rates. Council doesn't charge an additional registration fee and do random checks of conditions at 'free for alls' like Pottsville and Kingscliff, which cheapen the local economy.
  - No return on crops.
  - Difficulty making a profit. General public won't pay the additional cost of locally produced food.
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- Local food production is not viable - not valued.
- Why is there no economic strategy? Need to look at jobs in rural industry.
- Everything is drive by money.
- Older farmers need retirement package.
- Better income from clean and green.
- How can Council sustain farming with commodity prices? Council has no role in pricing structure or outcomes. Economics of scale taking local infrastructure away.
- Imports are subsidised. Returns to local farmers stay the same, while costs go up. Transport costs hurting piggery - slaughter houses too far away.
- Working two jobs because farming alone is not sufficient.
- Need 400 breeders to make any income.
- Lot size coupled with economies of scale - doesn't work anymore, especially with property prices.
- Decreased property value - \$2.2 million now \$750,000 for Tyalgum farm.
- Separate title allows financial opportunities for medical/aged care.
- Farming needs other income.
- Land valuations do not reflect land productivity.
- The farm is our superannuation, would like to stay on the property.
- Can't get labour to pick passionfruit because workers go to Bundaberg, Childers, Tulley, where there are larger properties.
- Agricultural is becoming more expensive - materials, peak oil, climate change. Input more expensive.
- Age distribution of farmers, labour costs going up, dairying going down, oversupply of cattle.
- Diversification hindered by capital expense.
- Economies of scale forcing family farms out.
- Children can't afford to live in Tweed, capable of farming but choose to leave.
- Cattle prices are biggest problem, can't wean on property.
- Grant farming - can be materials 'funding' but needs more information sharing.
- Increase in land rate by more than 40-60 per cent; coastal areas not hit with same increase.
- Rates up but no services and poor roads.
- Don't want rates money wasted.

## **Environment, vegetation management, biodiversity**

- Can't clear 10 acres.
- Tweed is a biodiversity hotspot, so planning needs to incorporate ecological diversity.
- Delicate balance between World Heritage listing, rural production and subdivision - exceptional rural land in the valley.
- Need to protect environment.
- Organic farming guidelines - need native vegetation and biodiversity.
- Wildlife corridor buffers needed between Kings Forest and rural land.
- 30-year holding in Tyalgum - aiding forested land.
- Zoning needs to recognise reserved areas.
- Green Tweed - need to retain environmental value as an economic / social asset.
- Land that hasn't been cleared by now should never be allowed to be cleared.
- Preserve escarpments.

- There is a perception that there aren't trees in the Tweed. There are more trees than ever before, now bananas and the dairy/cattle industry have dropped. Plantation and grazing land now reverting to native vegetation.
- Ex-banana block converted to rainforest to extend wildlife corridors.
- Joined Landcare.
- Council approved Kings Forest 25 years ago but there's no other koala habitat.
- Lots of koala sightings now, finding good habitat.
- Support to reforest marginal land from primary production is negligible.
- Concerns about water quality in the waterways - lack of vegetation making landslides more prevalent.
- Council creating corridors and riparian zones without personal consultation.
- Carbon sequestration - land locked up for too long and doesn't consider existing vegetation.
- Land rehabilitation a good strategy by expensive.
- Environmental management and awareness is an increasing issue.
- Financial viability of property is jeopardised if land is entirely rezoned environmental.
- Some farmers would destroy endangered species as soon as possible if they found them.
- Many koalas on property are gone, despite planting koala food trees; so the idea of a koala/wildlife corridor might not be necessary.
- Corridors should be developed in consultation with the community.
- Two-thirds of property under environmental protection; pay rates but can't do anything on it.
- Why pay same rates for environmental protection zones as other land? If society wants to lock up land, why pay same rates?
- There should be retention of and expansion of vegetation corridors.
- Need case-by-case consideration of vegetation corridors; agricultural pursuits should be included in discussion.
- Environmental changes will force farming changes.

## Flexibility

- Need to have more flexibility in what can be done.
- Flat zones don't work.

## General comments

- Waiting to clear land to boost productivity. Over the hippie era, newcomers want to make a living off the land.
- We can produce the food but half the world can't afford it.
- Waiting on public feedback.
- Rural Land Strategy should showcase how rural land can be planned and managed.
- Great opportunity in the Tweed.
- What are the rules for the farming industry?
- Working the farm is hard work with long hours, can't apply an hourly rate. Making money is not the only driver - also about lifestyle.
- Too much emphasis given to other land uses instead of farmers' interests.
- Cattle are agisted and do the rural landholder a favour.
- Where are the results from previous reports and strategies? They do not appear to be available to the public.

- Food is safe, away from radiation.
- Used to be 1200 dairy farmers, now just five.
- Unhappy with farmer interview process. Who decided who would be interviewed?
- Tweed Future 04/24 was a tremendous document, allowed flexibility, allowed super/access to assets.
- We live like peasants to provide a rural landscape for day-trippers.
- Farming is a 24-hour job.
- Previous strategies (LEP 87/2000) endorsed but rejected by Grafton - Council officers undermined Council resolution.
- Concerned about how the study is going; terms of reference - seeking a predetermined outcome. Everyone should listen to everyone, not separate.
- Why were some interviewed and not others?
- What qualifications in PRU are specific to this study?
- Thought it was an open forum - disappointed with the 'divide and conquer' format.
- What right do non-landholders have to say what happens?
- Remember the Draft Rural Settlement Plan done by the LEP advisory committee.
- Remember the Tweed Rural Land Use Study done by Sinclair Knight and Merz.
- The four-year priorities in Council's Tweed Futures 2004-2024 included establishing a Tweed rural partnership; formulate a new model for the productive use of rural lands to promote ongoing viability of rural industries. It would be reviewed every four to five years to ensure adequate progress is made, outcomes are achieved, changing circumstances and needs are taken into account and necessary adjustments are made.
- The Draft Rural Settlement Plan, Tweed Rural Land Use Study and Tweed Futures did not lead to anything being done for the rural sector, so why should we trust you now?
- Consider Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- Co-dependence on the three sugar mills.
- The community is trespassing on private farmland, using it for recreation purposes.
- Farmers should have a right to farm.
- More rainfall under climate change will have unknown impact.
- Hobby farmers don't show as much TLC, with cattle there to eat there grass.
- Dairy farms are fragmented.
- Can't borrow to buy/build a house on multiple occupancy properties and might be insurance problems.
- Out-of-town visitors just walk onto properties without consideration that it is private property. Usually Queenslanders.
- Concern that hadn't heard about Rural Land Strategy until today.
- Not everyone wants people coming onto the property.
- Should be more trust in rural landowners' ability to look after their land.
- Talk to stores etc.
- We should be able to do what we want with our land.
- Would the strategy restrict future uses?
- EPA closed the piggeries.
- Include share farming, i.e. historic perspective.
- No farms on the Gold Coast.

## Heritage

- Aboriginal sites in area and coastal strip have been destroyed, collected etc, now useless.
- Referred to Isabel McBride book on local aboriginal history.

- Rural Land strategy might raise heritage fear that land will be locked up or lose possession. Need carrot, not stick.
- Need to show a clear linkage between Aboriginal heritage and management of rural land.
- Concerned about strategy e.g. heritage listing of hall.

## Infrastructure

- Infrastructure is a major constraint.
- How are the roads going to cope with the extra population at Kings Forest?
- Additional local population will increase traffic on rural road, so need better roads and more contributions from developers - rural and residential.
- Rising population increasing need for infrastructure and higher rates.
- Infrastructure needs to match population growth.
- Local co-operatives are closing down. Murwillumbah abattoir closed; now have to pay to transport cattle to Casino.
- Murwillumbah livestock saleyard might close because surrounding residents complain about noise etc. If it closes, would have to pay extra to transport livestock to Casino and it only operates fortnightly.
- Need rail back to transport produce and reduce fossil fuel emissions.
- Need new access into Queensland.
- Dam at Byrrell Creek should go ahead despite opposition. Bridge should go ahead at Seagulls.
- Rural living is in demand where services already exist.
- Rural land can be cut up with landholders managing their effluent - without infrastructure requirements on Council.
- Council needs to free up its investment at Byrrell Creek.
- Murwillumbah is losing essential services and community infrastructure is a major concern.
- Need leadership/action to protecting local services, based on catchments as political boundaries.
- Lots of infrastructure required in five-acre subdivisions
- Ongoing infrastructure costs will be an issue.
- Cane drains not working, seems to be an environmental problem.
- Minimal garbage increase and other utilities.
- should be able to sell closed roads serving properties.
- Back log of road works / Pacific Highway / higher road levels.
- Saltwater over roads in high tides.
- Roads need better attention - Kennedy Drive
- User pays for roads but no increase in services for roads in rural areas.
- Need mobile butchers: Murwillumbah abattoir closed; concern that the saleyard will also close another loss of local infrastructure; value add infrastructure.
- Need more sealed roads and more maintenance of roads.
- Worker accommodation would assist Tweed farmers: 'humble accommodation', farm stay etc. but would need a road upgrade costing several \$100,000, making the opportunity to value-add uneconomical.
- Need supporting infrastructure.
- State of roads is shocking; causing expensive damage to vehicles.
- Compare expenditure of rural roads with funding for art gallery.
- Potholes can be accepted, but not craters.
- Tourist buses use rural roads – to access tourist facilities.

- Don't want to lose Murwillumbah saleyards. Could attract other land users. Keep for future opportunities.
- Crown land 'paper roads' surveyed a long time ago. Council now wants to sell to landowners for \$13,000 or rent for \$400. If don't pay, need to fence and keep cattle out.
- Lifestyle choice, education is not an issue, there are school bus runs, but school buses can't use some of the roads because of their poor quality, but tourist buses do.
- Garage at Tyalgum recently closed and EPA controls might prevent it from reopening. Will mean more trips finding fuel. How difficult would it be to start a garage on private property?
- New road works near Tyalgum not surviving.
- Need to maintain roadside weed spreading and native vegetation.
- Need drum disposal facility at Tyalgum.
- Is there enough water to expand rural villages?
- Tyalgum general store used to sell everything; shoppers now prefer diversity provided out of town.
- People shop for recreation and fun, so happy to drive to Tweed Heads to shop.
- Roadside slasher spreads weeds.
- Roads don't have safe verges for horseriding.
- Parramatta grass spreading on roadsides.
- Issues with carriageways at rural subdivisions west of Tyalgum. Problems with maintenance and ownership, e.g. Eaglehawk Close extension.
- Problems with telecommunication coverage in rural areas.

## **Incentives**

- Need incentives to farm: clear regrowth, cropping, red tape, rates.
- Need incentive plans for good management - stewardship of land.

## **Lack of support, recognition, information**

- Lack of support from Department of Agriculture.
- Lack of information, so pay for consultant, internet, magazine.
- Need for recognised support from Councillors and Council staff. Recognise individual effort rather than generic support.
- Need recognition of rural economic contribution, rather than just town and 'industry'.
- Farming still not fully recognised for its values.
- Property owners should have input to what happens in valley.
- Feel like have no option, no voice.
- Property owners should have input to policy.
- Feel like have no voice.
- Younger generation doesn't have education about the region and farming.
- No courses to teach young farmers sustainable farming techniques.
- Farmers not valued like NZ farmers, need to change perceptions.
- Farmers don't have a voice; need direct sales to consumers.
- Small farms get mismanaged because of lack of experience and time.
- Growers generally can't afford apprentices, so knowledge is lost and not passed onto next generation of farmers.
- No news about rural people - ignored.

- Community not being informed about rural issues.
- Local produce agents have knowledge, know what works.
- Growers learn land practice by mistakes.
- Rural landowners are an excellent source of information about new tourist/cyclist pathways.

## **Lot size, subdivision, dwelling entitlements**

- Five-acre blocks more appropriate size.
- Hydroponics viable on four to five acres.
- Need subdivision opportunities:
  - a. succession planning
  - b. needs link with financial systems and social inputs.
- Smaller lot sizes make it harder for developers to purchase adjoining land because have to deal with more landowners.
- Retired farmers has 22-acre property at Eungella; interested in sub-division, sale of land would help children.
- In 1970s, five-acre blocks could be cut out of larger properties.
- Want clarification of rural residential zoning. More than 200 properties zoned rural residential but can't build houses on them. Own 40 hectares, was rated rural residential but can't sell it. Adjacent land has houses. Want building entitlements.
- 230 hectares at Cudgera. Use to be banana/very small crops/cattle farm, now 100 head of cattle and conservation area. Want to keep in one piece and 'clean'.
- Labour is critical issue. Can planning provisions accommodate for substantial on-farm housing, dormitories for workers.
- Want to retire and live on the farm when can't work any longer, but very difficult to retire on the farm with only one dwelling entitlement and inability to subdivide off a small lot.
- Council and Department of Planning are consenting to the subdivision of some of the best agricultural land for urban development. However, farmers can't subdivide a small portion of existing farms to keep their families on the farm and provide a better accommodation base for farmers, ensuring agricultural practices can continue. It's hard to get younger generations on the farms if they can't live onsite.
- Council allowing development on some of the best agricultural land: Terranora, Kings Forest, Banora Point.
- Additional rural subdivision should be considered. Should only be suburban block size, rather than five acres which is too big for non-farmers to easily maintain and too small to farm anything worthwhile.
- Need more one-hectare blocks for rural residential.
- Separating a rural residential lot from your farm takes a lot of time and cost.
- Allow farmers to reforest 50 per cent of their land and subdivide the rest.
- Only 3 ha of farmer's 15ha is valuable. Wouldn't make a living out of it.
- Weed control costs \$1000s every year on blocks with good views and drainage. Just need to subdivide two five-hectare blocks to get extra income.
- There are no incentives - what are we farming for? Got to live somewhere, share it with your family, very expensive to subdivide.
- Additional dwellings needed on rural properties, specifically for family members. Very important to keep cheap labour onsite to work the land.
- Leniency is required in Council's permit and building approval process so family members can live on the property and to encourage younger family members to stay. This would not be a land subdivision of the property.
- Lot size controls need to be defined.

- Need specific criteria to define where houses can be located.
- Need to protect properties from declining values because of overdevelopment.
- Succession planning and subdivision needed to assist ongoing farming.
- Forty hectares is too big for Tweed farms, except for sugar cane. Two hectares is sufficient. Flexibility is needed to allow diversity.
- The wider community wants flexibility and smaller lots.
- Small lots don't detract from local economies - wider 'rural' uses spend the same as farming, if not more.
- Town people don't 'subsidise' rural subdivision.
- Lot sizes should be staggered within subdivisions.
- Granting dwelling entitlements would stimulate the economy.
- Raising capital can lead to amalgamation - not about cutting up prime land.
- Need to maintain current land stock.
- Subdivision rules inhibit rural hinterland farmers/landowners who are doing it very hard.
- Can't subdivide to keep kids on the farm (20 years ago)
- Can't cut a block off for your own family.
- Land in Chinderah township could have been subdivided into four lots but Council refused.
- Should never have allowed Terranora to be cut up.
- Allow a percentage of lot size to be cut off; create rental housing, less intrusive.
- Subdivision is a problem; price too high to buy back and results in houses on the best land.
- Wants to subdivide 12-acre block for retirement; want separation from neighbours.
- Should be 20-30 acre blocks where rural enterprises are compatible.
- Share farm 300 acres to have a viable cattle property and can subdivide into four 100-acre blocks for children.
- Don't want to see neighbouring land subdivided into five-acre lots.
- Would like a case-by-case assessment for subdivision.
- Look at other industries suitable for smaller lot sizes.
- Can make your own dwelling as big as you like but can't subdivide.
- Lot size needs to be contemporary with current agricultural pursuits.
- Retention of agriculture more important than emotional attachment to staying on farm when ageing.
- No subdivisions should be allowed for rural areas west of Eaglehawk Close (Tyalgum).
- Don't want unrestricted development like the Sunshine Coast.
- Increase in population - the region does not want to be another Gold Coast.

## **Diversity of rural enterprises**

- Diversity will be lost as farmers move out of the industry.
- Quality and consistency of building types very important.
- Need an interesting and diverse environment for business.

## **Productivity**

- Improved farming techniques can make smaller farms very productive.
- Smaller farmers can be productive if managed properly.
- Cost and time lag in bringing rural land back into production.

- Needed to go back 60 years to understand history of chemical use when assessing proposed development.
- Leasing agricultural land to increase productivity.
- Productive areas in Cudgen not used properly.
- Asian farms are very productive.
- Stockmen aren't available to help, chemicals aren't doing the job, ticks build up resistance.

## Roadside stalls

- An on-farm outlet needs to look rural and rustic but affected by Council requirements.
- Coopers Plains at Brisbane used to have lots of roadside stalls.
- Roadside stalls policy impacts on stalls and character of rural areas.
- Rural producers should be able to have roadside stalls without a development application.

## Social impacts, workforce

- Have two sons who can't live on the farm.
- What population numbers do we want in the Tweed?
- Elderly will need children to look after them, saving on aged care infrastructure and cost on community.
- Bringing in labour would assist rural landowners, e.g. Camp Borahoffen children could have a rural experience and bring community together. Employment opportunity.
- Two sons need dwellings.
- Impose a population cap.
- Three sons on the farm and rent land, agist property but work off-farm.
- Observed there were no young people (farmers) in the room. Why would you? More money for less work elsewhere.
- Many people born onto farms are 'stuck' with it. Expectation the farm will continue.
- Once children leave the family farm, they never return.
- The environment is unpopulated and safe, leading to a positive attitude.
- Safe because not over-populated; kids are occupied by things to do.
- Young people won't work.
- Mum and dad become unpaid labour.
- Handy to have family near to help out on the farm.
- Landowners selling properties often don't have any children to work the farm and purchasers often don't want to farm.
- Succession planning is a real problem, not sure what to do.
- Employing workers brings in many extra considerations, e.g. super, workers compensation.
- Want to give land to children.
- Understand about succession planning.
- Kids are the employees.
- Locals work on the farm.
- Hard to find workers who can live on the farm; not many rentals.
- Deals with elderly people in Tyalgum. At some point they need to leave the village.

## Sustainability

- Wind generators refused by Council; interfere with escarpment views.
- Should I get carbon credits because I planted?
- Opportunity for this strategy to showcase the Tweed's sustainability.
- People moving into rural living are more sustainable than residential.
- Infrared for power generation - rapidly evolving technologies.
- Need for ecological and sustainable development /wildlife corridors (e.g. in the Tweed Local Environment Plan).
- 47-acre, very steep land previously used for cattle. No dollar value but sustainable market farming. Focus on direct and healthy foods as niche markets.
- Ethanol fuels from farm.
- Future comes down to value of land and sustainability of block.
- Sustainable agriculture means: care; self regulation of drainage requires further approval; Water management act; 40m buffer manmade now defined as natural watercourse.
- Condong power plant underutilised. Opportunities with biomass.
- CO<sub>2</sub> absorption rate 10 times higher with sugar cane through compared with other vegetation. Which may be carbon neutral.
- Can accumulate 1500 tonnes of carbon on sugar cane property using minimum tillage, and can manage acid sulfate discharge.

## Tourism

- Maintain main tourist routes.
- Eco tourism initiative - is it suitable for the Tweed?
- Food trail and tourism i.e. local distribution (too expensive / make it cheaper).
- Rural tourism has potential but requires significant commitment from the host; become hotel manager instead of farmer. Some farm stays can command up to \$200 per night.
- Local tourism not emphasised enough as part of the region's economic development strategy.
- People want to know if there are opportunities to start a bed and breakfast business.
- How do you transition from farmer to tourist operator?
- Eco tourism should be a major economic activity for the Tweed.
- Shouldn't be a tourist attraction. Some people don't want to live on beach.
- Tourism is an option for Piggabeen, e.g. B&B can be close to coast and airport.
- Unique area and drawcard for eco-tourist.
- Don't want eco-tourism to conflict with reality - killing animals.

## Housing options

- Need development to encourage people to come into villages.
- Need to increase housing diversity in towns so sprawl does not consume rural land.
- Areas already subdivided might be suitable, e.g. 100-acre blocks that are 'locked in'.
- Opportunities to subdivide in and around villages.
- Some concern in little villages that smaller subdivisions will be reminiscent of Gold Coast.
- Looking forward to Kings Forest going ahead in Area 4 (Tweed Urban & Employment Land release Strategy).

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- Time frame for Kings Forest is 30 years. Mechanisms in place to manage this population growth without losing intrinsic values of the land.
  - What is the right model for where to live and how many people?
  - Mt Tamborine is as an example of a model to be considered.
  - Gold Coast is already here, e.g. Cobaki.
  - Granny flats in rural areas need to be attached.
  - Need option for low-cost housing and share accommodation.
  - Fearful the mass development along the Tweed Coast will be replicated elsewhere.
  - Wants Kings Forest to go ahead; owns land in area 4 of TULRS 2009. Land is good for housing.
  - Stop major development.
  - Fragment the land to help developers.
  - There is already enough development.
  - A regional growth strategy is required to manage growth.
  - Doubling the Tweed's population is not viable.
  - Keep region the same, leave the zonings, protect the wildlife corridors and buffer zones.
  - 250m<sup>2</sup> blocks seem unreasonable in rural villages, e.g. Mooball. Medium density is taking away villages' character.
  - Do not turn our village in rural slums.
  - Eungella subdivision is good example of a quarter-acre block in rural villages; conserving rural culture.
  - Additional housing would only need to be a small (suburban) sized lot and located on second rate land that wouldn't undermine the primary agricultural purpose.
  - Maintained biodiversity, not mass subdivisions as proposed.
  - Rural residential lots would earn Council more rates to spend on rural roads.
  - Would like my kids to build on the land. Allow other houses as lifestyle priority.
  - It used to be possible for three families to survive on the farm. No longer possible because of inflexible housing allocations on rural properties. Three generations on one property not possible; eldest generation moved to nursing home.
  - Need to make more homes but do it by clustering say four to five families. Still have a rural land use - a showcase.
  - Rubbish land could be beautified to create a micro-village.
  - Could have strata title on land, rather than multiple occupancy.
  - Cluster on land which is steep or has poor soil. Clusters are an option on a case-by-case basis with improved technology. Cluster development should have separate title.
  - Clusters could meet needs but maybe not ideal outcome across whole shire.
  - Impact on villages; flow-on impacts to other industries.
  - Need to be onsite for horticulture, need houses to have the farm.
  - Uki is working as rural residential, not losing farmland.
  - Can't build another house, so kids need to move into town. But need to be close.
  - Kids today usually don't want to stay on the farm because of effort required and lack of housing options.
  - Needs planning for additional housing to ensure views and environment are not impacted.
  - Rural worker dwellings are permissible in rural zones, but use for environmental.
  - Housing requirements should be assessed case-by-case, with Council officers visiting properties.
  - Can't put another house on property - has workers cottage and parents house.

- If farmers can prove they have income, why can't they build another house? Maybe related to Council requirements such as septic tanks. There are options for new technology for effluent disposal.
- Village character is important.
- A little growth is okay.

## Vision

- 130-acre property previously cattle and forestry, now 25 acres planted as pecan to diversify. Still run some cattle (50-60 head) but now mostly pecans, which took 10 years to establish and become productive.
- Aim to establish a commercial farm while enhancing and fixing environment. Economically viable as well as environmentally sustainable. Good that (Sustainable Agriculture Project Officer) Sebastian can help farmers consider more sustainable farming practices.
- Want to pass on viable business but it is difficult to encourage new generation to farm when you only make about \$20,000 after expenses. Sons can work elsewhere and earn significantly more money. Occasionally help with the farm but not as a full-time- permanent commitment.
- 20-year vision - no handover plan to children. Reality will be to sell and move out.
- Offer subsidised market mechanisms, resources and support for much stronger community networks.
- Future will have many more dramatic changes, sourcing food locally to feed growing population.
- Things can't stay the same but need to keep good agricultural land.
- Excited about the future and rural opportunities.
- Expand villages and hamlets.

## Weeds and pests

- Camphor Council - limit on clearing of not more than 20 trees per year is a restriction.
- Feral pests an issue. Wild dogs and dingos in Mooball National Park, so no wallabies and wild turkeys.
- Integrated weed management required; Parramatta grass and roadside maintenance.
- Fear domestic animals from Kings Forest will become feral.
- Hobby and holiday farmers can't or won't control camphor laurel and other weed infestations.
- Need money for nets to control flying foxes. Dealing with pests - including some native fauna - is a big issue for fruit and vegetable farming, e.g. flying foxes eating bananas.
- Camphor is coming back; weed control costs are high.
- Neighbour got into trouble for cutting down camphor laurel on a creek bank but it's a noxious weed. Need to drill it, let it die slowly, let native vegetation regenerate.
- Pest management is an issue.
- Property was inherited from father - overgrown property and current landholder trying to clean it out.
- Five acres is too big, breeds weeds: Crofton weed, fireweed. Tree-changers aged 55-60 move for lifestyle and don't understand what it takes to look after the land.
- Development applications needed to harvest camphor laurel for co-generation plant, even though it's a noxious weed.
- Cut down camphor laurel; taking over.
- Wild dogs causing land use interface problem.
- Weeds are more work, less profit for ageing farmers.

## Suggestions

While outside the scope of Stages 1 and 2, a diverse range of suggestions for the future of Tweed rural lands have been presented:

- Register of initiatives, e.g. grower education in the Tweed.
- Intensify market gardening enterprises to make them viable.
- Local produce for local communities.
- Work with farmers for sales of produce, food wastage, buy local, eat local.
- Community networks help to sustain farming land and different use. Other planning models?
- Valuable crops coming in, i.e. soybeans offer opportunities.
- Cadetships through TAFE (TROPO).
- Schools program to encourage growing food and selling at market.
- Community gardens.
- Education to consumers about fresh foods.
- Community networks.
- Council is node of knowledge; use Council networks and resources to build knowledge networks.
- Education on growing different crops.
- Innovation in farming, i.e. diversification.
- NZ relies on domestic markets - range of foods in NZ.
- Local markets for small and larger-scale farmers.
- Think outside the square with planning. Research different schemes that show agriculture and residential use together.
- Value-adding incentives/support.
- Be more supportive of agriculture and environmental tourism, to add to farm income.
- Incentives for farmers/rural landholders to improve environmental values
- Covenants for conservation areas on private land.
- Rates should be based on produce.
- Help to diversify, have a mix of crops to make ends meet. No money left in bananas.
- Farms need to diversify and 'value add'. See the book 'Lifting the Yoke: Local solutions to America's farm and food crisis'
- Dairies could diversify; as well as selling the milk, could make cheese to generate extra money; fix house and property and further diversify farm. Good idea but difficult to do here - too expensive to set up the 'value adding' component.
- Local co-operatives an option but can be resource intensive. Have to farm as well as sit in a market stall selling produce for half a day, when there are always jobs to do on the farm.
- Diversifying and value adding a good idea but could cost \$50,000-\$100,000 start up, when can't even afford to repair fence.
- Noticed many more hot houses in Coffs Harbour as a more viable specialisation of farming. Requires less footprint, more productive and easier to manage (pests etc).
- New lobster farm near Melaleuca Station. Mega bucks but out of reach for most local farmers.
- Walking track from Byron to Murwillumbah could bring people to the area but potential nightmare for farmers. Current maintenance contractor not doing their job and getting paid a lot of money.
- Victorian farmer has sold shares in farm and produce, e.g. share in a cow - right to go and get milk supply.

- Agisting horses is best use for marginal land. Brahman cattle keep grass down.
- Local markets will be the saviour. Need concessions when you sell locally.
- Supplement off-farm income with bush foods.
- Need to diversify and live on rural land with a low impact.
- Need to make more of the Tweed's natural beauty. Increase wildlife and habitat to give visitors more places to visit. Need more walking tracks, walking corridors where replanting has occurred, to benefit locals and tourists.
- Promote bicycle track around Terranora (except for Barmah Forest).
- Diversification is the key. Need more than one source of income, e.g. tourism and agricultural services.
- Aiming to provide a complete market circle, complete the loop.
- Need to have options. Need to be flexible, decide on projects based on their merits.
- It is important to educate the public about locally grown food.
- Stronger community support for youth and training youth to work the land. Show them how to live on the land.
- Farmers Market to be held on Saturday afternoon instead of during the week, when people are working.
- Diversified economic base needed to support land holders, not just production of food but utilising a broad spectrum of attractions.
- Networks of pathways and public access (land trust) to open space. Utilising farm lands for tourists to hike across people's properties in a significant network of trails, e.g. Sonoma County Land Trust in northern California.
- Education programs to preserve local knowledge from existing farmers. Record the information and cultural capital of the locals and long-term land holders to ensure local farming knowledge is preserved. Avoid re-inventing the wheel and making expensive mistakes for newly acquired land.
- Promote what is unique in the Tweed, i.e. blue knob orchids. Kayaking on waterways as part of eco tourism. Integrated trails network.
- Government and communities should support the right to farm.
- Great emphasis on promoting local farming, the service farmers provide and the value of locally produced foods.
- Use the river for services such as transport and tourism.
- Implement a river ferry between Tweed Heads and Murwillumbah.
- Map actual land use and reduce taxation rates for properties that are not viable for agriculture but are instead used for biodiversity retention. Owners of non-farming land could choose whether to participate in the mapping. Mapping would not mandate taxation according to land use but could be applied if a landholder wanted a discounted rate for non farming land. Biodiversity conservation would be supported and resourced.
- Want sugar to go organic.
- Keep Tweed aesthetically appealing so people keep wanting to come here.
- This valley produces extraordinary people and technology that we need to showcase.
- What can we do to keep rural land intact and be prosperous doing it?
- Commitment to keep more rural land than we need.
- Option to construct more rental property on farms.
- The Tweed has the possibility to be a leading nature produce locality.
- Neighbours are growing pecans.
- Regional food labels have failed.
- If going to brand for Tweed it is for Tweed only and genuinely.
- Need coordinated /integrated approach for branding.
- Could buy every bit of organic certified sugar and mulch.
- Should be public access into some rural lands and National Parks.

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- Selling off 'paper roads' could be a problem for adventure operators in the future.
  - Don't underestimate the benefits and importance of pathways through properties.
  - Allow community titles, reduce buy-in cost, Council coordinated multiple occupancies, flexibility in planning to form a panel/committee.
  - Taro industry fell over before it begun; labour intensive, no return. People have tried everything - sheep, emus, feijoa fruit and aloe vera.
  - Value adding the only way to make a dollar, e.g. dairy with factory and tourism.
  - More market gardening/local markets.
  - Council needs to be prepared to look at different options, such as integrating tourism.
  - Need more flexibility in potential land uses.
  - Option to have a high rise in rural areas, with monorail linkage. Need to think outside the envelope.
  - Option for other industries, e.g. panel shops, so kids can stay on the farm and employed.
  - Small-goods processing - marketing 'local' produce.
  - Breeding rabbits for pets.
  - Increased need for local markets and rural land to meet increasing demand. Rail trail, tourist drives, roadside stalls - biodiversity coming back and helping tourism.
  - Capitalise on and enhance awareness of 'localism' - 'think local, buy local'.
  - Need innovation in industry. State funding reducing. Chances for 'sponsorship' of products.
  - Direct marketing.
  - Market Tweed's advantages. Council should act as a networker and assist collaboration - awareness and education.
  - Woofers accommodation an option for bush management.
  - Money is usually the carrot.
  - Need a better network of information sharing.
  - Explore industries that better reflect the lot sizes available and recommended.
  - Options for elderly people to stay longer in villages once they leave the farm.
  - Maximise food production.
  - Help farmers maintain creeks and water quality.
  - More walking trails; more funds. Only existing track is Mt Warning, which is closed.
  - Promote lookouts.
  - Link villages with trails.
  - Support farmers through Landcare, Destination Tweed, Council's Natural Resource Management Unit.
  - Grants should be retained and assistance highlighted.
  - Retail native plants for revegetation, i.e. sell seedlings.
  - Small landowners/ farmers would benefit from a leader who brought them together to form linkage between producers/manufacturers. Rural Land Strategy should include assisting leaders among the rural community.
  - Rural Land Strategy should include tree farming/forestry as an option for farmers.
  - The RLS should contain options for tourism expansion and reforestation.



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