



Community Strategic Plan

RICHMOND VALLEY 2040

Richmond
Valley
Council



Richmond Valley Council recognises the people of the Bundjalung Nation as Custodians and Traditional Owners of this land and we value and appreciate the continuing cultural connection to lands, their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region in the past, present and future.

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL

Casino Office:

Cnr Walker Street and Graham Place
(Locked Bag 10)

Casino NSW 2470
Phone: (02) 6660 0300

Evans Head Office:

Cnr Woodburn Street and School Lane
Evans Head NSW 2473
Phone: (02) 6660 0365

Email: council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

Front Cover: *Growing Our Future*

Students from Rappville Public School have been busy raising seedlings for Richmond Valley Council's greening program. These seedlings will soon be ready for habitat restoration plantings throughout the Valley.

Publication Date: 2025



An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely Richmond Valley, showing a dense residential area with colorful roofs, a winding river or estuary, and a sandy beach with people swimming in the turquoise water.

A place we are proud to call home

The Richmond Valley is the rural heart of the Northern Rivers, with wide open spaces and room to grow. We're a down-to-earth, friendly community with a relaxed lifestyle, where we know our neighbours and the people we meet on the street - and can still enjoy a walk on an empty beach, or a campfire under an open sky.

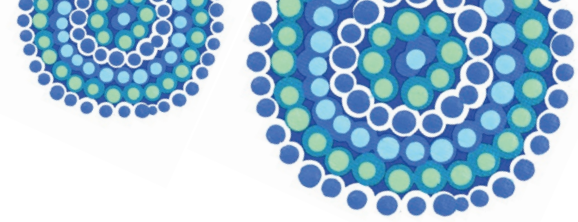
It's a place of opportunity, where you can get a start in life – buy your first home, raise a family, work the land, or build your own business. And where success is earned through hard work, persistence, and the courage to get back on your feet in hard times.

Our Valley is defined by quiet determination and resilience. When challenges come, we endure, we recover, and we rise once again to rebuild. Our people are connected to the past through our stories, culture and unique identity – and we are connected to each other through a shared love of this place, of family and community.

But we also know that things are changing, and the pace of that change is increasing. We are writing the next chapter of our story, as more people are drawn to our Valley seeking its authentic way of life, more businesses are established and more homes and services will be needed.

Our challenge is to welcome this growth and enjoy the benefits it brings, while still preserving the things that we value the most.

This Plan sets a pathway to achieve this, as we continue to create healthy and prosperous communities through sustainable growth to 2040.



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BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

A message from the Mayor and General Manager

The Richmond Valley is standing on the threshold of regional change and opportunity, and we are ready to take the next steps. Over the past few years our community has endured some of its greatest challenges through drought, bushfires, pandemic, flood and cyclone, but we are still standing strong together and working to rebuild and reclaim our future.

For the past few months, Council has been talking to the Richmond Valley community about its hopes and priorities for the future as we review our Community Strategic Plan. The feedback has been positive - confirming the key directions in our original Richmond Valley 2040 plan. People told us that they wanted to continue with steady, well-managed growth for the next 20 years and enjoy the benefits that it brings – with more affordable family homes, more jobs and better services and facilities. But they also wanted to keep the things that make the Richmond Valley a really great place to live – our small-town vibe and friendly communities and the relaxed and down-to-earth lifestyle we all enjoy. We believe we can achieve these outcomes, and this plan sets a pathway to do it. During the consultation we also engaged in some open discussions about the challenges of living in a changing climate, the need to adapt to new ways of living and the new role that the

Richmond Valley will play in the Northern Rivers' future. We listened to the things that people were concerned about and noted their ideas for improvements to help refine the Plan and reflect the community's expectations.

Now we're ready to deliver our shared vision for the future, working in partnership with federal and state governments, local community groups and organisations, and our business community. There are exciting times ahead, as we finish the major works we've begun and open new opportunities for investment. In the coming years we will see more than 1900 new jobs created through the Regional Jobs Precinct, as new industries open their doors and local businesses continue to grow. This will bring more working families to the Richmond Valley and we have sufficient flood-safe land to house them all, creating a new community of up to 1500 homes at South Fairy Hill. Council is currently working with the NSW Government to help get this land development-ready. Over the next 15 years, we will also deliver our plans to secure long-term water supplies for Casino and the Mid-Richmond, provide new and upgraded water and sewage infrastructure and enhanced community facilities across the entire Valley.

We will also continue to enjoy the many benefits of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail and progress



Richmond Valley Mayor Cr Robert Mustow and General Manager Vaughan Macdonald

with our newest attraction for the Mid-Richmond with the staged construction of the Three Villages Cycleway. There are also commitments to continue to protect and restore our unique environment, to help our communities adapt to a changing climate and work towards improving the health of our water catchments. It's a big, ambitious plan for a regional community, but it can be done.

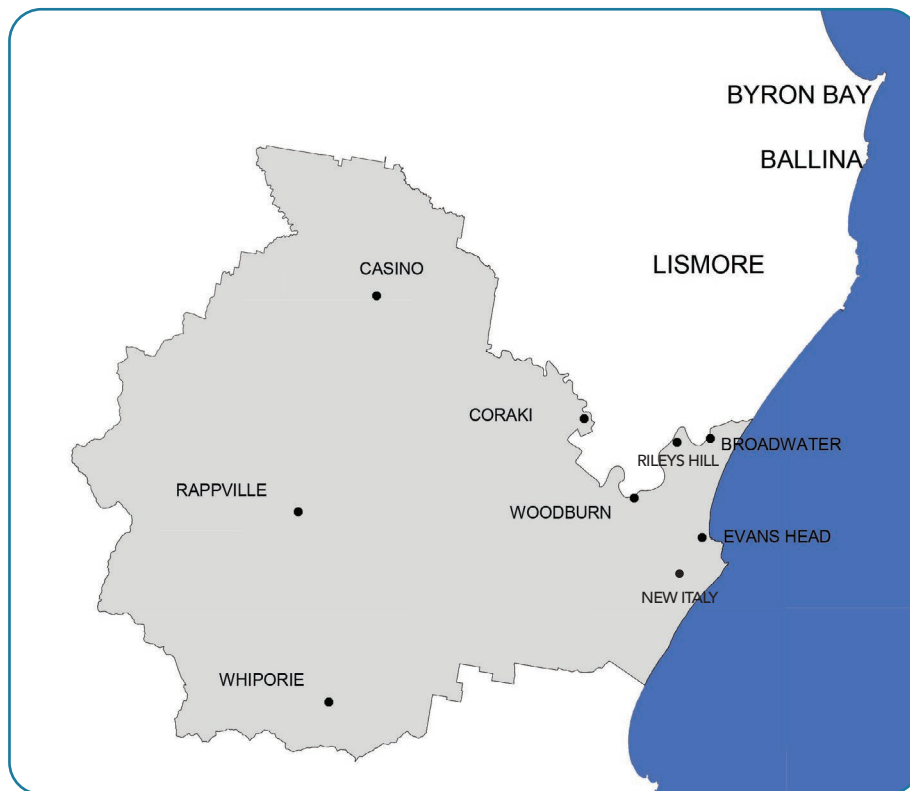
Together we can create the future we want for our families and the generations that follow, preserving our unique identity and the things we love about the Richmond Valley, while embracing the opportunities of a growing region.

ABOUT THE RICHMOND VALLEY

The Richmond Valley local government area covers 3,050 km² and extends from the coastline at Evans Head to the foothills of the Great Dividing Range to the west. The Bundjalung People are the traditional custodians of this land.

Most of the Valley's rolling hills and fertile river plains are devoted to agriculture, interspersed with State forests, national parks and nature reserves.

The largest town is Casino, with a population of more than 12,000. Other communities include Evans Head, Broadwater, Rileys Hill, Woodburn, Coraki, New Italy and Rappville, as well as rural areas.



AREA SNAPSHOT

Total area 3,050 km²
38 km of coastline
140km Richmond River
490 km² State Forest
173 km² National Park
1260 km² floodplain

LOCAL SERVICES

SCHOOLS

12 primary schools
2 high schools
2 K-12 schools
1 TAFE college

HEALTH SERVICES

1 District Hospital
4 Community health centres
2 Ambulance stations
GPs: 1 GP per 1000 residents
Medical Specialists: 0.2 per 1000 residents
Nurses: 5.2 per 1000 residents

LAW & ORDER

1 District Court House – Casino
4 Police stations – Casino, Coraki,
Woodburn, Evans Head



Who are we?

Population – 23,892

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander – 7.9%

Born overseas – 6%

**People requiring help in their daily lives
due to disability – 7.9%**

Under 18 yrs – 21.9%

Over 60 yrs – 32.3%

Median age – 46 yrs



Where do we live?

Number of dwellings – 10,970

Rental properties – 25.5%

Owner-occupied – 70.3%



Where do we work?

Annual production - \$1.2 billion

Top employment sectors – manufacturing, health care/assistance, education

Local jobs - 8,663

Unemployment rate – 6%

Live & work in the Valley – 58.4%

**Average weekly income – Men: \$808;
Women: \$770**

GROWING, ADAPTING AND EMERGING

The Richmond Valley has been on a path of growth and community renewal over the past 15 years, with more than \$300m investment in critical infrastructure. The next 15 years will require even greater commitment to deliver our community's vision. Through past achievements, we've earned a reputation as a reliable government funding partner and a community that gets things done - delivering projects such as the Rail Trail, upgraded NRLX and Casino Showground, major upgrades to the Woodburn-Casino Rd and significant improvements to community and visitor facilities the Mid-Richmond. But our progress has been challenged with no less than 12 declared disasters in the last seven years for bushfire, flood, storm and cyclone. Catastrophic events such as the 2019 bushfires and the 2022 floods left devastation on a scale that we had not seen before. But we have worked together to rebuild our communities and redefine our future. While there is still much to be done, we are making steady progress and building greater resilience along the way, to ensure we will continue to thrive.

Making progress

Major milestones in our flood recovery have included completion of the \$15.8m landslip repair at Naughtons Gap, securing \$18m to replace and raise the Tatham bridges, and the recent re-opening of Broadwater Public School, with a new \$20m flood-resilient facility.

Repairs to damaged roads and bridges are also progressing, with nearly half the \$100m program completed. Further road damage was sustained in the Cyclone Alfred event and this is currently being assessed.

Another high priority for flood recovery has been advocating to all levels of government for funding and support, as well as ensuring that community facilities such as local halls and sports grounds are returned to service as quickly as possible. The region continues to operate under the 2023 Reconstruction Area Order, with the NSW Reconstruction Authority leading the government response. Programs such as Resilient Lands and Resilient Homes are still being rolled out and there are many issues unresolved. It will be at least another 3-5 years before major Resilient Lands sites, such as south Fairy Hill could see homes delivered.

Planning for future events

The 2022 flood and the recent impacts of Cyclone Alfred have served as a harsh reminder that disaster adaptation, response and recovery will be an ongoing way of life in the Northern Rivers. Since the flood, we have been taking steps to be better prepared for future disasters. This includes programs to replace flood gauges and improve warning systems, continued work on the CSIRO's flood study of the Richmond River catchment and the new Regional Adaptation Plan. Council has also updated its Richmond Valley Flood Study and is preparing a new Floodplain Risk Management Plan. These projects will provide a clearer picture of how flooding may occur in the future, whether mitigation measures could reduce its impacts and how we will need to adapt our homes and infrastructure in the future.





\$300m+

infrastructure investment
over the past 15 years



\$500m+

needed in the future



4000+

new residents will call the
Richmond Valley home

Strengthening our role in the region

While flood recovery and adaptation has been a major focus over the past three years, we have also seen new opportunities emerging. With some of the largest tracts of flood-safe land in the Northern Rivers, the Richmond Valley has a stronger role to play in the region's future. We are seeing renewed confidence in local investment, with \$56.4m in commercial and industrial projects approved since the flood. Productivity has also increased, rising to \$1.2 billion in 2024. However, housing availability and affordability remains a major challenge. Although the Richmond Valley is one of the most affordable markets in the Northern Rivers, there are still many people in our community who cannot secure permanent housing. Council has been working on plans to accelerate employment and housing growth since 2021, with the Richmond Valley Regional Jobs Precinct now approved and open for business. The next step is to realise this

project's potential to create 1900 new jobs in our community and Council has invested \$18m in industry activation projects for the Precinct. This will help pave the way for new businesses to establish or relocate to the Valley. The Regional Jobs Precinct and continued in-migration to regional areas is expected to increase the Valley's population by at least 4000 over the next 15 years. We have sufficient land to accommodate an anticipated 1700+ new homes throughout the Valley and Council is working with government and private investors to activate these areas. As we move forward together, the objectives, strategies and key directions in our Community Strategic Plan will help to guide priorities and investment over the next 15 years.

KEY STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Looking ahead to 2040, there are a number of challenges facing our community, but there will also be new opportunities. The past five years have seen turbulent times on the regional, national and global fronts and we can expect that this increased uncertainty and change will continue. Our Valley has endured natural disasters, a global pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, but despite this, local production has increased, commercial investment is strong and regional in-migration rates are amongst the highest we've seen. The word is out that the Richmond Valley is a good place to be, and we are well-positioned to take advantage of these changing trends. Through careful planning and progressive leadership, we can continue to lay the foundations for a prosperous future.



Our Key Strengths

A great place to live

Our beautiful beaches, rivers and landscapes are a great attraction for residents and visitors alike. Combined with a relaxed lifestyle, welcoming community and great sporting and recreation facilities, the Richmond Valley is a popular place to live, work and play. Our villages and rural settlements offer the peace and quiet of country life, while major centres are only a short drive away to access work, shops and services.

A connected region, close to emerging markets

Located some two hours from Brisbane and the growing communities of South-East Queensland, the Valley is in easy reach of emerging tourism and investment markets.

We're also close to regional services, facilities and attractions. The Northern Rivers is a closely connected community, with an easy drive between the major centres. Many people commute for work across the region.

Major transport links

With direct access to the Pacific Motorway and key freight routes along the Bruxner Highway and

Summerland Way, the Richmond Valley is well placed to capitalise on future investment and visitor markets. Casino's access to the northern rail line is also a key advantage for its emerging industrial precincts and the continued growth of the Ballina/Byron airport has improved direct access to Sydney and Melbourne.

Essential infrastructure

Key local infrastructure such as regional roads, telecommunication networks, electricity supply, health services, schools, water, sewerage and waste management facilities are already in place and accessible to our future urban expansion areas. Plans are well advanced to upgrade and expand essential facilities such as the Casino and Evans Head sewage treatment plants.

Well-established industries

We have a strong economic and employment base through well-established agricultural and manufacturing industries, with opportunities to continue to expand and value-add. These "engine industries" will form a solid foundation as we continue to diversify our economy and activate the Regional Jobs Precinct.



Room to grow

The Valley has room to grow on flood-free lands north-west of Casino, with major employment centres nearby. This area can take the main development demand over the next 40 years, allowing for more managed growth in our sensitive coastal and rural areas.

KEY STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges



Adapting to a changing climate

Our climate is changing and we will need to adapt to a less predictable future. We know it will get warmer and there will be longer droughts and more bushfire events, along with more frequent storms and flooding. This means we will need to plan, build and respond differently in the future to ensure our community is safe and sustainable.

Continued flood recovery

We still have more work to do over the next three years, to repair all our flood-damaged roads from the 2022 and 2025 events and continue to support flood-affected communities to recover and build resilience. This will require an ongoing partnership between local, state and federal governments to deliver the funding and support we require.

Solving our housing crisis

The Northern Rivers was in the grip of a housing crisis before the pandemic and floods arrived. Housing construction rates had declined and rental vacancies were scarce. With the post-pandemic exodus from the cities, pushing housing prices higher and availability lower – and then the floods and subsequent buybacks reducing regional housing stock, the crisis has deepened. The Northern Rivers is now facing one of its

highest rates of homelessness, with vulnerable members of our community suffering the most.

Addressing disadvantage

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Socio-economic indexes tell us that, of the 128 local government areas in NSW, the Richmond Valley experiences some of the highest levels of relative disadvantage. People in our community aren't enjoying the same educational and employment opportunities as others and the level of investment in government services and jobs is much lower than in other neighbouring communities. Turning our relative disadvantage around will take a long-term commitment from all levels of government, supported by private investment and the continued work of community support services.

Aging infrastructure

Like most regional communities, our major infrastructure is aging faster than our population is growing. This means we now face a big investment to replace these outdated assets and will need help from State and Federal governments to fund this reconstruction. This includes advocating for the \$65m+ we need to future-proof Casino's sewerage treatment plant, as well as the substantial funds required to upgrade town drainage throughout the Valley.

Opportunities

Creating more jobs for our community

Council has been working with the NSW Government to develop the Richmond Valley Regional Jobs Precinct for the past three years, with the final planning now approved. This will create at least 1900 new jobs, through industry start-ups and relocations, expansion of existing enterprise and service industries. More tourism jobs are also on the way, with opportunities to build the Richmond Valley's unique brand and capitalise on key attractions, such as the Northern Rivers Rail Trail.

Opening the way for housing development

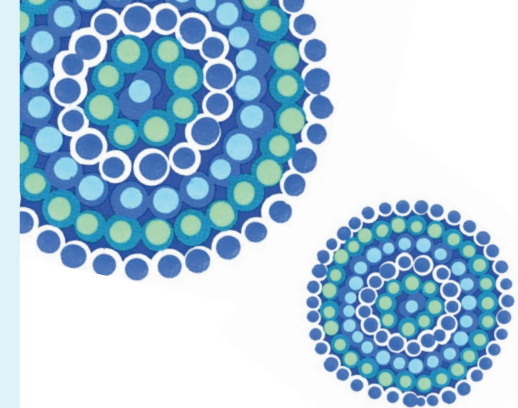
Hinterland communities, such as Casino, have some of the largest and most affordable supplies of flood-safe residential lands in the Northern Rivers. As coastal communities become increasingly expensive, Government initiatives, such as the Reconstruction Authority's Resilient Lands program have the Richmond Valley in their sights as a key future growth area. Council is currently working with the government to secure funds for essential infrastructure to serve up to 1500 new homes near Casino.

Plans to secure more services

With a growing population, the Richmond Valley will need more health services, shops, schools and public transport. Council has completed the Richmond Valley Growth Management Strategy to identify where new development can be located. The strategy identifies a new Health Precinct, centred on Casino Hospital, and plans further upgrades for our CBD areas. Council will be advocating strongly for more government-led services to be established in the Richmond Valley to support this growth.

Opportunities from the Brisbane Olympics

2032 is not far away and plans are already well in hand for the influx of visitors and growth in investment, services and infrastructure that the Brisbane Olympics will bring. The Northern Rivers is well placed to benefit from increased tourism and business opportunities from this international event.



WHAT OUR COMMUNITY SAID ...

Council continued “Our Big Conversation” through 2024 and 2025 to help review the Community Strategic Plan. The community was asked to provide input through Wishing Tree and the Ocean of Ideas activities at the library, online ideas board and surveys, pop-up consultations at community events and the mobile library, and local primary and high school programs.

Feedback received during consultation for our key strategies including the Mid-Richmond Place plans, Water for Life 2050 Strategy, Economic Development Strategy and review of the Destination Management Plan was also considered in developing priorities and actions for this plan.

Throughout the consultation, community members were asked what they value about the Richmond Valley, what they want to protect and what they want to make even better. There were two main streams in the consultation results: Foundation issues (things that are long-standing priorities with the community) and Emerging issues (new priorities and concerns).

Foundation Issues

- Community connection and local identity
- Housing affordability and availability
- Maintaining our roads infrastructure and footpaths
- Strengthening our local economy
- Protecting our landscapes, beaches and environment
- Creating more employment
- Lack of public transport
- Adapting to a changing climate
- Disaster Preparedness

Emerging Issues

- Crime prevention and public safety
- Supporting more community events
- Access to services, including medical
- Youth engagement and services
- CBD accessibility and beautification

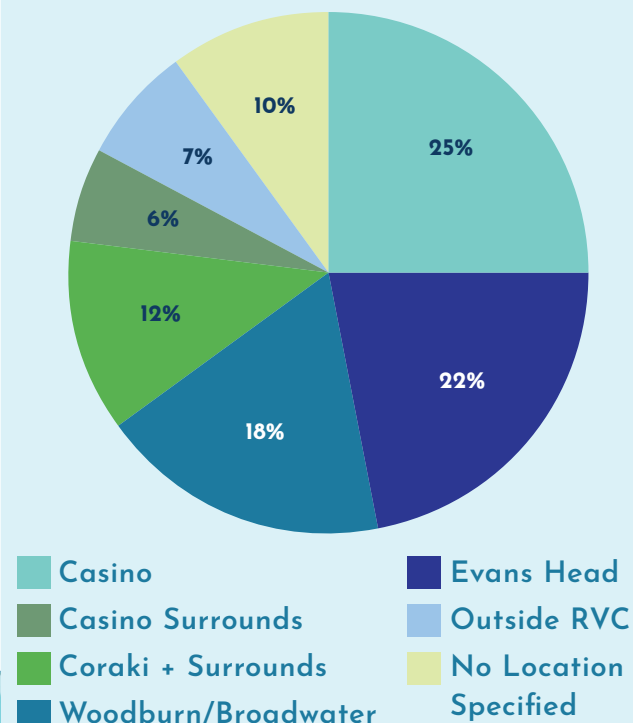


2600+ Direct responses

14 Events attended

16 Schools visited

WHERE DID OUR RESPONSES COME FROM?



What do you love about the Richmond Valley?



327 wishes for our future

Our Wishing Trees and Ocean of Ideas boards at local libraries, markets and events were a popular family activity. Kids, mums and dads and other community members were keen to share what they loved about the Richmond Valley and to add their hopes for the future to the tree. We collected 327 wishes during the consultation.



WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE?

We asked young leaders from our local schools what they'd like to see in the Richmond Valley

"The friendly nature of everyone and the beaches."

"I really appreciate the footy fields."



"More support in the creative and performing arts. The arts is what makes our community special and it's something that everyone can access."

Amelia Staader
Evans River K-12 School



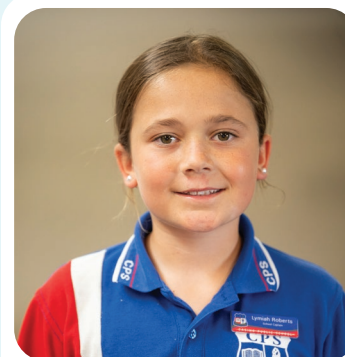
"I'm thinking maybe more family events for the community. It's been a bit quiet in Coraki so I think families should get around and maybe do more events."

Christina Ranger-Knox
Coraki Public School



"What I'd like to see is for people to treat other people the way they want to be treated so that everyone gets to say something and make a difference."

Ruben Smith
Evans River K-12 School



"More activities for kids, so we don't have to travel far, far away. Some of the things are like bounce, parks, cinemas and what kids like."

Lymiah Roberts
Casino Public School



"What I'd like to see in the Richmond Valley is a footpath on the Woodburn Road so kids can get to school safer."

Thomas Walsh
St Josephs Primary
Woodburn



"I like playing in the parks."

"Love our local library."

"Playing sports like soccer. Colley Park."

"Koalas, surf, green valleys, rolling hills."



"I'd like to see more after school activities for kids, not just sport ones but non-sport ones so it can include everyone in the community."

Joseph Watt
Casino High School



"I'd like to see more equipment at the parks and people mowing the grass and watering it so it's not all dead. It's a fun place to go after school and a nice place to relax."

Levi Fepuleah-Baran
Casino West Public School



"I'd like to see bigger playgrounds in the area so more kids can have fun."

Piper Cowie
Stratheden Public School

Community Satisfaction survey results

Council has been conducting a regular survey since 2016 to help inform the Community Strategic Plan and understand how the community's priorities have changed. These surveys are conducted independently by Micromex Research. The 2025 survey saw the three most valued aspects of living in the Richmond Valley - the community, the natural environment and our lifestyle - remain the same as in 2021. But there was a significant change in the top priorities for the future.

Top priorities from the July 2021 survey

1. Road maintenance and infrastructure
2. Housing – affordability and availability
3. Local employment
4. Delivery of quality services

Top Priorities from the April 2025 survey

1. Crime prevention/ public safety
2. Road maintenance and infrastructure
3. Economic development (jobs and businesses)
4. Disaster management and preparedness

Key changes

- Crime prevention and public safety saw the biggest change going from 8% in 2021 to 37% in 2025.
- Although housing affordability and availability wasn't in the top priorities for 2025, only 18% of survey respondents agree that housing is affordable and available in the area.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE: PRINCIPLES & VALUES

To prepare the Community Strategic Plan, we've been talking to people throughout the Valley about what is important to them and what they hope for in the future. These conversations have helped to form the following principles that will under-pin our plan for the next 15 years.



A rare sight – Bungawalbin's coastal emus



RESPECT

Everyone in our community should be valued, included and respected.



EQUITY

We should all be treated fairly and have the same opportunities in life.



SANCTUARY

Everyone should have a safe and affordable place to live and be free to participate in the community.



OPPORTUNITY

Everyone should share in our future prosperity, with new ideas and possibilities.



CONNECTION

We should all have the choice to stay connected to this place and be proud of where we live. No-one should have to move away from family and friends to make a living, receive an education or find a home.



STEWARDSHIP

Everyone should work together to leave this place better than we found it for the generations to come.

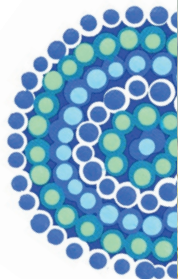


These words are simple, but their meaning is profound. They challenge us to think differently, to do more and to change.

The six principles form the basis for the key directions we have set in this plan and the strategies and actions that will help to deliver them.

Everyone will play a part in delivering these outcomes – Council, state and federal governments, community groups and individuals.

At the end of each council term, we will use them as the benchmark to measure our success in creating the kind of community we aspire to be.



A growing, sustainable community, with a relaxed lifestyle, beautiful environment and thriving economy.



OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE: A GROWING, PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY

Over the next 15 years, we want our community to grow, prosper and provide more opportunities for everyone to get a home. Our vision for Richmond Valley 2040 includes:



INCREASED POPULATION

Growing our community by 4000+ new residents. Total population 27,600.



MORE HOUSING

Providing up to 1,700 new homes across the Valley



MORE JOBS

Creating 1900+ new jobs from the Regional Jobs Precinct. Increasing service industry and tourism jobs throughout the Valley



MORE SERVICES

Increasing access to health services, education and public transport



BETTER FACILITIES

Upgrading our town centres and village streetscapes, delivering signature projects and improving facilities

A SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Over the next 15 years, we want to address some of the challenges facing our community and build a more sustainable future. Our vision for Richmond Valley 2040 includes:



SAFER HOUSING

Adapting our high risk communities to better withstand storms, floods and bushfires



MORE PARTICIPATION

Encouraging people of all ages to be more involved in community life, volunteering and activities.



SAFER COMMUNITIES

Supporting emergency response and recovery. Advocating for more community policing and improving the safety of public spaces



GREENER PLACES

Continuing with community greening programs to plant 1000 more trees every year.



ACCESSIBLE PLACES

Improving access to public places for people of all abilities.



SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Reducing our impacts on the environment and developing long-term solutions for responsible waste management.



DELIVERING OUR VISION

CASINO FOCUS AREAS

-  Accelerated housing growth
-  Activate Regional Jobs Precinct
-  CBD Renewal and Revitalisation
-  Northern Rivers Rail Trail
-  Casino Water Security Stage 1
-  Casino STP Replacement
-  Rappville Sewerage Scheme



MID-RICHMOND FOCUS AREAS

-  *Steady resilient housing growth*
-  *Three Villages Cycleway*
-  *Investigate improved flood plain management*
-  *CBD Renewal and Revitalisation*
-  *Evans Head STP Stage 2*
-  *New river access*
-  *Investigate RV friendly stopover*
-  *Richmond Terrace Stabilisation*

WHAT IS HAPPENING THROUGHOUT THE VALLEY?

-  Continuing flood road repair programs
-  Supporting a business-friendly environment
-  Ongoing sports facility upgrades
-  Advocating for funding and services
-  Improving drainage, reducing inflow & infiltration
-  Continuing greening programs
-  Supporting community events

ABOUT THIS PLAN

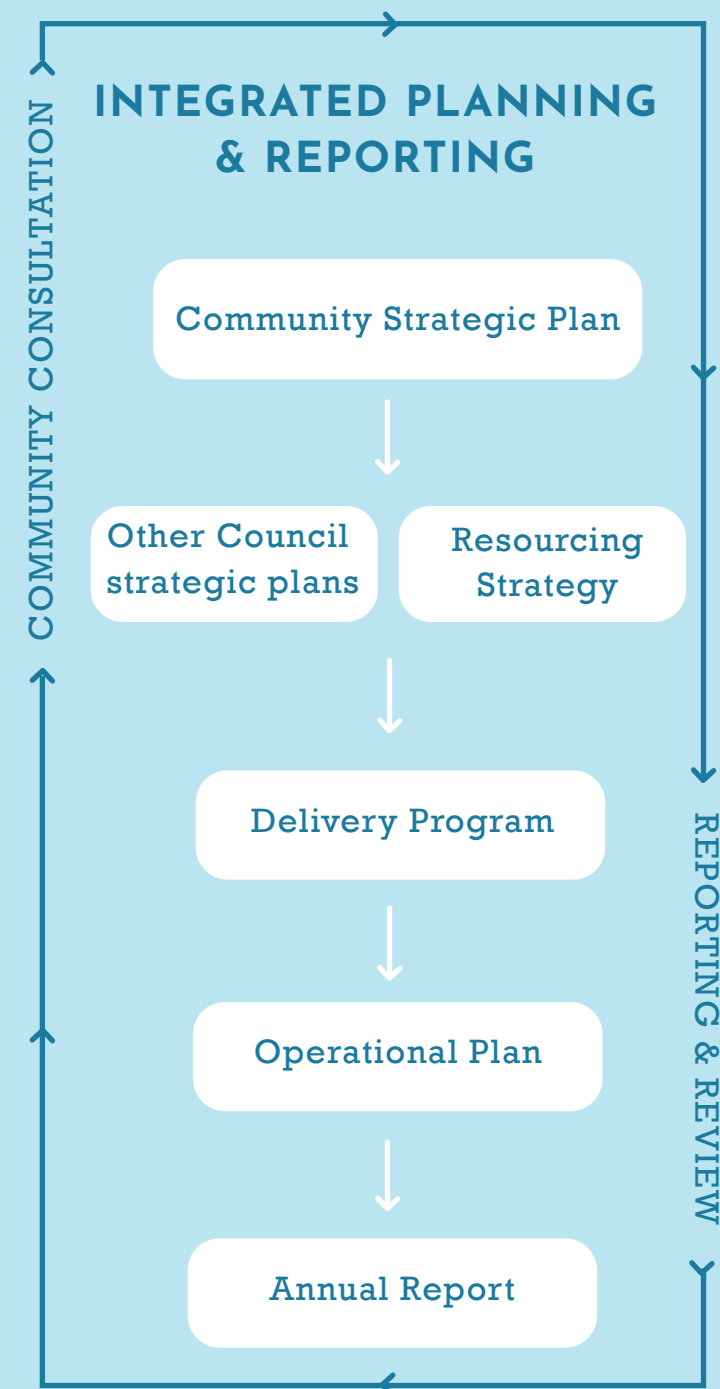
When each new Council is elected to office, one of its first responsibilities is to review the Community Strategic Plan (CSP). This plan identifies the community's long-term goals and priorities over at least the next 10 years. Every community is different, so every Community Strategic Plan is unique, and many people, agencies and authorities will be involved in delivering the outcomes.

Council originally adopted the Richmond Valley 2040 Community Strategic Plan in June 2023, in the wake of the devastating 2022 floods. The plan focused strongly on flood recovery, while also exploring the Richmond Valley's emerging role in the region as an employment growth centre and reaffirming our commitment to protect the environment, our unique local identity and community connections.

Two years into the implementation of the Plan, we have made strong progress in flood recovery, but there is still more to do in continuing to support those directly impacted, driving economic recovery and repairing flood damage to our roads and bridges. Further flooding in 2025, in the wake of Cyclone Alfred

has reminded us of the ongoing challenges of living on a floodplain and the need for long-term adaptation and new solutions. Over the past four months, Council has been working with the community to explore some of these challenging issues and identify opportunities and priorities for the next 15 years. These discussions have helped to inform this revision of the Richmond Valley 2040 Community Strategic Plan.

The CSP helps to inform the Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plans (as shown in the diagram). These plans set out how Council's activities and resources will be directed towards delivering the community's priorities. Council reports on progress on the Delivery Program every six months. At the end of the Council term, a "State of the Valley" report is prepared to reflect on our progress in achieving the CSP goals.



OUR FOUR KEY DIRECTIONS



Based on the feedback Council received during the community consultation, we developed four key directions for the Community Strategic Plan. These directions reflect the requirements of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework and align with the strategic planning work Council has already completed with the community. The Key Directions create the framework for the objectives, strategies and actions that will help to deliver community priorities and improvements.

1. Strengthening our role in the region

This direction is based on the Richmond Valley Growth Management Strategy and the Mid-Richmond and Casino Place Plans, developed in consultation with the community. The direction focuses on steady, well-managed growth for the Valley over the next 15 years, strengthening and diversifying our economy and providing more housing, jobs and services. It also addresses our ongoing challenge to adapt to a changing climate and continue to support flood recovery.

2. Creating great places to live

This direction is based on consultation with the community, including feedback from our community forums and surveys. It focuses on creating vibrant, liveable and safe communities – providing opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to come together. It also aims to ensure that our parks, playgrounds, sports fields and community facilities are well maintained and fit for purpose and essential infrastructure and services, such as roads, water, sewer and waste management meet community needs.

3. Protecting our unique environment

This direction is based on our Sustainable Communities Strategy, adopted by Council in 2024 after community consultation. It focuses on preserving our native bushland and biodiversity, maintaining healthy rivers, beaches and waterways, and reducing our impacts on the environment.

4. Delivering for our community

This direction focuses on the role that Richmond Valley Council will play in helping to deliver this plan. It includes Council's civic leadership in engaging with and advocating for our community, as well as our responsibilities for managing community resources and providing great service.

Objective #1

ESTABLISH THE RICHMOND VALLEY AS A REGIONAL GROWTH CENTRE

The Richmond Valley is on the move, with major changes driving growth in population, jobs and housing over the next 15 years. These changes include:

- The Richmond Valley's designation as one of four Regional Jobs Precincts in NSW, putting us on the map for industrial and commercial investment
- Continued in-migration to regional areas, with more people seeking a better way of life. The Richmond Valley was recently rated as one of the 'Top five lifestyle hotspots' in the Regional Movers Index, with a 273% increase in migration from metro and regional areas in 2024.
- Changes to regional growth dynamics after the 2022 flood. The Valley's generous supply of flood-safe industrial and residential land means it will play a stronger role in regional growth in the future
- Record Government investment in infrastructure and community facilities in the past three years, is creating momentum in the market.

Our challenge for the future is to guide this growth in a well-measured and sustainable way.

Planning for future growth

The Richmond Valley Growth Management Strategy sets out where residential and commercial growth can occur over the next 20+ years to meet demand. The Strategy, prepared in consultation with the community, is supported by Place Plans for our towns and villages. The Place Plans focus on enhancing the unique local character of each place and outline growth opportunities and constraints. The Growth Strategy supports accelerated housing and industrial growth in the Casino area, with sufficient urban land to meet housing needs for the next 40 years. In the Mid-Richmond communities, steady, sustainable growth is supported, to protect sensitive environmental areas and manage flooding constraints.



Delivery Partners

- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- NSW Health
- Transport for NSW
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water (DCCEEW)
- Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
- Richmond Valley Council
- Private health care/aged care investors
- Housing developers (community & private)
- Community groups and individuals

ACTIVATING HOUSING INVESTMENT

One of the key principles of this plan is that everyone should have a safe and affordable place to live. Sadly, for many local families this is still not the case. The Northern Rivers was suffering a housing crisis before the flood and the situation is now worse. In the decades prior to the flood regional housing construction rates declined, creating under-supply and increasing prices. Turning this crisis around will require serious investment and careful planning.

There are two key strategies to increase our housing supply:

- Providing more housing choices in existing settlements
- Unlocking greenfield sites near established communities

At present, single-person households represent 29% of our housing stock, but lack of housing choice is discouraging down-sizing. Preparing a housing strategy to find out exactly what type of homes people need, and where they should be, will help support planning changes and demonstrate housing demand to potential investors.

The Valley's greatest potential for addressing long-term housing needs relies on activating greenfield sites to build more homes. There are a number of small privately-owned sites that could be developed in existing urban areas. However, achieving large-scale housing development will require support from all levels of government. The largest housing site is at South Fairy Hill, close to Casino and the Jobs Precinct, with potential for up to 1500 new homes in stage one and a further 2500+ in future stages. There is currently keen development interest in activating stage one and Council has been working with the proponent. The site was identified in the Northern Rivers Resilient Lands Strategy as a priority investigation area for flood-safe housing and Council has received funds to commission feasibility studies. The studies show that unlocking the site will have major social and economic benefits for the region but government investment in infrastructure will be needed. Council will advocate strongly for investment from the Resilient Lands Program's \$100m funding pool, as well as other State housing programs.



Current housing stock:

10,970

Estimated demand by 2041:

13,550

SECURING ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Long-term growth will also require long-term investment in essential infrastructure for our community. We will need to resolve some of the big issues facing our future such as:

Providing water security for Casino and the Mid-Richmond

Council has committed to a \$200m investment plan over the next 25 years to improve our water and sewerage systems. This includes completing Stage One of our water security project for Casino and investing more than \$10m in improving the Casino water treatment plant. Rous Water will also be investing significantly in the Woodburn Groundwater Project, opening new water bores and constructing water treatment systems that are flood and cyclone resilient.

Finding a long-term solution for disposal of residual waste

Our community currently generates 11,600 tonnes of landfill (residual waste) each year and recovers a further 4,900 tonnes of recyclable materials. Council has secured sufficient space to address our residual waste for the next 12+ years by opening a new cell at the Nammoona facility. However, we will need to start planning long before then for our next waste management solution.

Replacing and expanding our sewage treatment plants

The Casino STP is more than 90 years old and reaching the end of its asset life. We will need to replace the plant with a modern facility in the next five years and expand its capacity for at least a 20,000 population. This project will cost more than \$65m. Council has already invested \$2m to ensure the project is shovel-ready, but we need help from Federal and State Governments to proceed to constructoin Funding has already been secured for Stage 2 of the Evans Head STP which will cater for growth beyond the next 20 years and improve environmental performance.

Upgrading key transport links

Essential access roads and freight links such as the Woodburn-Casino Road, Summerland Way and Bruxner Highway will play a critical role in supporting our future growth. A key focus will be resolving congestion on the highway through Casino, fixing low-lying sections of road on the Summerland Way and completing our main resilience project on the Woodburn-Casino Rd, the \$18m replacement of the Tatham Bridges.





Evans Head Sewage Treatment Plant.

PROVIDING MORE JOBS AND SERVICES

Providing more jobs and a greater choice of employment will be essential to achieving our goal of becoming a regional growth centre. The Regional Jobs Precinct – now approved by the planning minister and open for business – will open the way for an additional 1900 jobs in manufacturing, and associated industries. Council is investing \$18m (with help from government funding) to unlock the potential of our new industrial lands and is actively promoting the precinct to investors.

We'll also be targeting greater investment in high-tech and professional services to broaden the range of employment options in the Richmond Valley. A recent analysis of growth in government jobs in the Northern Rivers showed that the Richmond Valley has seen continued under-investment. Our population growth should have created demand for an extra 830 new government jobs, yet we achieved less than 400. Actively targeting more growth in government employment will be a priority for the future.

More government jobs will mean more government services for our growing community. We need to ensure there are sufficient health and education services, policing and public transport to meet our future needs. A recent health needs

assessment for the North Coast showed that the Richmond Valley has some of the lowest rates of GPs, medical specialists, nurses, midwives and allied health workers per 1000 population.

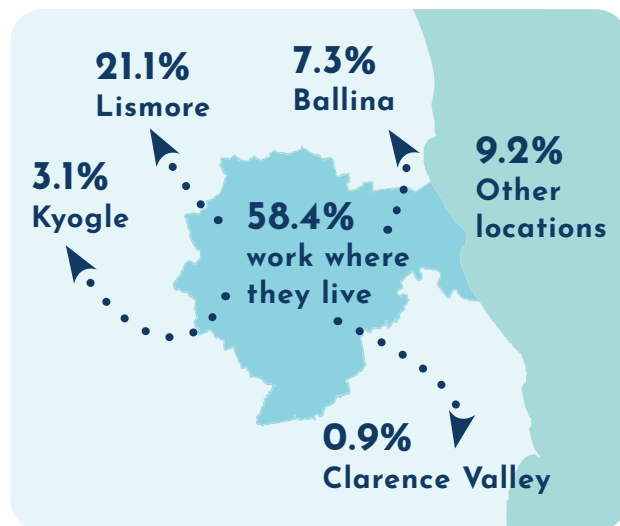
Building stronger relationships with NSW Health to increase community access to services will be a top priority over the life of this Plan. Council has identified opportunities to activate an expanded health precinct around the Casino hospital, as well as supporting expansion of Mid-Richmond services, and will be advocating strongly for further investment.



What services will our growing community need?

- ✓ More doctors (GPs & specialists)
- ✓ More health services – hospital, allied health and aged care
- ✓ More care workers (aged care and disability)
- ✓ More police and crime prevention measures
- ✓ More emergency services personnel
- ✓ More childcare places
- ✓ More education facilities – public & private schools, TAFE and university
- ✓ Better public transport

Where do we work?



Starting a career with Council

Richmond Valley Council is doing its part to increase government employment opportunities in the Valley. Council provides 295 local jobs and offers traineeships and scholarships to local school leavers each year. Apprenticeships in mechanical and electrical trades are keenly contested, with more than 90 applicants for each job! Pictured is our latest intake of new trainees celebrating their first day at work.



STRATEGIES

- Plan for long-term sustainable growth
- Provide more homes for our growing community
- Create more job opportunities
- Secure essential services
- Provide critical infrastructure

Top priorities

- Richmond Valley Masterplan, housing and infrastructure studies
- Activating new flood-safe housing developments
- Working with the NSW Government to deliver more health care, transport, affordable housing and education services
- Attracting more government employment to the Valley
- Establishing the Woodburn-Casino Road as a major transport link
- Advocating for improvements to the Bruxner Highway and Summerland Way
- Securing our long-term water supplies for Casino and the Mid-Richmond
- Building a new \$65m sewage treatment plant for Casino and completing Stage 2 of the Evans Head STP
- Developing more long-term solutions for disposal of our residual waste

Objective #2

ADAPT TO REGIONAL CHALLENGES & BUILD RESILIENCE

During our community consultation for this Plan, we received hundreds of comments on what people loved about the Valley, how they felt a strong connection to the place where they lived and valued the strong sense of community we enjoy. These are the reasons many people choose to live here – and why they never want to leave.

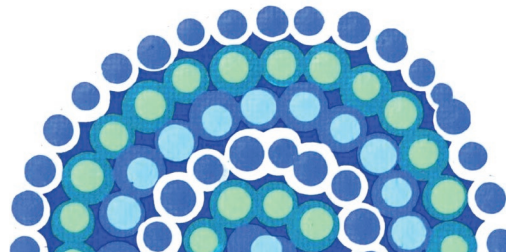
But we know that life in the Northern Rivers comes with its challenges and we will need to continue to face them in the future. The bushfires, floods and storms of the past five years have shown us that we must change the way we prepare for, respond to and recover from these events and make disaster adaptation a way of life in our Valley for the future. Through well considered strategies, risk management and innovation we can adapt to these challenges and continue to thrive. But it will take a collaborative approach between communities, Council, Emergency Services, Federal and State Government authorities to bring it all together and create a new way forward. Inputs such as the current CSIRO project to develop a hydrodynamic

model of the Richmond River catchment and test flood mitigation options will be critical components, combined with the State and Regional Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Plans and our local adaptation planning piloted in the Mid-Richmond Place Plans. The Place Plans use a version of the CSIRO's Maintain-Modify-Transform model to explore adaptation pathways. Council will consider ways to apply this model more broadly across the Richmond Valley as it moves to finalize the new Richmond Valley Floodplain Risk Management Plan. It will also work directly with our Mid-Richmond communities to explore tailored approaches to development controls in each village, to ensure they can continue to support managed growth that addresses flood risks.



Delivery Partners

- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
- CSIRO Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative
- Richmond Valley Floodplain Risk Management Committee & technical advisors
- Community resilience and preparedness initiatives
- Local and regional Emergency Services
- Community agencies and support networks





Students of Broadwater Public School proudly walk to their new \$20m flood-resilient school, after three long years in temporary accommodation.

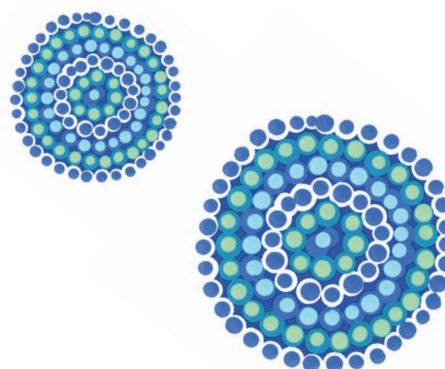
BUILDING RESILIENCE AND SUPPORTING FLOOD RECOVERY

Although we are making steady progress with flood recovery, there is still more to be done to find long-term solutions for housing resilience, resolve the future of buy-back lands and continue to support economic recovery of the Mid-Richmond villages. We also need to complete the remainder of our \$100m road repair program and continue to improve the resilience of our sewerage networks and drainage systems. Nearly half of the road program has been completed, but it will take another two years to deliver the remaining works, as well as fixing the damage from Cyclone Alfred.

There are many delivery partners involved in this process and further government funding will be required.

As part of the repair program, Council has taken every opportunity to build community infrastructure better and stronger than it was before. This includes raising electrical switchboards in our sewerage pump stations and treatment plants, using flood-resilient materials in buildings, relocating assets at risk and fixing low-lying areas of road that keep communities isolated during flooding. A total

of \$23.5m in resilience funding was secured to fix the drainage at Dairy Flat and Thearles Canal (completed) and replace and raise the twin Tatham Bridges on the Woodburn-Casino Road. These projects will help ensure that vital links to communities such as Coraki can remain open. Betterment works were also included in the \$15.8m Naughton's Gap landslip remediation, completed in late 2024. This road was closed for more than three years as Council sought funding for repairs and worked on a complex solution to the problem. The new resilience works, including 152 concrete piers, up to 15m deep will help to ensure the road can survive future flooding events.





FIXING OUR ROADS & BRIDGES

75%

of our road network impacted

\$100m

road flood repair program

\$46.8m

works completed so far

STRATEGIES

- Improve disaster resilience
- Strengthen emergency response
- Support continued flood recovery

Top priorities

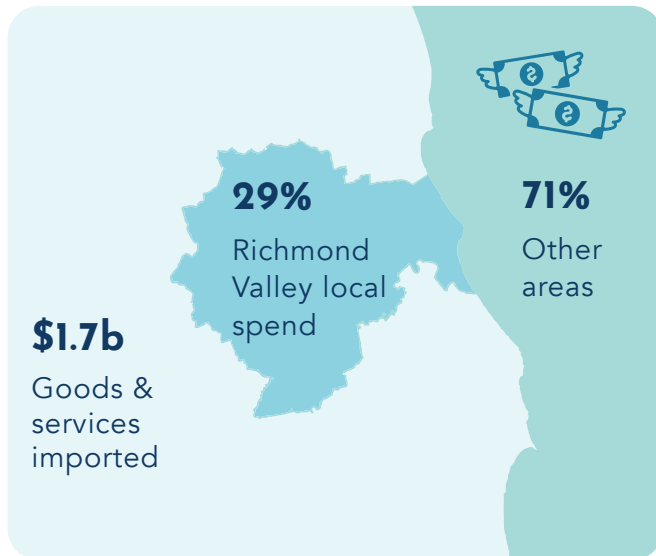
- Completing the CSIRO floodplain study & Regional Adaptation Plan
- Finalizing the new Richmond Valley Floodplain Risk Management Plan
- Developing resilient housing options and adaptation strategies for the Mid-Richmond villages
- Improving community preparedness and response to natural disasters
- Supporting continued flood recovery
- Completing our \$100m road repair program
- Designing infrastructure to be more disaster resilient
- Improving maintenance and performance of drainage systems

Objective #3

GROW AND DIVERSIFY OUR ECONOMY

The Richmond Valley economy is on the move, with annual production exceeding \$1.2 billion and opportunities for new enterprise and investment emerging. With affordable flood-safe land, a strategic location, and strong community spirit, the Valley is primed for investment, business expansion, and new industries.

Where does our money go?



Activation of the Regional Jobs Precinct, increasing innovation in agriculture and a thriving visitor economy will help to underpin our prosperity over the next 15 years, as we continue to diversify our industry and employment options. A key focus will be on strengthening local supply chains and production and providing more opportunities to shop local. At present, the Richmond Valley imports up to \$1.7b in goods and services from outside of the region and 71% of our spending goes out of town. We need to bring some of that investment back to our community.

Building our reputation as a progressive place to do business will help to attract more investment. The Richmond Valley already achieves the fastest turn-around times for development approvals in the Northern Rivers and Council's free development concierge service supports new investors to navigate State planning regulations and compliance. But we want to do more to help set local enterprise up for success and encourage continued collaboration and growth in our business community.



RICHMOND VALLEY ECONOMY

\$1.2 BILLION ANNUAL PRODUCTIVITY

Top value-add industries:

- Agriculture – 15.2%
- Manufacture – 14.8%
- Health care/assistance – 9.9%

8,663 LOCAL JOBS

Top employment industries:

- Manufacture – 14%
- Health care/assistance – 13%
- Education – 10%

Activating the Regional Jobs Precinct

Council has been working with the NSW Government for the past three years to develop the Regional Jobs Precinct Masterplan and supporting planning amendments. There are only four Jobs Precincts in NSW and they offer a new way to do business, making it easier for businesses to establish and reducing the costs of pre-development studies. Industries investing in the Precinct can have confidence in putting their proposals forward, with a clear understanding of planning requirements and service availability.

To provide a further boost to new enterprise, Council is investing \$18m, with help from government funding, to establish new industrial estates within Precincts 1 and 3 of the RJP. This means that investors will have fully-serviced land ready to go. Council has been actively marketing opportunities for larger-scale industry in the Precinct 1 estate and will shortly open more land in Precinct 3 which will be suitable for light industry or large retail/homemaker businesses.

The Jobs Precinct will bring economic benefits for the whole Valley and attract more working families to our community. Over the next 15 years our population is expected to grow by an additional 4000 and Council will be working closely with the NSW Government to activate more flood-safe land to house key workers.



342ha
of employment land
1900
new jobs



Creating vibrant town centres and main streets

The Richmond Valley's unique identity and way of life sets us apart in the Northern Rivers and we want to build on this strength in the future. This includes plans to revitalise our CBDs, main streets and iconic places, capitalizing on features such as Casino's art deco architecture and the coastal village atmosphere of Evans Head.

Our town centres say a lot about our community and the way we live. They reflect the health of our local economy, our civic pride and local culture. Making these places more vibrant, attractive and business-friendly will be an important part of our economic success.

Council will be working with the community, local businesses and property owners to carefully plan revitalisation of town centres in Casino and Evans Head. This includes creating stronger links between the CBDs and adjoining river and foreshore precincts. Casino's new \$3m suspension bridge will be a key feature of the new design. We'll also be looking at improving safety and street lighting in our CBDs and providing more options for events and shop-local campaigns. The plans will form the basis for future civic works and investment and open the way for more residential options in our CBDs.



Local villages, such as Coraki, Broadwater and Woodburn are also set for a fresh, new look, with recommendations from the Mid-Richmond Place Plans to be implemented over the coming years. This includes the Woodburn CBD upgrade, resolving ownership of parts of the old Pacific Highway so civic improvements in Broadwater can begin and working with the community to design new walkways and improvements to Windsor Park in Coraki.



Delivery Partners

- Regional NSW and government funding partners
- Richmond Valley Council, Invest and Live Team and development concierge services
- Major employers and industries
- Local businesses and retailers
- Commercial property owners
- Tourism and marketing industries
- Destination North Coast
- Northern Rivers Rail Trail

Boosting the visitor economy

The Richmond Valley is a place worth discovering - and growing our visitor economy will ensure that more people get the chance to experience its unique attractions and natural beauty.

A strong visitor economy means more jobs, more investment, and more opportunities for small communities to thrive. A key focus will be increasing visitor accommodation options throughout the Valley. There are some exciting new proposals coming forward in Evans Head and Casino, but we need more investment in a diverse range of accommodation. From farm-stays to family camping adventures, country hotels and luxury seaside escapes, encouraging people to stay overnight means more local spending, and more opportunities to showcase our Valley.

Promoting our regional icons

Promoting and developing our regional attractions will also be a top priority. The Casino section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail continues to grow in popularity and, with the opening of the Bentley-Lismore link, there are more value-add options to explore. Strengthening the link between the Casino CBD and the start of the Trail will be a key focus in the CBD revitalisation. There are also plans to develop the Mid-Richmond's own unique cycling experience with staged

development of the Three Villages Cycleway. Council has been working on this project to link Evans Head, Woodburn and Broadwater, with some sections already constructed or under design. The cycleway will help to provide a welcome boost to our Mid-Richmond villages and a great experience for local families and visitors.

Increasing tourist visitation will be supported by consistent branding, marketing, and promotional efforts and a strong and diverse events calendar to raise the region's profile. Signature events such as the Casino Truck Show and Beef Week already attract regional and international visitation and there are plans to establish a new signature event that reflects the Mid-Richmond's coastal lifestyle.



STRATEGIES

- Ensure the Richmond Valley is open for business and investment ready
- Strengthen our manufacturing and industrial base
- Support continued growth in service industries
- Encourage innovation and new technologies
- Grow our lifestyle and tourism markets

Top priorities

- Activating the Regional Jobs Precinct, with traditional and emerging industries
- Encouraging new industries to establish or relocate, to the Valley, including new opportunities for ag-tech and value-add in agriculture.
- Setting businesses up for success, by promoting local opportunities and supporting applicants through the planning and approvals process
- Increasing trade and technical training opportunities
- Revitalizing our CBDs and main streets and growing the retail sector
- Boosting our visitor economy, with more visitor accommodation choices and eco-tourism options
- Building on business opportunities from the Northern Rivers Rail Trail and developing a new regional attraction with staged delivery of the Three Villages Cycleway

Objective #4

CELEBRATE OUR LOCAL IDENTITY AND LIFESTYLE

The Richmond Valley's strong sense of community is one of the main reasons people choose to live here. Preserving the small-town vibe of our communities – knowing our neighbours, and spending time with family and friends – was one of the main priorities identified in our community consultation.

The Richmond Valley has an active program of more than 75 annual community events and festivals which help to bring people of all ages, cultures and abilities together to celebrate our lifestyle. Signature events, such as Beef Week and the Casino Truck Show will continue to be a regional drawcard in the future, while activities such as NAIDOC Week, music festivals, markets, fund-raisers and sports competitions also play

an important role in community life. Council will continue to support local groups to deliver activities through the Community Grants and Events funding programs.

Helping people to feel valued and included in our community is one of the key principles underpinning this plan and there is still more work to be done in improving accessibility to public places and services. Two key focus areas suggested were providing all-ability access to beaches and installing more tactile indicators on our footpaths, to help those with vision impairment.

Feeling safe within the community is also essential and there are increasing concerns about crime in some areas. This is an emerging trend in our regional and addressing community safety will require a collaborative approach between governments, police, businesses, community groups and individuals. A key focus will be providing safer streetscapes through improved design and lighting, advocating for more policing and providing community programs.



Casino Truck Show is a huge hit with the local community, providing a \$3.9m boost to the Richmond Valley economy.

Rated one of the best truck shows in the Southern Hemisphere, the 2024 event drew record crowds of 30,000 and attracted 600 entrants. The Truck Show is set to be here for the long run as one of our favourite signature events.

Supporting our future leaders

Young people are the future leaders of our community, so it's important that they have opportunities to be actively involved in community life and have a say in decisions that will affect them.

There are many local groups supporting youth participation in our community. This includes sporting clubs, community organisations, service clubs, school-based activities, church groups, emergency services volunteers, local neighbourhood centres and services.

Council currently provides programs for youth through local libraries and the Casino Indoor Sports Centre and runs a successful Youth Employment Scheme, providing traineeships for up to 20 school-leavers each year. It also leads the Richmond Valley Youth Network, which brings young people, youth service providers, educators, community members, and businesses together to raise awareness of local youth issues.

Exploring more ways to engage with young people, hear their ideas and encourage them to be involved in decision-making will continue to be a priority over the life of this Plan.



I would like to see more people in the community volunteering. It gives people something to do and it helps make our community a better place.

*Ruby Beckenham
Casino High School*



Delivery Partners

- Federal and State government funding partners
- State government agencies
- NSW Police
- Richmond Valley Council
- Local businesses
- Community groups and sports clubs
- Local schools
- Richmond Valley Youth Network
- Richmond-Upper Clarence Regional Library
- Local events managers, including Beef Week and Casino Truck Show
- Community members

Providing safe places to learn and share

Richmond Upper Clarence Regional Library has been quietly changing our community for more than 45 years and continuing this valuable service will be a high priority for the future.

The library provides it's 16,000+ members with more than just books. It is a safe place to learn, connect and participate in community life. It's a place where local kids whose families can't afford a laptop or internet service can still continue their schoolwork. It's a friendly face to help older people connect with technology and navigate on-line services. And it's a welcoming and inclusive space for people of all ages and abilities to come together, socialise, have fun and learn.

Last year, more than 129,000 people walked through the door of our local libraries and more than 148,000 items went home with them, as part of the lending service - not just books, but jigsaws, crochet hooks, exercise equipment and even kids' birthday cake tins. More than 1000 community programs were provided, including everything from early learning to kids' anime and lego clubs, create, make and share sessions, adult colouring-in and film club.

Expanding the library's outreach programs and resources and ensuring the service continues to evolve and receive the funding it needs will help to secure its place in our community's future.



I would like to see more parks and places. I think it's important for families to come and enjoy time with their kids and enjoy the place.

Zamira Wade
Casino Christian School



Cool places to play and great public facilities

When we asked people what they loved about the Richmond Valley, local parks and play spaces were on the top of the list for young families. Parents liked the healthy, affordable activities and children told us they wanted to be more involved in designing our play spaces. There were a lot of great suggestions for new bike tracks, water play and adventure activities. The biggest issue raised was the need for more shade and cool spaces. People wanted more trees and shaded seating in our parks, as well as shade near walkways and cycleways. Council's Community Greening Program has a commitment to plant 1000 new shade trees each year, however it's important that we choose the right species and the right place for our public plantings.



Another top priority was ensuring that our public places, including main streets, parks and cemeteries were always well presented and that we have sufficient sporting facilities to cater for the needs of our growing population. The past two years have seen a big investment in local sport, with more than \$5.9m in government funding secured for upgrades to Stan Payne and Woodburn Ovals and new clubhouses for Woodburn Pony and Tennis Clubs, Casino Netball, Casino Cobras, Junior Rugby League and Swimming Club. This is on top of the \$6.7m Stage One upgrade of the Casino Memorial Swimming Pool.

Over the life of this Plan, Council will work with the community to assess future sporting needs and continue to advocate strongly for more government funding for local sports facilities.



STRATEGIES

- Encouraging community participation and connection
- Providing opportunities to learn, create and celebrate
- Creating safe and inclusive public spaces
- Providing healthy, family-friendly activities
- Ensuring facilities are well maintained and meet community needs

Top priorities

- Continuing to support NAIDOC Week activities, Aboriginal cultural awareness and employment programs
- Providing accessible public places for people of all abilities
- Supporting signature events such as Casino Truck Show and Beef Week and developing new events
- Continuing community grants and events funding programs
- Improving safety in our public places and advocating for more policing and crime-prevention
- Providing more family-friendly play spaces with shade areas
- Expanding outreach programs for the Regional Library and Indoor Sports Centre
- Providing more opportunities for young people to have a say and be involved in community life
- Ensuring there are sufficient sports facilities for our growing community and continuing to upgrade our sports fields, pools and recreation areas

Objective #5

PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT MEETS COMMUNITY NEEDS

The Richmond Valley is set for a \$150m+ investment in infrastructure over the next five years as we continue to rebuild our flood-damaged road networks, expand our water and sewerage services and replace our aging infrastructure.

Infrastructure that is well-planned, constructed and maintained is essential for our community's future and there are many partners involved in providing these services, including national and state governments, energy utilities, telcos and Richmond Valley Council.

The NSW Government is responsible for the highways that traverse our area, and provides funding towards regional roads, but most road

construction and maintenance in the Richmond Valley is carried out by council employees or contractors. Council is also responsible for managing water supply (in partnership with Rous Water) maintaining sewerage and drainage networks and operating resource recovery and waste services. It maintains a large operational workforce to carry out this work, as well as employing local contractors. Road repairs are a high priority for the next three years, as there is still more than \$50m of flood damage repairs to complete following the 2022 flood - as well as further repairs following Cyclone Alfred. We also need to keep up with regular maintenance, such as road grading and drain cleaning, to ensure infrastructure remains in good order and is ready for the next disaster event.

There will also be new infrastructure to service growth and unlock more housing, and major investment in replacing or upgrading aging essential assets, such as sewage treatment plants. To meet these challenges, we will need to plan carefully, considering the whole-of-life cost of providing, maintaining and replacing new assets. Council will continue to advocate strongly for government funding to support this work.

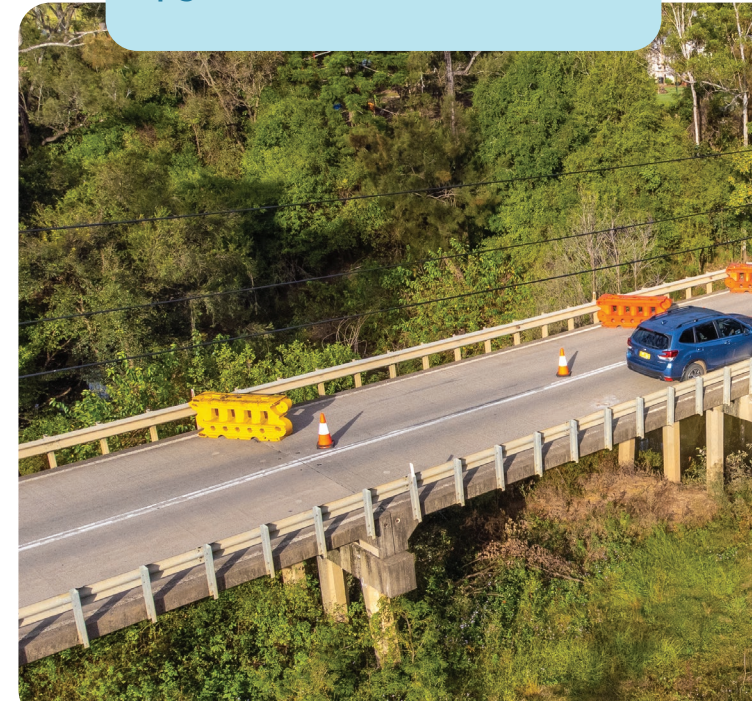


Opening the \$15.8m Naughtons Gap landslide remediation

\$1.2b
in community assets

1064km
of local roads to maintain

\$150m+
over the next 5 years to fix and upgrade essential infrastructure



Fixing our drains

More than one-third of the Richmond Valley local government area is floodplain, so providing drainage systems that work effectively in a changing climate will continue to be a major challenge for the future.

Many of our urban drains were designed more than 50 years ago and aren't equipped to cater for our growing communities and more intensive rainfall patterns. Fixing and upgrading these systems will take time and require funding from all levels of government. The NSW Government currently limits the amount that local councils can collect from each property for stormwater

improvements, so there is not enough to fund essential projects. Last year, a total of \$206,000 was collected from the levy, yet Council will need to spend more than \$2m on the Illawong Lane drainage project currently being completed in Evans Head.

Understanding how our drainage systems work is the first step to designing and implementing solutions. Stormwater modelling for Casino has helped us to understand where we can get the best results for our investment and Council is focusing on these priority projects. Modelling for Evans Head and our Mid-Richmond communities will also be completed in the next two years and priority projects identified. Meanwhile, drain maintenance and inspection programs will continue to be a high priority.

Rous County Council also plays a role in managing rural flood mitigation infrastructure and experiences challenges with limited funding and complex government approval processes in maintaining its 190km network of drains and canals. Recent government funding programs have helped to complete some works, such as cleaning the Woodburn and Coraki town drains, but securing long-term investment in the network will remain a priority for the future.



Delivery Partners

- Federal and State government funding partners
- Transport for NSW
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water
- Environmental Protection Authority
- NSW Health
- Essential Energy
- NSW Telco Authority
- Richmond Valley Council
- Private contract firms
- Local businesses
- Community members



: The \$18m Tatham Bridge replacement project is due for completion in 2025.

Investing in water and sewerage services

Water and sewerage services are essential to community health, so ensuring they operate safely and efficiently is a high priority. Many of the Valley's water and sewer assets were built in the last century and are now approaching the end of their life. Substantial investment in upgrading and replacing this infrastructure will be required if we are to meet the needs of our growing population.

Providing safe drinking water

Ensuring Casino and the Mid-Richmond communities have access to safe, quality drinking water will be a key focus over the life of this Plan. Rous County Council currently provides bulk water to Evans Head and the Mid-Richmond villages, and Richmond Valley Council manages the Casino water supply. Rous is investing in the Woodburn Groundwater Project, to secure an emergency water source for the community and provide improved water treatment. Richmond Valley Council will be investing more than \$10m on its planned upgrade of the Casino Water Treatment Plant to improve water treatment processes and automation. Coraki's water network will also receive investment in the future, with replacement of the water reservoir scheduled for 2035.

Improving sewerage networks

Major investment will also be required to replace, augment and improve the performance of our two largest sewage treatment plants at Casino and Evans Head and develop future improvements for the aging Coraki plant. Stage 2 of the Evans Head STP is scheduled for completion in 2026 and the Casino STP project is awaiting government approvals and detailed design. We will need at least \$45m from funding partners to deliver this essential infrastructure. Another key focus over the next 15 years will be improving the performance of local sewerage networks and continuing to address the challenge that all councils in our region face of reducing stormwater inflow and infiltration during storms and floods.



2.7b

litres of drinking water
supplied each year

7386

connected properties

2

major water supplies

\$10m+

upgrade for Casino's water
treatment plant

\$65m+

to replace the Casino Sewage
Treatment Plant

\$13m+

Stage 2 Evans Head Sewage
Treatment Plant

Casino Water Treatment Plant

Managing waste responsibly

Our community currently sends 11,600 tonnes of waste to landfill annually, and the volume has been increasing since the flood as reconstruction work continues. About 4,900 tonnes of recyclable materials are collected each year, however contamination rates are high which makes it difficult to find markets for these products.

The NSW Waste Levy continues to add to the cost of managing our community's waste. Every tonne of waste collected costs \$98 in State government charges and very little of this is returned to local communities.

In the past, much of our community's waste was sent to landfill sites in South Queensland, at a cost of some \$2m per year. With the opening of the new cell at Nammoona Resource Recovery Centre, we can now manage our waste locally, with 12 years+ capacity in the cell. Within the life of this Plan, we will need to find more solutions

for managing residual waste as the Nammoona cell reaches capacity. After detailed investigation, Richmond Valley Council has ruled out Energy from Waste facilities as a future option for residual waste, so other alternatives will need to be explored.

Council will continue to advocate for a greater return of waste levy funds and to develop and upgrade the Nammoona facility and Evans Head Transfer Station in the future.



HOW MUCH WASTE DO WE PRODUCE?

11,600 tonnes	taken to landfill each year since 2022
4,900 tonnes	recyclable materials recovered per year
23%	contamination rate in yellow kerbside bins (including general waste and non-recyclable materials)



STRATEGIES

- Undertake whole of life planning for community infrastructure
- Provide a network of safe, well-constructed and maintained roads and bridges
- Manage water supply and sewerage networks effectively
- Provide responsible waste management services

Key Directions

- Repairing our flood-damaged roads
- Completing the Broadwater Bridge upgrade
- Completing the Tatham Bridges replacement project
- Further upgrades to regional roads, including the links between Evans Head, Broadwater and Woodburn
- Completing stormwater modelling studies for the Mid-Richmond and developing improvement programs for drainage systems
- Upgrading the Casino Water Treatment Plant
- Progressing the Casino STP replacement
- Completing Stage 2 Evans Head STP and the Rappville sewerage scheme
- Completing upgrade works at the Nammoona Resource Recovery Centre
- Maintaining efficient waste collection and recycling services

Objective #6

PRESERVE NATIVE BUSHLAND, BIODIVERSITY AND WATERWAYS

Working together to restore habitat

The Richmond Valley is defined by its beautiful landscapes and waterways, and our future will depend on protecting and improving the health of these unique areas. Our rivers, native animals and plants are under increasing pressure from human activity and a changing climate. There are currently 285 threatened species of flora, fauna and fish and 12 threatened ecological communities within our Valley and 70% of our local tree canopy has been lost through land clearing.

We will need a strong commitment to work together on habitat protection and land management practices over the next 15 years if we are to protect our native species and improve the health of the Richmond River. There are many local environmental and land care groups currently working within our community to care for critical habitat areas for koalas, native fish and flying foxes. Council has been supporting this work, with major habitat restoration in Casino and Coraki.

A key focus is to create new habitat for the region's flying fox colonies to encourage them away from urban areas.

Enhancing and protecting our local wetlands will also continue to be a high priority over the life of this Plan, as well as working with farmers to explore new sustainable practices and riparian zone restoration.



What I'd like to see in the Richmond Valley is looking after our nature. Because if we take too much, we won't have it anymore.

Austin Virtue
Manifold Public School



Photo by Brad Mustow



Delivery Partners

- Federal and State government funding partners
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water
- Environmental Protection Authority
- Department of Primary Industries
- Local Land Services
- Richmond Valley Council
- Landcare groups
- Friends of the Koala
- Local environmental groups
- Fishing clubs
- Farmers and rural landholders
- Community members

Looking after our waterways

One of the great family traditions of the Richmond Valley is to gather at Evans Head for a summer holiday by the beach. Our beaches are also a big attraction for holiday makers from southern Queensland and our seaside population nearly doubles in peak periods. With increasing pressure on our coastal environment, it will be important to strike a balance in the way we manage recreational activities on our beaches in future while protecting sensitive environmental areas, such as dunes, coffee rocks and bird nesting sites. Council will be working with the community to develop practical solutions, so we can all continue to share these great places. Another key theme from our community consultation was the need to improve access to our local rivers for residents and recreational

users. People love to spend time near the river to fish, swim, kayak or play and there are opportunities to improve access while still protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

There is also great potential to strengthen the connections between our town centres at Evans Head and Casino with the adjoining foreshore and riverbank precincts.

Improving the health of the Richmond River will also be a high priority over the life of this Plan. This includes working with other stakeholders, such as Local Land Services to improve catchment management and continuing programs to address water quality risks from on-site sewage management systems, underground fuel tanks, urban, industrial and farming activities.



Airforce Beach

STRATEGIES

- Protect biodiversity and encourage community participation in habitat restoration
- Enhance and protect local wetlands
- Improve catchment health and water quality
- Provide opportunities to enjoy and protect local beaches and waterways

Top Priorities

- Continuing flying fox habitat restoration programs to encourage relocation of colonies
- Supporting koala protection and habitat restoration/development
- Partnering with local farmers to encourage, habitat development on-farm and improve riparian zones
- Expanding and restoring wetland areas and incorporating traditional knowledge and cultural practices
- Working with stakeholders to improve Richmond River catchment health and manage water quality risks
- Improving community access to local rivers for recreational activities, including upgrades and new facilities at Coraki, Broadwater, Woodburn, Evans Head and Casino
- Managing shared use of our local beaches and protecting coastal habitat

Objective #7

REDUCE OUR IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

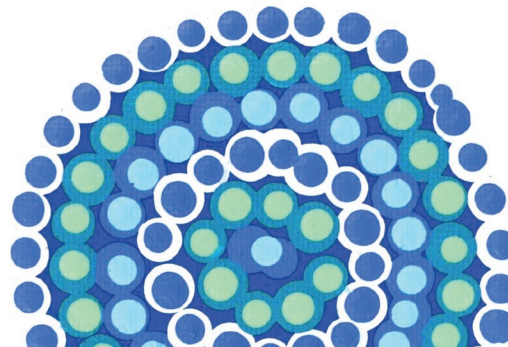
Playing our part to save water

Our community currently uses more than 2.7 billion litres of town water every year, and this is expected to rise to 4 billion litres over the next 25 years with continued growth. To ensure water security and respond to expected higher temperatures and longer periods of drought, we will all need to play a part in reducing water consumption. This includes reducing household usage, refining industrial and commercial processes to save water and reducing use in public open spaces and facilities.

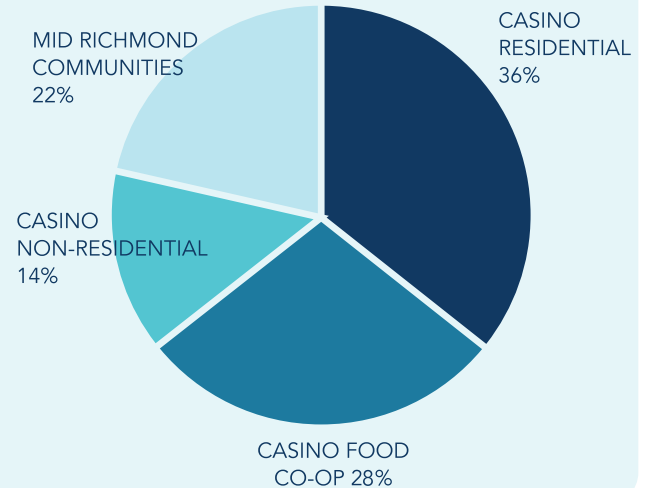
Richmond Valley Council and Rous Water have been working in partnership to help reduce water consumption across the region. One of the key initiatives over the next 10 years is to roll-out Smart Water Metering for homes and businesses in the Mid-Richmond (stage 1) and Casino (stage 2). This will help customers to better monitor and manage their own water usage, as well as providing live data to Council on what is happening in its water network, including potential water loss.

Providing cool, green spaces

Planting more trees is one of the best things we can do to help reduce our carbon footprint and respond to climate change. It was also identified as a top priority in our community consultation. Council's Community Greening Program currently has a target of 1000 additional shade trees each year for public parks and streets and local schools and community groups have been helping out by raising seedlings for the program. However, we will all need to play a part in protecting our remaining tree canopy and planting new trees for the future. Council has produced a free guide to help people choose the right tree for the right place in their gardens and we'll also be encouraging more on-farm tree planting.



AVERAGE ANNUAL WATER USAGE – 2730ML



Delivery Partners

- Federal & State Government funding partners
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water
- Environmental Protection Authority
- Richmond Valley Council
- Rous County Council
- NE Waste
- Local industries and businesses
- Community members

Reducing our carbon footprint

Richmond Valley Council has been working on a project to monitor and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in essential services such as waste management and sewerage treatment, as well as reducing electricity consumption at community facilities. Landfill operations produce some 8,800 tonnes CO₂-E annually, and our local sewerage networks 4,082 tonnes CO₂-E, with electricity usage for pumps and treatment plants contributing to this figure. Council has been looking at options for solar installations at community buildings and essential infrastructure to help reduce these impacts in future. The new Casino STP will have its own solar installation, and solar systems will also help to power the pumps that transfer water from the river to the Casino Water Treatment Plant.

Increasing recycling rates

The NSW Government has set a 20-year target to transition to a circular economy and we have a lot of work to do to achieve this. At present, the amount of waste taken to landfill is increasing (partially due to flood reconstruction) and the amount of materials being recycled is decreasing. High contamination rates, with the wrong materials going into our yellow and green bins, makes it harder to find markets for these materials.

Increasing recycling rates, finding new uses for organic wastes and encouraging consumers to make smart choices about products and packaging will be a high priority for the future.

STRATEGIES

- Promote responsible water usage
- Deliver community greening programs
- Reduce, recycle and reuse waste products
- Reduce our carbon footprint

Top Priorities

- Partnering with industry and commercial users to reduce water consumption
- Introducing smart-metering and other water saving programs
- Preparing a new drought management strategy
- Continuing the Community Greening Program to plant 1000 new shade trees each year
- Increasing recycling rates and reducing material contamination rates
- Encouraging more recycling industries to establish in the Richmond Valley
- Monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from key areas such as landfill and sewerage networks
- Introducing more solar installations for public buildings and facilities
- Providing community education and awareness programs to encourage sustainable living



Objective #8

LEAD AND ADVOCATE FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Shaping our future together

As the Richmond Valley prepares for the next 15 years, our community will need strong and accountable leadership to guide our progress and continue our flood recovery journey.

All levels of government will play a role in delivering our community's vision for the future and Richmond Valley Council will be at the forefront of this change. Over the past years, Council has ensured that the voice of the Richmond Valley is heard in future planning and investment decisions for the region and will continue to advocate strongly for our community. This includes participating in regional forums, such as the Northern Rivers

Joint Organisation and working directly with the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Council has also led the way in creating the plans that will guide future growth in our Valley, support more sustainable communities and strengthen our economy.

The next 15 years will bring some exciting possibilities, and everyone can play a part in the key decisions that will shape our future. This includes participating in community engagement and Council meetings, as well as being actively involved in community life through local business chambers, organisations and service clubs.



I think in the community I'd like to see greater youth engagement and more events where the community can engage.

Paiten Hampson
Casino High School



Delivery Partners

- Federal and State Governments
- Local Members of Parliament
- Richmond Valley Council
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
- Local business organisations and chambers of commerce
- Community organisations
- Local sports clubs
- Community members



Having a say in decisions

As we deliver the community's 15-year vision, there will be lots of ways to be involved in consultation and feedback.

Richmond Valley Council has seven elected Councillors who meet each month to make key decisions for the community. Anyone can be involved in open council meetings or contact their local Councillor directly to share their ideas or concerns. Residents can also find out about plans, projects or proposals that are open for

consultation by checking the "on exhibition" section of Council's website. The Agenda for each Council meeting is also available on-line in advance of the meeting.

Council shares news with the community through its social media sites and community newsletters and prepares a Community Engagement Strategy for each new term of council to outline how we will provide opportunities for people to have a say, including how to be involved in land use planning and development decisions.

STRATEGIES

- Strengthen community engagement and participation
- Advocate for community needs and priorities
- Lead with integrity

Top Priorities

- Continuing Council's Big Conversation engagement program
- Exploring new ways to encourage young people to have a say
- Actively seeking government grants for community projects
- Continuing to provide accessible council meetings, with live-streaming services
- Ensuring good governance and decision making in Council
- Working with local MPs to address community priorities
- Actively engaging with government Ministers and agencies on local issues and priorities.
- Continuing to work with the NSW Reconstruction Authority and participate in the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation



Objective #9

MANAGE RESOURCES RESPONSIBLY & PROVIDE GREAT SERVICE

Managing an \$88m enterprise

The final objective of our Plan focuses on the role that Council will play in delivering the community's vision over the next 15 years. As the second largest employer in the Richmond Valley, Council provides a range of essential services for our community, including managing water supplies, road construction, drainage networks, parks and reserves, and providing important regulatory services in development assessment and public health.

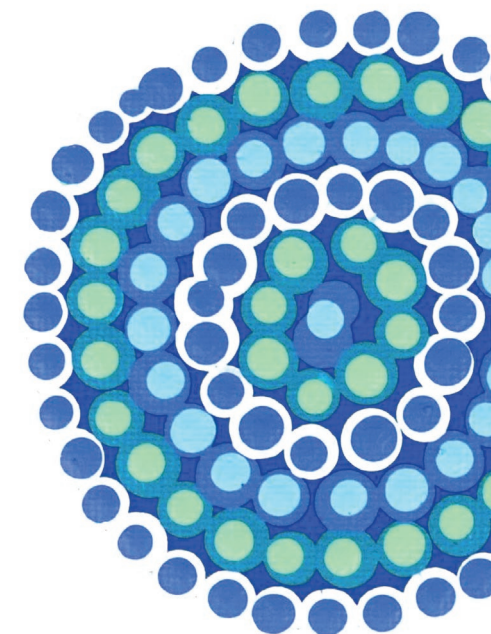
Council also has stewardship of more than \$1.2 billion of community assets, manages an annual operational budget of \$88 million, as well as some \$80 million in capital works.

Our Plan sets an ambitious agenda for growth and prosperity within the community and our success in achieving these goals will depend on prudent investment by government and private enterprise, and sound financial management from Council to deliver the essential infrastructure we need. We will rely on a combination of government grants

and long-term loans, rates, fees, charges and development contributions to fund this work, while also ensuring we have sufficient skilled workers to carry out the tasks ahead.

Getting on with the job

As our community continues to grow, Council will get on with the job of providing the services we all need for a healthy and prosperous community. By the time this Plan has been delivered in 2040 we will have emptied more than 9 million bins for local homes and businesses, answered 200,000 phone calls from customers, provided 40 billion litres of safe drinking water, rescued more than 3000 stray dogs and mowed 207,000 ha of grass to maintain our public spaces. This is the work that happens quietly every day, in every town, village and rural community to ensure the Richmond Valley is a really great place to live.



Delivery Partners

- Federal and State Government funding partners
- Office of Local Government
- Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)
- Richmond Valley Council
- Local business community
- Local schools and colleges
- Community members

Investing in local employment

Richmond Valley Council has supported an 'invest and grow locally' workforce strategy for the past 10 years, to ensure that local people have opportunities to get a job, learn new skills and build their careers at Council. Over the past three years, 34 young people have been offered traineeships, apprenticeships or university placements through Council's Youth Employment Scheme and initiatives such as Try a Trade have encouraged local women to explore non-traditional roles such as construction, mechanics and outdoor maintenance. Currently only 7% of Council's operational workforce is female and promoting opportunities in these roles will be a key focus for the future.

Council currently employs 295 full-time staff, with 77% of the workforce, and their families, living in the Richmond Valley. Further employment is provided through contract workers for construction and services such as traffic control and Council sources many of its supplies and materials from local businesses. That represents a major boost for the local economy and an investment in the community's future. A key priority for the next 15 years will be continuing to build local employment options and explore new technologies to ensure a safe, modern and mobile workforce.



STRATEGIES

- Manage finances responsibly and provide value for money
- Manage Council businesses and commercial activities for community benefit
- Strengthen Council's role as a leading local employer
- Manage organizational risks
- Provide a high standard of customer service
- Deliver consistent regulatory and compliance services
- Provide efficient corporate and operational support

Top Priorities

- Managing Council's income and investments to ensure there is enough for current and future community needs
- Delivering a positive return for the community from Council's industrial activation projects
- Continuing the Youth Employment Program (YES) women's Try a Trade and Aboriginal employment programs to offer more local jobs at Council
- Ensuring Council works safely in the community and protects public health
- Continuing to deliver the Development Concierge service to help local applicants
- Continuing Council's local procurement initiatives
- Improving cyber-security and using new technologies to support a modern, mobile workforce

MEASURING SUCCESS

The Community Strategic Plan provides for the next 15 years of growth and activity in our Valley. In the life of this plan, we will see more than four terms of office for local and state governments and many social and economic changes within our community. So how will we measure whether our plans for Richmond Valley 2040 are making a positive difference?

At the end of each term of office, Council is required to review progress in delivering the Community Strategic Plan and prepare a State of the Valley report for the in-coming council.

To help prepare this report, we will measure outcomes in a number of ways including:

- Monitoring Council's progress in delivering the nine objectives and the activities and actions from our Delivery Program
- Listening to community feedback through surveys, listening tours and other engagement activities
- Monitoring state and regional reports, including the review of the North Coast Regional Plan and reports from the NSW Reconstruction Authority

- Measuring local trends in investment, consumer spending, development applications, productivity and employment
- Monitoring environmental health, such as water quality and habitat regeneration
- Comparing Council's financial performance against the NSW local government benchmarks

We'll also revisit our key growth targets to see if we are on track in delivering the jobs, housing and population growth envisaged in the plan and whether we are achieving our annual targets for the Community Greening Program.

Assessing our progress against the key principals will also be important and we'll be seeking community feedback on whether these aspirations are being achieved.

Council and the community will receive regular updates on progress and each new in-coming council will lead a review of the Plan and undertake further community consultation on priorities and projects for the future.





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Richmond Valley Council would like to thank the many community members who helped to create this plan by sharing their ideas and aspirations for the future.

To those who took the time to attend consultation sessions, write submissions or participate in our on-line surveys, ideas forums and schools consultation programs - thank you for your contributions.

Also thanks to:

Noel Caldwell for the "River Dreaming" artwork which appears throughout this document, and to Jasmine Phillips and the team at Wild Honey Creative for creative development and graphic design.



Casino Office:

**Cnr Walker Street and Graham Place
(Locked Bag 10)**

Casino NSW 2470

Phone: (02) 6660 0300

Evans Head Office:

Cnr Woodburn Street and School Lane

Evans Head NSW 2473

Phone: (02) 6660 0365

Email: council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au