Have your say

Submissions close 4pm Monday 7 December 2009.

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This document has been developed by Sunshine Coast Regional Council’s Regional Strategy and Planning Department (Strategic Planning Branch) for the purposes of seeking public comment.

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This document has been released by Sunshine Coast Regional Council for the purposes of community consultation to generate feedback and input from the community into the development of council’s policy position and strategies. This document does not represent the adopted views or policy position of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council.
Preamble

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council has identified its vision for the region to be “Australia’s most sustainable region – vibrant, green, diverse”. In this current Council term (up to 2012) and in partnership with the community, the new Council will begin the challenging task of delivering on its vision.

A key concept that must inform all decision making to deliver on that vision is that of “carrying capacity”, defined briefly as “the population that can be supported indefinitely by its supporting systems”. Over the page, you will find a discussion of all the elements that need to be considered in ensuring a sustainable carrying capacity for the region.

A key element in that task will be the production of a new planning scheme, with its capacity to provide for new development that meets our requirements for economic, environmental and social sustainability.

As the first step in beginning that process, Council has prepared a Statement of Proposals outlining the key directions for the new planning scheme as well as a number of draft policy documents for your comment as listed below. We would welcome your views on the policy directions outlined, and any omissions that should also be considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENTS FOR COMMUNITY COMMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>► Affordable Living Discussion Paper - Outlines Council’s proposed strategies to improve affordability on the Sunshine Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Biodiversity Strategy - Identifies Council’s strategies to protect and enhance biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Canelands Discussion Paper - Outlines Council's intentions for the future use of Canelands on the Sunshine Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Climate Change Strategy - Outlines Council’s strategies to respond to climate change and peak oil on the Sunshine Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Cultural Heritage Background Study - Provides information as the basis for the preparation of a Cultural Heritage Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Flooding and Stormwater Management Discussion Paper - Identifies Council’s intended principles for managing flooding and stormwater management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Housing Needs Assessment Background Study - Provides information on existing and future housing needs for the Sunshine Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Open Space Discussion Paper - Outlines a framework for the preparation of an open space strategy for the Sunshine Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Rural Futures Background Study - Identifies Council’s intentions for the use of rural lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Rural Planning Background Study - Provides background information on rural areas and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Statement of Proposals - Outlines Council’s key intended directions for the new planning scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>► Waterways and Coastal Foreshores Management Discussion Paper - Outlines Council’s strategies for managing natural waterways, coastal foreshore areas and constructed waterbodies.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Carrying Capacity: the population that can be supported indefinitely by its supporting systems.

In ecological terms, the carrying capacity of an ecosystem is the size of the population that can be supported indefinitely upon the available resources and services of that ecosystem. Living within the limits of an ecosystem depends on three factors:

- the amount of resources available in the ecosystem,
- the size of the population, and
- the amount of resources each individual is consuming.

A simple example of carrying capacity is the number of people who could survive in a lifeboat after a shipwreck. Their survival depends on how much food and water they have, how much each person eats and drinks each day, and how many days they are afloat. If the lifeboat made it to an island, how long the people survived would depend upon the food and water supply on the island and how wisely they used it. A small desert island will support far fewer people than a large continent with abundant water and good soil for growing crops.

In this example, food and water are the natural capital of the island. Living within the carrying capacity means using those supplies no faster than they are replenished by the island's environment: using the 'interest' income of the natural capital. A community that is living off the interest of its community capital is living within the carrying capacity. A community that is degrading or destroying the ecosystem on which it depends is using up its community capital and is living unsustainably.

Equally important to community sustainability is living within the carrying capacity of the community’s human, social and built capital. Carrying capacity is much harder to measure for these types of capital, but the basic concept is the same -- are the different types of capital being used up faster than they are being replenished? For example:

- A community that allows its children to be poorly educated, undernourished, and poorly housed is eroding its human capital.

- A community that allows the quality of its social interactions to decline through lack of trust, respect, and tolerance is eroding its social capital.

- A community that allows its buildings, roads, parks, power facilities, water facilities, and waste processing capability to decay is eroding its built capital. Additionally, a community that is creating built capital without considering the future maintenance of that capital is setting itself up for eventual decay.

So, in the context of sustainability, carrying capacity is the size of the population that can be supported indefinitely upon the available resources and services of supporting natural, social, human, and built capital.

http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/Sustainability/KeyTermCarryingCap.html
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Executive Summary
This paper provides a commentary on current issues for the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast Region and background information for the preparation of a Rural Futures Strategy.

The rural areas of the Sunshine Coast are the portions shown as either Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area or Rural Living Area under the South East Queensland Regional Plan and at 89% they form the vast majority of the Sunshine Coast.

Agriculture, including grazing, poultry farms, tree crops and other crops, is an important part of the rural heritage of the Sunshine Coast and an integral contributor to the character of the hinterland. The retention of agriculture, particularly in those areas where farming activities have been the traditional use, is important to preserving the rural character and community identity.

National Parks, State Forests, Conservation Reserves and other rural lands have high scenic amenity, add to the economic prosperity of the Sunshine Coast and accommodate a wealth of biodiversity values. They also serve as the “lungs” of the Sunshine Coast and form the inter-urban breaks between distinct urban communities.

The rural areas, with their scenic landscapes, and peaceful lifestyle are the ideal setting for retreats, eco-tourism, food & wine tourism and other nature and rural-based tourism and benefit from the clean, green imagery associated with the Sunshine Coast hinterland.

The communities of the rural areas, including the communities of rural towns and villages, have a strong affinity with the natural values of their surroundings and with the heritage of the Sunshine Coast. While some residents have connection to the early farming and timber-getting families of the region, many more have moved here from areas outside the Sunshine Coast to appreciate the natural values of the area and the lifestyle it affords.

As the Sunshine Coast continues to grow rural lands will come under increasing pressure from urban uses. Changes in the agriculture industry and other global issues including climate change and peak oil will affect primary production and other rural industries. Therefore innovation and best practice in relation to farming, value-adding, transport, marketing and land management will become increasingly important.

While maintaining and improving rural productivity and employment options is highly important, the sustainability of natural resources of biodiversity, water, air and soil is equally important. In addition, the long term sustainability of rural communities relies on suitable housing, infrastructure and social support for residents.

This background study will help to inform the Sunshine Coast Rural Futures Strategy and will be used to guide Council’s future activities in the rural areas to help achieve the desired outcomes. Review of the various opportunities and threats facing the rural areas as well as existing Council operations has lead to eight nominated focus areas for future actions.
1.0 Introduction
The rural areas of the Sunshine Coast make up 89% of its area. Landowners, residents and the wider community value the land for a multitude of reasons, and it contributes widely to the character, economy and environment of the Sunshine Coast. A balanced future for these areas that acknowledges and protects the range of values is a critical factor in the sustainability of the Sunshine Coast. This is particularly important in these times of major economic, social and environmental change, at the local, national and global scales.

The purpose of the Rural Futures Background Study is to provide an overview of the community, economic and environmental issues currently facing the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast. It supports the preparation of the Sunshine Coast Rural Futures Strategy and will be used to guide Council’s future activities in the rural areas to help achieve the desired outcomes. The Sunshine Coast Rural Futures Strategy will form the basis for an integrated rural framework for the Sunshine Coast, to support and facilitate rural growth and change. This Strategy will provide a whole-of-Council response to address the full range of issues facing the rural areas. The policy framework for this Background Study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Policy Framework for Rural Futures Background Study
2.0 Background to Rural Areas

2.1. Definition of the Rural Areas
The Sunshine Coast encompasses an area that extends from the lower end of the Great Sandy Region and Kin Kin Ranges to the North, the Pacific Ocean to the East, Beerburrum and Pumicestone Passage to the South and, Conondale and Kenilworth to the West. It covers an area of 3,127km², where 89% or 2,792km² (or 279,243 hectares) are dedicated rural areas. The Sunshine Coast area is shown in Map 1.

The rural areas of the Sunshine Coast generally align with the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area and Rural Living Area designations under the South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plan. This includes some of the smaller rural villages. Hinterland towns, while within the Urban Footprint, are the service and employment centres for rural areas and must therefore be included in consideration of rural areas. Map 2 – Study Area shows the general settlement pattern of the Sunshine Coast and highlights the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area and Rural Living Area designations.

In addition however, there are areas inside the Urban Footprint which Council has determined as unsuitable for urban development. Such areas include hard constraints such as flood prone land, significant vegetation and steep land. The more significant of these areas have been identified in the Statement of Proposals for the new Planning Scheme. These areas will also be the subject of forward planning and policy for rural areas.

For the purpose of this document it is worthwhile stating that “Rural Areas” evokes different meanings for different people, and that apart from the general alignment stated above, this document discusses largely the significant portion of the Sunshine Coast that is outside the more densely populated coastal urban environment. Nambour is recognised as the major activity and service centre for the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast, but again it is a large urban centre and outside the scope of this study.

2.2. Description of the Study Area
The Sunshine Coast Region is made up of a diverse range of landforms which consist of mountainous highlands, flood plains and coastal low lands. The majority of urban areas are located along the coast between Noosa Heads and Caloundra, meaning rural lands are generally to the west of the coastal strip.

The Sunshine Coast is well known for its unique environment, rich in native flora and fauna. The region includes surf beaches, sand dunes, rivers, wetlands, hinterland ranges, iconic glasshouse mountains, rainforest and woodlands. These diverse environments support a range of vegetation and wildlife including terrestrial, aquatic or marine species. However there are many natural habitats within the Sunshine Coast that are fragmented or at risk from fragmentation by expanding agricultural uses and other development.

The existing pattern of remnant vegetation is the outcome of more than a century of land use for forestry, agriculture and settlement which cleared and fragmented large areas of habitat. The history of the Sunshine coast’s European settlement has involved extensive clearing for dairying in the western valleys and logging, pine plantations and intensive cropping on the hills and flats towards the coast. Historically, it has been the vegetation on the more fertile soils, volcanic soils and alluvium which has been most impacted by settlement, agriculture and development. Most of Sunshine Coast’s largest intact remnant areas are restricted to steeply sloping lands and coastal areas of poorer soils.
The Sunshine Coast is divided by the North Coast Railway line which runs parallel to the coastline through the Hinterland. Along the railway line, a distinct settlement pattern has formed which includes the towns of Beerburrum, Glasshouse Mountains, Beerwah, Landsborough, Mooloolah, Eudlo, Palmwoods, Woombye, Nambour, Yandina, Eumundi, Cooroy, Pomona and Cooran. Other settlements have occurred on the Buderim Plateau, the Blackall Range and along the Noosa and Maroochy Rivers.

The Sunshine Coast is a fast developing region but growth is largely concentrated in the coastal urban areas. The local government area had a 2006 residential population of approximately 295,125 but the rural areas accommodated 72,900 of these residents. Due to the historical trend of interstate migration and the sea change phenomenon, the Sunshine Coast region’s population is projected to grow to 473,727 by 2026. By the same time the component expected to live in the rural areas is 133,213. It is important to note however that some rural towns are expected to grow quite significantly and most of the anticipated growth between 2006 and 2026 will in fact be within the urban footprint rather than in rural or semi-rural settings.

Since the beginning of the 21st century high population growth as well as other factors, has lead to a substantial boom in property prices, forcing lower income residents away from the coast and into the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast and changing the pattern of population.

As would be expected in the South East corner of Queensland rural properties are generally smaller than in more remote parts of Queensland, however there are still some significant properties. Table 1 shows how many properties within the Sunshine Coast fit within the nominated size categories.

There are 918 lots of 50 hectares or greater and they account for more than 43% of the rural area of the Sunshine Coast. By comparison there are 3,439 properties of between 10 and 50 hectares in area, many of which could still be productive farms. There are 6,265 properties of between 2 and 10 hectares in area, some of these will include intensive horticulture or animal husbandry however many are lifestyle properties or may include some grazing, farm forestry and bushland protection.

Lots less than 2 hectares in area, which account for over 61% of all properties, but just 5.58% of the land area, are generally considered unlikely to contribute to rural production.

Table 1 – Rural Lot Size Distribution (all land outside the Urban Footprint designation and not State Government land)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot Size</th>
<th>0-2ha</th>
<th>2-5ha</th>
<th>5-10ha</th>
<th>10-20ha</th>
<th>20-50ha</th>
<th>&gt;50ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Lots within this size category</td>
<td>16,856</td>
<td>4,179</td>
<td>2,086</td>
<td>1,933</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of total lots within this size category</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of total land within this size category</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.0 Values of Rural Areas
The rural areas of the Sunshine Coast are valued by landholders, the rural community and the wider Sunshine Coast community for many different reasons. A sustainable future for these areas needs to protect and enhance these values.

3.1. Rural Production
Rural production has traditionally been the most recognised value of the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast, and has largely influenced the development of the region as a whole. The rural environment of the Sunshine Coast region provides competitive advantages for primary production and as a result primary production has been a significant contributor to the local economy. These competitive advantages are:

- A high and reliable rainfall;
- Subtropical climate with severe frosting being rare;
- The geology of the area provides fertile soils;
- Absence of major air pollutants;
- Proximity to markets;

This natural resource endowment has meant that the Sunshine Coast is suitable for a diversity of agricultural, horticultural and pastoral pursuits.

3.2. Rural Living
The rural lifestyle of the Sunshine Coast is valued by rural landholders and envied by the urban population for a variety of reasons. It is perceived by many that rural towns and rural communities have:

- A greater ‘sense of place’, including connection with the land and its natural ecosystems;
- A greater ‘sense of community’, including more family friendships and ties between local families and the community in general, greater inter-generational linkages and a higher level of social capital;
- A more traditional and conservative attitude;
- Less crime;
- A more relaxed lifestyle;
- Availability of larger areas to pursue hobbies and home businesses.

3.3. Tourism
The rural areas are highly valued for their contribution to the Tourism industry. While the beaches remain the biggest drawcard for visitors to the Sunshine Coast, the rural areas provide a complementary attraction for visitors. This attraction is because:

- The rural areas have a diverse range of outstandingly beautiful landforms, including mountain ranges, rivers, valleys, floodplains, and wetlands.
- The local tourism industry relies heavily on ‘clean, green and natural’ imagery as part of its marketing strategy.
- The rural environment is generally quieter with less traffic and few obvious distractions allowing for peace and relaxation.
There is frequently a distinctive, genuine or authentic country character to products offered in the hinterland, which is rarely found in urban centres. As a result, eco-tourism, agricultural tourism, food & wine tourism, and animal based tourism are major components of the Sunshine Coast tourism industry. Caution is needed around increasing tourism products that have no direct connection with the rural areas but seek to locate in the rural areas because they require large areas of land.

3.4. Open Space & Outdoor Recreation
The Sunshine Coast’s climate, natural diversity and beautiful landscapes provide the “green infrastructure” to support a diverse range of outdoor recreation activities and are utilised and highly valued by Sunshine Coast communities and the greater South East Queensland Region. While most outdoor recreation pursuits have a direct connection with the rural values some sporting activities are located in the rural areas because they are not conducive with residential amenity.

3.5. Scenic Amenity
The rural areas provide large open (and predominantly green) spaces on the Sunshine Coast. Protected open space and rural lands create inter-urban breaks and separate incompatible land uses. Open space preserves rural landscapes, allows social and spiritual connectivity and maintains air and water quality.

3.6. Biodiversity
The rural areas of the Sunshine Coast provide a diverse array of natural ecosystems. The variety of habitats provided by the biogeographical features of the Sunshine Coast has meant that the biodiversity value of the region is very high by international and national standards. Within the rural areas are a number of significant protected areas such as National Parks, State Forests, and Bushland Conservation parks. Approximately half of the Sunshine Coast’s native vegetation is on private land, with most of it located on rural land. Some rural landowners have entered into voluntary agreements to conserve natural values on their properties.

3.7. Cultural Heritage
Cultural heritage sites in the Sunshine Coast include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sites. Significant Indigenous landscape heritage ranges from bora rings, rock art, shell middens, story places and vegetation, to traditional ceremonial and camping places and paths. The history of European invasion, settlement and development is characterised by its association with significant landmarks and rural and natural landscapes. Place names often reflect cultural heritage, with many adopting the Aboriginal names given to certain locations prior to European invasion, or significant historical events or people.

Early European settlement in the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast led to a strong timber getting industry with various reminders such as mill sites and timber shutes remaining. A thriving cattle industry established followed by sugar cane and eventually many other crops such as bananas, pineapples, citrus and vegetables. Early transport routes including the railway, waterways and roads were pivotal in how the Sunshine Coast was settled.

3.8. Water Supply Catchments
The rural areas form the majority of water catchment areas for the urban community’s water supply. Water storage and treatment is also located within the rural areas. The quality of the water supply, to a large extent is dependent on the land management practises of the rural landowners in these water
catchments. Land owners gain some support in this area from community groups such as Landcare and catchment groups.

3.9. Flood Management
The rural areas, and in particular the flood plains, are critical to the management of flooding. The rural industries associated with the floodplains are particularly resilient to the adverse impacts of floods. The economic damage experienced by these industries is minimal and they continue to function and operate after flood events. This is not the case with urban areas as has been well demonstrated by recent flooding events in other regional parts of Queensland.

3.10. Extractive Resources
There are significant extractive resources sourced from the rural areas. Hard rock, clay, gravel and sand are taken from local quarries. Given the relatively low value of these resources it is not viable to transport them great distances, so they are particularly important to the local construction and transport industries. Historically minor gold deposits at North Arm have been mined and may still be of relevance.

3.11. Urban Infrastructure
Infrastructure serving urban areas, such as bulk supply and movement of water, electricity and transportation (road and rail) is often located within the rural landscape. This infrastructure is generally located to minimise conflict with urban activities, however has potential to affect the rural amenity, natural environment and viability of rural activities.
4.0 Current Situation

4.1. Environment
Enjoying a vast array of natural assets the Sunshine Coast is one of the most biodiverse regions in Australia. The Sunshine Coast is nationally recognised as a biodiversity 'hotspot'. It contains 84 different ecosystem types ranging from coastal wallum to dry and wet eucalypt forests and highland rainforests. The Sunshine Coast has the only substantial coastal mainland remnant vegetation area between Byron Bay and Bundaberg, consisting of over 100,000 hectares of native vegetation. Its existing remnant vegetation pattern, however, reflects more than a century of land use for forestry and agriculture. Most large upland forests and smaller coastal lowland remnants are considered significant for biodiversity conservation, and a high proportion of remnant vegetation is regarded as having state significance. **Map 3 – Remnant Vegetation** shows the significant remnant vegetation (Regional Ecosystems) of the Sunshine Coast.

Remaining core areas of remnant vegetation are generally protected in National Parks, Conservation Parks or State Forests. Some of these areas are of national and international significance. These areas are sometimes linked together by corridors of intact habitat, such as the National Estate listed Noosa-Maroochy Wallum Area, running from Mudjimba to Noosa National Park, and the Noosa Maroochy State Forest corridor. Approximately half of the Sunshine Coast’s native vegetation is on private land, with most of it located on rural land. Some rural landowners have entered into voluntary agreements to conserve natural values on their properties.

The Sunshine Coast has a network of iconic waterways, with major catchments including the Noosa, Maroochy and Mooloolah Rivers. The region also has 12% of the Mary River catchment, some tributaries of the Pumicestone Passage and some headwaters of the Stanley River under its management. **Map 4 – Catchments** shows the catchments within the Sunshine Coast. Results from the regional Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program suggests that the health of these catchments are generally in good condition but recent health declines in some of these systems highlights the need for additional resources to protect and improve associated waterway values as the Sunshine Coast experiences unprecedented urban development.

Scenic amenity is another important factor of the Sunshine Coast environment. Natural mountains and ridgelines, and rivers and coastline have the highest scenic amenity, although agricultural areas also have significant amenity value. **Map 5 – Scenic Amenity** shows the scenic amenity values for the Sunshine Coast.

4.2. Rural Community
In 2006 the Sunshine Coast rural area accommodated approximately 20% of the Sunshine Coast’s population with an estimated population of 57,921 people (compared to 56,697 people in 2001). This represents an annual increase of 0.4% between 2001 and 2006. The forecast population in 2026 (assuming current scenarios) is 63,087 people. Growth in the rural areas is at a slower rate than the urban areas and this is likely to remain the case. Most population growth in the rural areas will be focussed on the hinterland towns and villages.

**Map 6 – Rural Land Sales 2004-2008** and **Table 2** shows how many properties in the rural areas have changed hands in the last 5 years.
The average median age of the rural residents is increasing but is still comparable to the whole Sunshine Coast. Between 2001-2006 the proportion of ‘young families’ (i.e. age groups between 0-14 and 25-44) declined. At 2006 over 13% of rural residents were already over 65 years of age and a further 14% were between the age of 55 and 64. This suggests there could be increasing demand for housing choice suitable to older residents. While it is appreciated that some of the smaller hinterland communities are already seeking retirement villages it is complicated to provide such housing without also improving transport and other medical and senior services as well as walkways and transport options.

In 2006 the Sunshine Coast rural area had a higher percentage of family households compared to the whole Sunshine Coast however there was a reduction in the number and proportion of families with children, and an increase in the number and the proportion of families without children. The average occupancy rate for the rural area was 2.5 people in 2006. This is as a result of an increasing proportion of 2 person households and a decreasing proportion of all other household sizes.

The 5 years to 2006 saw a decrease in the proportion of people employed and an increase in the number of people not in the work force (but to some extent this correlates with the increase in the proportion of residents over the age of 55). There is however still a reasonably strong contingent of residents up to and including the age of 19, indicating the number of young people moving into the workforce and looking for employment over the next decade will still be significant.

In comparison to the whole Sunshine Coast, the rural area had a higher proportion of people within the construction industry and a lower percentage of people in the retail and accommodation industry. Accordingly the rural area had a higher proportion of people with an occupation in the trades or as a labourer.

On average individual and family incomes of the rural areas are slightly lower than that of the Sunshine Coast as a whole. Compared to the whole Sunshine Coast, a greater proportion of housing in the rural area is fully owned or being purchased and a smaller proportion is rented. The average mortgage repayment or weekly housing rent is lower than that for the whole Sunshine Coast. Compared to urban areas however, there is a lower proportion of rental properties available and the majority of housing is limited to detached houses with fewer flats or units. Frequently in rural areas the ownership of a property is considered a liability to older residents who no longer earn an income from the land, as the high value of their asset prevents them receiving a pension.

The SLAs of Caloundra Hinterland (the southern end of the Blackall Range and further west) and Noosa Balance (Noosa hinterland) are expected to have particularly low levels of growth with only 3,031 and 3,214 persons respectively projected to be added between 2006 and 2026. Paynter-Petrie Creek (which takes in the towns of Bli Bli and Palmwoods) is also expected to have relatively low growth, projected to be 8,289 for the same 20 year period. Caloundra Rail Corridor, which takes in the expanding towns of Beerwah, Landsborough, Glasshouse Mountains and Beerburrum, is expected to accommodate an additional 13,510 people between 2006 and 2026. Maroochy Balance, which takes in the towns of Eumundi, Yandina, Mapleton and Montville as well as significant rural living around these towns, currently has the highest population of these SLAs and is likewise anticipated to have the highest growth of 18,260 persons over the 20 years from 2006 to 2026.

A detailed Community Profile of the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast is included in Appendix 1 of this report.
Table 2 – Rural Land Sales 2004-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Most Recent Sale</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>0-2 Ha</th>
<th>2-5 Ha</th>
<th>5-10 Ha</th>
<th>10-20 Ha</th>
<th>20-50 Ha</th>
<th>&gt;50 Ha</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Sales</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average of Sale Price</td>
<td>$326,154</td>
<td>$408,385</td>
<td>$519,902</td>
<td>$544,833</td>
<td>$673,665</td>
<td>$1,310,571</td>
<td>$402,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Number of Sales</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average of Sale Price</td>
<td>$371,547</td>
<td>$413,664</td>
<td>$539,127</td>
<td>$489,717</td>
<td>$629,279</td>
<td>$979,792</td>
<td>$430,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Number of Sales</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average of Sale Price</td>
<td>$363,896</td>
<td>$476,159</td>
<td>$581,901</td>
<td>$606,343</td>
<td>$1,648,803</td>
<td>$1,535,100</td>
<td>$468,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Number of Sales</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average of Sale Price</td>
<td>$403,631</td>
<td>$507,676</td>
<td>$618,059</td>
<td>$912,059</td>
<td>$1,256,818</td>
<td>$832,138</td>
<td>$505,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Number of Sales</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average of Sale Price</td>
<td>$444,405</td>
<td>$613,046</td>
<td>$645,902</td>
<td>$693,854</td>
<td>$878,149</td>
<td>$1,001,143</td>
<td>$529,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Number of Sales</td>
<td>3,485</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Average of Sale Price</td>
<td>$387,621</td>
<td>$492,374</td>
<td>$586,860</td>
<td>$674,427</td>
<td>$1,039,780</td>
<td>$1,086,558</td>
<td>$475,788</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disclaimer: This has been compiled from the best available data from the three property systems in the three former Shires, and may contain anomalies.
4.3. Economy

The rural industries of the Sunshine Coast were historically the major economic driver of the Sunshine Coast, however in the mid to late twentieth century, tourism, retail and construction took over as the major industries. As discussed elsewhere in this report considerable changes are occurring in rural areas, which are altering the traditional use and values of rural areas (such as closure of the Moreton Sugar Mill in 2003, the growing pressure on rural areas from urban-style land uses and years of inappropriate subdivision and industry / market changes that reduced the extent of actual primary production on the Sunshine Coast). The change from an agrarian economy to a service economy will continue within the Sunshine Coast as shown by the increase in knowledge economy employment with over 12,000 jobs identified in 2006 (12% of local employment)

Analysis of the Sunshine Coast’s Gross Regional Product for 2006/07 highlighted that Agriculture was a less significant contributor to the Sunshine Coast’s GRP at just 1.9% than it was for the whole State of Queensland (at 3.5%). The agriculture sector accounted for 3.8% of Queensland’s employment but just 2.55% (3,218 jobs) of the Sunshine Coast’s employment. What these figures suggest is that the agricultural industry is no longer a major economic driver of the Sunshine Coast and as might be expected other sectors like tourism, construction, retail, property and business and health and community services are now more significant in terms of employment and output.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is potential to increase value adding to current production and improving supply chains to increase the extent of local trading between primary producers and end users such as restaurants, hotels and other retail outlets however the extent of this potential has not been studied.

In 2007, 85% of Sunshine Coast businesses had less than 5 employees (just over 9,000 businesses with a turnover in excess of $50,000pa). Therefore sole operators, small businesses, home businesses and farm businesses are particularly important to our economy generating 56% of the region’s turnover. In June 2007, the agriculture sector accounted for 6.4% of businesses.

Another sector worth particular note is the tourism industry. In the year ended June 2008 there were 2,922,000 domestic overnight visitors to the Sunshine Coast (59% of which were holiday visitors). The proximity of the Sunshine Coast hinterland to urban populations of greater Brisbane makes it ideal to market the destination for weekend getaways or mini-breaks. Various forms of accommodation are suitable for this but host farms, cottages, guesthouses and B&Bs are particularly appealing for quiet escapes and can supplement existing rural businesses.

The number of international visitors is just a fraction in comparison to domestic visitors but they stay on average for longer. International visitors stayed for an average of 8.5 nights on the Sunshine Coast in the year ended June 2008, compared to an average of 4 nights for domestic visitors. Visitors staying for a week or more are more likely seeking a mix of experiences and accommodation offering a higher degree of services and facilities. Therefore as well as the natural attractions of the Sunshine Coast, interpretative tours, wildlife enclosures, trails, equestrian facilities, golf, boat cruises and other water activities and other outdoor activities can add to the attraction of the hinterland. Larger rurally based ecotourism resorts, spas, country clubs and retreats might best capture some of this market.
4.4. **Land Use Activities**

The main land uses within the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast include cropping, animal production, forestry, conservation, tourism, recreation and rural living. Map 7 – Rural Land Use shows the existing land uses of the Sunshine Coast rural areas.

4.4.1. **Agriculture**

Agriculture in its various forms has traditionally been the predominant land use in the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast, and the region has been a major contributor of high value products in Queensland. The Sunshine Coast has also contributed significantly in the development of many industries and crops, including pineapples, strawberries and low chill stonefruit. Significant research and development continues, including through the Department of Primary Industries Research Station at Nambour.

Certain areas have been recognised as being ‘good quality agricultural land’, which are broadly defined by biophysical attributes of the land. These areas are shown on Map 8 – Good Quality Agricultural Land. The viability of agricultural production on individual properties is, however, determined by several critical factors which must be assessed on each individual situation. These factors do not necessarily correlate to defined good quality agricultural land, and agricultural enterprises may be viable on other rural land. The critical factors include:

- **Climate.** The climate of the Sunshine Coast is highly suitable for agriculture, however certain temperature and rainfall conditions affect specific crops, such as extremes and seasonal variations. Frost can be a significant issue in low-lying sheltered valleys. Climate factors are managed through crop choice and management practices.

- **Soil.** The Sunshine Coast contains a wide variety of soil types – each with varying characteristics affecting agricultural production. Map 9 – Soils shows the major soil types of the Sunshine Coast. Relevant soil characteristics include nutrients, structure, internal drainage, acidity and erosion potential. These can vary within individual properties, and be influenced by previous management. Stoniness can also be a minor problem in individual areas and for certain cultivated crops. Potential problems due to soil type can be resolved through crop selection and management practices, although the latter may affect production viability.

- **Flooding.** Flooding of various intervals and extents occurs in the floodplains and valleys of the Sunshine Coast. Map 10 – Flooding shows the flood-prone land within the Sunshine Coast. There are three primary ways this can impact on agricultural production; prolonged waterlogging (resulting in yield reduction or plant death), crop damage through water movement and sedimentation, and delays in machinery operations (such as harvesting and pest control). These impacts will vary depending on crops and individual property characteristics.

- **Acid sulfate soil.** Low-lying floodplains and river valleys of the Sunshine Coast generally contain actual or potential acid sulphate soils. Map 11 – Acid Sulfate Soil shows the land subject to acid sulphate soils within the Sunshine Coast. These may impact on agricultural enterprises, depending on the chemical and physical characteristics of the soil, but can generally be managed through various practices.

- **Irrigation.** Irrigation is used to supplement rainfall, and requirements vary depending on the specific crop and land / soil characteristics. Generally horticultural crops require significant irrigation, and water quality is a significant consideration. Irrigation water is sourced by various methods, including pumping from waterways, collecting overland flows, bores and utilising recycled water (currently minor uptake).
Slope. Slope can limit agricultural production through contributing to soil erosion and affecting mechanised access to growing crops. Map 12 – Slope shows the land with high slopes in the Sunshine Coast. As a result, slope generally influences the type of agriculture undertaken – regular cultivation occurs mainly on flatter land, while perennial, trellis or permanent crops can occur on steeper land. Management practices can improve the production on slopes.

Pesticide residue. Organochloride insecticides were used widely in the agricultural industry in the mid 20th century, until their eventual ban. These chemicals, however, persist in the environment for many years and pose a risk to crops and animals subsequently produced on the land. There are regulations regarding allowable chemical residues found in agricultural products intended for human consumption. This issue is generally managed through crop selection and management practices.

Wind. Many crops are susceptible to wind damage, which can arise from several climatic sources in the Sunshine Coast. Wind is usually managed on an individual basis through siting of cropping land, wind breaks and crop choice.

Land use conflicts. Activities associated with agricultural production can cause conflicts with adjacent land uses, particularly urban development and sensitive activities within rural areas (e.g. B&Bs). These conflicts include spray drift, noise and dust. The responsibility for addressing these conflicts is determined on an individual basis, however may affect the long-term viability of a production enterprise within the community. On the other side, there are some land uses that cause problems to agricultural production. These uses include urban development, extractive industries and urban infrastructure, and potential impacts are loss of productive land, contaminated runoff and domestic animals.

Labour. Certain agricultural activities are labour intensive, particularly small crops, tree crops and amenity horticulture. The availability and cost of permanent or seasonal labour is recognised as limiting the development and long-term viability of some enterprises and industries on the Sunshine Coast, such as strawberries.

Processing facilities. Some agricultural products need ready access to processing facilities. This may be due to the need to process within a certain time (such as meat chickens) or to minimise transportation costs (such as sugar cane being transported to Maryborough Mill).

Access to centres and infrastructure. The majority of agricultural enterprises in the Sunshine Coast have good access to centres and infrastructure, for the supply of production inputs (e.g. chemicals and fertiliser), labour, support services, markets and distribution. Rural roads need to be adequately constructed and maintained to provide appropriate access for vehicles.

Sugar Cane
Sugar cane growing started in the Sunshine Coast in the late 1800s, and the Moreton Sugar Mill located in Nambour began operations in 1896. In the last decade that the Mill was in operation, approximately 10,000 hectares of land were allocated for cane production, although the actual harvested area was only approximately 7,000 hectares (mainly in the Maroochy River floodplain). During this time, the sugarcane tonnages received by the Mill ranged between 350,000 and 650,000 tonnes per year, with an average of about 500,000 tonnes.

The Moreton Sugar Mill closed in 2003, which removed the market for sugar cane produced on the Sunshine Coast. The decision to close by the Mill owners was made after nearly two decades of uncertainty in the ability of the mill to remain economically viable. Sugar cane is generally the only
traditional crop that can be grown on the majority of cane lands, so alternate uses for cane are being widely researched, with the most promising being feedstock (BioCane). The world sugar price is also currently high, so transportation of raw material to the Maryborough Sugar factory may also be a short-term option for cane farmers.

Pineapples
Queensland provides for the majority of pineapples grown in Australia. The Sunshine Coast is a prime growing location, in areas that are well-drained and frost. Pineapples have been a major crop on the Sunshine Coast for over 100 years. The 2005/06 production for the Sunshine Coast was 31,697 tonnes, which equated to approximately 32% of the South East Queensland production.

The majority of pineapples have traditionally been sent to the Golden Circle Cannery in North Brisbane for processing, with a smaller proportion is distributed to the fresh fruit market. The pineapple industry has experienced a long term decline in its production, particularly in the past two decades, due to increasing competition of processed pineapple overseas imports, conversion of productive land to urban development and increasing costs of production. The long-term effects of the recent sale of Golden Circle to Nestle on the industry is unknown, however there evidence that certain practices may be altered to improve efficiencies. These include changes from transportation from rail to road from centralised on-farm depots.

The fresh fruit market for pineapples has been an increasingly important component of the industry, with up to two-thirds of the value of pineapple production. The industry is considering introducing a national research, development and promotion levy in 2009, which should improve its viability into the future.

Dairying
Dairying was a major rural industry in the hinterland areas of the Sunshine Coast. It has reduced in prominence in recent times due to deregulation in 2000 and competition from farms in Victoria and Southern New South Wales. Dairying remains, however, a significant rural industry in the Sunshine Coast, especially in the Upper Mary River Valley. There are several cheese, butter and milk processing facilities, with development of niche markets in places such as Maleny and Kenilworth. According to ABS data, there were approximately 15,000 dairy cattle in the Sunshine Coast in 2005/06. The average dairy farm in South East Queensland milks 158 cows, producing 890,000 litres of milk per year. Milk production has been declining for several years, and is likely to continue this trend in the short-term.

Poultry
Poultry farming on the Sunshine Coast has been a major industry since 1913. It includes breeding, meat and egg production. The majority of this industry is located around Beerburrum and Beerwah areas, with smaller enterprises located throughout the Sunshine Coast. According to ABS data, in 2005/06 there were approximately 1,300 laying chickens in the Sunshine Coast, producing over 15,000 dozen eggs. There were also about 1.7 million meat chickens. The industry is generally stable, however there is increasing conflict with urban and environmentally sensitive areas.

Strawberries
The strawberry industry in Australia is dominated by Queensland producers as the Queensland winter provides the perfect climate for strawberry growth. There are approximately 40 strawberry growers the Sunshine Coast, covering almost 200 hectares of production. Production is highly managed, requires irrigation and seasonal labour, and on land that is not subject to severe frost, high winds or waterlogging.
The 2005/06 production for the Sunshine Coast was 4,242 tonnes, which equated to approximately 34% of the South East Queensland production.

Overall industry production is expected to rise over coming years, but most expansion is expected to be in the Caboolture area (and possibly the Bundaberg Region). Anecdotally, it is expected that Sunshine Coast production will decrease as key growers leave the industry. The establishment of managed investment schemes in this industry is also important to the viability of smaller operators.

**Ginger**
It is estimated that the Sunshine Coast accounts for around 90% of Australian production with approximately 25 farms concentrated around the Eumundi area and supplying to the Buderim Ginger Processing Factory. Ginger is grown on fertile and well-drained soils. This is a unique rural industry in that it is almost completely localised within the Sunshine Coast. The 2005/06 production for the Sunshine Coast was 5,733 tonnes.

**Lifestyle Horticulture**
This industry includes nurseries, cut flowers and turf, and has been expanding rapidly due to increased residential development and overseas market for native cut flowers. The total value of the Queensland industry is approximately $1.3 billion (2007-08), which equates to about 10% of the total value of Queensland’s primary industry commodities. The recent drought in South East Queensland affected this industry, however it is likely to continue to expand in the longer term. Reliable water supply will is essential. According to ABS data, in 2005/06 there was approximately 225 hectares under cultivated turf, 136 hectares of nurseries and 67 hectares for cut flowers in the Sunshine Coast.

**Other Small Crops**
The Sunshine Coast is host to a wide range of small crops, particularly traditional ‘staple’ vegetables, such as lettuce, sweet potatoes, peas, snow peas, herbs, eggplant, melons, zucchini and tomatoes. The Sunshine Coast is a major supplier of small crops for South East Queensland, and the majority of produce is sold on the fresh domestic market. There has been major rationalisation within the industry in the last 5-10 years, with a reduced number of participants whilst the value of production has steadily increased. There is also a growing market for premium and niche products, such as bok choy, mibuna, mizuna, tatsoi, bamboo shoots, chilli, choko, okra and rocket. **Table 3** provides a breakdown of the major small crop production as provided by the ABS for the year 2005-2006.

**Table 3 – Other Small Crop Production 2005-2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Estimate (t)</th>
<th>Number of Establishments</th>
<th>Estimate % SEQ (t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zucchini &amp; button squash</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet potatoes</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes (undercover production)</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce (head) (undercover production)</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce (other)</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggplant</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Crop Estimate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Estimate (t)</th>
<th>Number of Establishments</th>
<th>Estimate % SEQ (t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herbs (other than parsley)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons (other than watermelon)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow Peas &amp; Sugarsnap Peas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tree Crops

Tree crop production on the Sunshine Coast traditionally occurs in the fertile areas, such as the foothills of the Blackall Range. This, however, has been affected over recent decades due to urbanisation and fragmentation of rural land. The region remains a major supplier of tree crops for South East Queensland, and the majority of produce is also sold on the fresh domestic market. As with small crops, the last 5-10 years has seen a reduced number of participants in the industry whilst the value of production has steadily increased. There is also a growing market for premium and niche products, such as persimmons, finger lime, coffee, passionfruit, low chill stonefruit, custard apples, lychees, feijoa, figs and bushfoods. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the total crop production as provided by the ABS for the year 2005-2006.

### Table 4 – Major Tree Crop Production 2005-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Crops</th>
<th>Estimate (t)</th>
<th>Number of Establishments</th>
<th>Estimate % SEQ (t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citrus (mostly oranges, lemons, limes and mandarins)</td>
<td>4,313</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts (incl. Macadamias)</td>
<td>2,202</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avocados</td>
<td>1,620</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Fruit</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paw Paws</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other orchard fruit</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mushrooms

Mushroom production is an intensive, high-value crop that produces high volumes on relatively small areas of land. In 2005/06, approximately 650 tonnes were produced on the Sunshine Coast, on only 2 hectares of land. This equated to approximately 14% of the South East Queensland production. Mushroom production in the Sunshine Coast consists of family businesses, and the need for skilled labour is high.
Grazing
Grazing predominantly occurs in the Upper Mary River catchment, eastern foothills of the Blackall Range and Upper Noosa River catchment. Most grazing is on native pasture, with some improved pasture on creekflats. According to ABS data, there was about 65,000 hectares of land under grazing in 2005/06 (including pastures for dairy production), across approximately 600 establishments. In this period, there were approximately 36,000 beef cattle, 700 stud horses, 360 goats and 200 sheep in the Sunshine Coast.

Broadacre Crops
In the past, sugarcane dominated the broadacre crop sector. Broadacre crops grown on the Sunshine Coast are varied and include, but are not limited to hay, grains and lucerne. According to ABS data, in 2005/06 there was approximately 14,000 tonnes of hay and silage produced, 650 hectares of cereal crops and 2,000 hectares of non-cereal broadacre crops (including any remaining sugar cane production following the closure of the Moreton Sugar Mill).

4.4.2. Other Rural Industries

Plantation Forestry
Forestry has also been a major rural land use for many years, mainly on publicly owned and operated plantations. These cover an area of 191,500 hectares (90% of the total Queensland plantation area), 85% of which are located in the coastal plains and hinterland areas between Beerburrum and Maryborough. Plantations are mostly exotic and hoop pine species. A research station, nursery and regional management office is also located in Beerburrum. According to ABS data, there were approximately 761 hectares of commercial forestry in the Sunshine Coast in 2005/06.

Growth is expected in plantation forestry, as well as agro-forestry and private native forestry. This is particularly due to the continued buoyancy in the building industry. Significant changes to the industry are occurring as a result of the State and regional forest agreements, with moves for large scale commercial investment in plantations.

Farm forestry on private properties has become increasingly popular with Gympie Messmate, Spotted Gums and cabinet timbers being the most popular species to date. Landcare and other organisations provide support and advice to private landowners

Map 13 – Forestry shows the major forestry areas of the Sunshine Coast.

Extractive Industries
The expanding construction industry on the Sunshine Coast is reliant on extracted material, particularly rock, sand and gravel. Extractive industries are located in various locations across the Sunshine Coast. They are almost all located in rural areas, due to the need to be separated from residential areas due to potential impacts such as noise, vibration and dust. Haulage routes also have potential to impact on sensitive uses. Some extractive resources have not yet been utilised, which means that supply of material should be available for local industry into the future. These sites, however, are often in environmentally sensitive areas, such as waterways and vegetated hills, so potential impacts will need to be addressed.

Map 14 – Mineral and Extractive Resources identifies known resources of significance.
‘Value-Added’ Agricultural Products
A wide variety of agricultural products are processed and sold in the rural areas, as a way to add value to the products. These are located throughout the Sunshine Coast, and take many different forms. Scales range from small on-farm production to larger centralised processing, such as macadamias and fruit juices. Some import raw products from outside the Sunshine Coast. Products are either sold on-site or through external retail outlets. Value-added products within the Sunshine Coast include:

- Food – nuts, bush foods, dairy products, herbs, dried and baked goods.
- Beverages – coffee, tea, wine and fruit juices.
- Oils – olive oil and avocado oil.
- Condiments and Preserves – sauces, jams, chutneys.

4.4.3. Tourism and Recreation

Tourism
The Sunshine Coast hinterland is renowned for its diverse natural environment and green assets and has a distinctive competitive advantage the tourism industry. While the beaches remain the biggest drawcard for visitors to the Sunshine Coast, the rural areas provide a complementary attraction for visitors. As indicated in the Values of the Rural Area (Section 2.3) this attraction is because of the natural landforms, the “clean/green” image, the natural setting, lack of distractions and distinct country character. As a result, eco-tourism, agricultural tourism, food & wine tourism, and animal based tourism are major components of the Sunshine Coast tourism industry.

Visitor projections indicate that market demand for natural assets will continue to increase, in particular the number of visitors pursuing outdoor / nature / recreational activities. The Sunshine Coast can develop a significant profile in this market if it can align and integrate its World Heritage attractions, expansive National Park and Forestry Estate and its significant natural assets with commercial tourism operators.

Existing accommodation options in the rural areas include:

- B&Bs;
- Secluded country cabins;
- Caravan parks;
- Farm stays;
- Hotels and motels; and
- Health retreats.

There would seem to be considerable opportunity to expand and develop the hinterland’s tourism industry and the range of tourism products provided. For instance there are relatively few certified eco-tourism facilities and scope for more agricultural tourism and art and culture based tourism products. Research has suggested there’s scope to better cater for a broader market in the hinterland such as the corporate market, families and backpackers. Neither top end (5 star) nor budget accommodation is very well catered for at present.
Special visitor experiences like a scenic drive looping around the Glasshouse Mountains, Blackall Range, Noosa hinterland and Kenilworth could be developed and promoted. New interpretative attractions could highlight the natural and cultural values of the Sunshine Coast hinterland. Development and promotion of a food and wine trail would seem an obvious priority.

Caution is needed around increasing tourism products that have no direct connection with the rural areas but seek to locate in the rural areas because they require large areas of land.

Recreation
The Sunshine Coast’s climate, natural diversity and beautiful landscapes provide the “green infrastructure” to support a diverse range of outdoor recreation activities and are utilised and highly valued by Sunshine Coast communities and the greater South East Queensland Region.

Outdoor recreation includes a range of activities undertaken in open space settings that range from predominantly natural through to rural and semi-urban.

While most outdoor recreation pursuits have a direct connection with the rural values some sporting activities are located in the rural areas because they are not conducive with residential amenity.

**Outdoor recreational activities include:**
- Bushwalking
- Picnicking
- Photography
- Bird watching
- Driving 4WD vehicles, trail bikes or other motorised vehicles
- Kayaking, canoeing and other water sports
- Fishing
- Camping
- Golf
- Rock climbing & abseiling
- Bike riding including mountain biking
- Horse riding
- Orienteering
- Rogaining
- Hang gliding

**Local attractions include:**
- Waterfalls, lakes and rivers
- Mountains and lookouts
- National Parks and Forestry
- Heritage sites
- Botanical Gardens
- River cruises
- Markets
- Country pubs
- Art galleries
- Ski and Skurf
- Forest Glen Deer Park
- Australia Zoo
- Big Kart Track
- Skirmish
- Ettamogah Pub and Aussie World

Current examples of outdoor recreation initiatives include:
- The 58 kilometre Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk through the Blackall Range;
The Noosa Trail Network - trails of various lengths through the northern hinterland, catering for walkers, horse riders and mountain bike riders and cross a variety of terrain; and

The 28 kilometre Maroochy River canoe trail, starting on the South Maroochy River in Yandina and making its way through the varied natural and agricultural landscapes on route to Maroochydore.

4.4.4. Rural Living

Significant portions of the rural areas are used for rural living. This is residential development on large lots (generally between 0.5 hectares and 5 hectares in areas) where residents can appreciate substantial open space around their home. The lifestyle of rural residents is closely related to the natural values of the rural areas. Properties with views, natural vegetation and waterways are particularly sought after.

Additional space often allows for the keeping of animals, permaculture or substantial landscaped gardens. Some property owners take advantage of the additional distance from neighbours to carry out business or hobby activities that may be noisy, dusty or in other ways offensive and can therefore not easily be located in town. Rural living properties also allow for substantial sheds, which are also difficult to locate in town.

Generally there is no planned expansion of rural residential development although some designated Rural Living Areas have scope for further infill development.

4.5. Development

Due to the nature of rural areas, less development occurs in comparison to urban areas. Most rural activities are existing or do not require Council approval (e.g. self-assessable).

Table 5 provides a summary of the number of the most common material change of use approvals in the rural areas in recent years (2004-2008). These have been assessed under the three existing planning schemes, or associated superseded planning schemes. The highest number of approvals has been for additional dwellings (50 and 19 in total for rural and rural residential zonings respectively, such as relative’s accommodation, worker’s accommodation and caretaker’s residences) and short-term accommodation (60 and 15 in total for rural and rural residential zonings – mainly B&Bs, but also rural holiday accommodation and cabins).

Other approved uses include home occupations (28), animal keeping and husbandry (14), industrial uses (16), restaurants (7), retails uses (8), indoor and outdoor recreation (11) and community uses (22). There were 9 and 19 approvals for residential development in rural and rural residential zonings respectively, which consists of approvals for residential development that override the existing zoning.

Table 6 provides an analysis of the number of reconfiguring of a lot (subdivision) approvals and additional lots created in the rural areas in recent years (2004-2008). These have been assessed under the three existing planning schemes, or associated superseded planning schemes. On land with a rural zoning, there were 95 approvals under Caloundra City Plan (consisting of a total of 149 additional lots), 143 approvals under Maroochy Plan 2000 (with 139 additional lots) and 31 approvals under the Noosa Plan (with 65 additional lots). The majority of additional lots were created by approvals overriding the Planning Scheme or approvals under associated superseded planning schemes (where higher development rights were enjoyed). These were mainly approved in 2004 and 2005, and have been
declining in the years since. Other subdivision approvals were of minor nature where additional lots were not created, such as boundary realignments.

There was more subdivision approvals in rural residential areas in these years, with a higher number of additional lots created. There was a peak of additional lots approved in 2004 – this aligns with the release of the first Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan, which affected the development rights of rural residential land outside the Rural Living Area designation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Type</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Zoning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional dwelling</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home occupation</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Retail use</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation (indoor / outdoor)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Residential development</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Residential Zoning</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Short-term accommodation</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Residential development</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
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Table 5 – Number of the Most Common Material Change of Use Approvals under the Existing Planning Schemes (2004-2008)
Table 6 – Number of Reconfiguring of a Lot Approvals (Including Additional Lots) under the Existing Planning Schemes (2004-2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Scheme</th>
<th>2004</th>
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<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Lots</td>
<td>Lots</td>
<td>Lots</td>
<td>Lots</td>
<td>Lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Zoning</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caloundra City Plan</td>
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<td>97</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maroochy Plan 2000</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Noosa Plan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residential Zoning</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caloundra City Plan</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroochy Plan 2000</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Noosa Plan</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6. **Key Issues Facing Rural Areas**

Considerable changes are occurring in rural areas on the Sunshine Coast, which are altering the traditional use and values of rural areas. Key issues facing rural areas include:

### 4.6.1. External Influences

- High paying industries like mining attracting potential rural workers
- Increased global competition for produce;
- Competing with faster growing urban areas for infrastructure spending
- Uncertainty of impacts of climate change
- Approaching peak oil;
- Biosecurity – risks associated with introduced species and pests;
- Scenic amenity and recreation expectations for nearby urban populations of SEQ;
- Different priorities and expectations for various generations (farming not a preferred career for younger generations);
- Land speculation by developers;
- Tree change & Sea change phenomena;
- Local, State and Federal regulation;
- Global economy and changing spending pattern of export markets; and
- Deregulation of rural industries.

### 4.6.2. Primary Production

- Fragmentation of productive agricultural land through subdivision;
- Risk of monoculture and decline of traditional rural industries, such as sugar cane, dairying and pineapples;
- Water security – reliable access to irrigation water;
- Farm operations conflicting with non-farming or rural lifestyle residents;
- Increases in land values and purchase of agricultural properties by new residents for non-agricultural uses;
- Increased compliance costs for environmental management and start-up costs to enter the market;
- Increasing input costs for rural production, including fuel, fertilisers and pesticides;
- Availability of skilled labour reduced and cost of labour increased;
- Age of farmers - many reaching retirement;
- Flood – access, hardship, effect on crop production and viability;
- Opportunities for on-farm value adding;
- Transportation and access to markets;
- Regulation involved in expanding or diversifying;
► Communication and access to information and support networks;
► New innovative enterprises.

4.6.3. Other Economic Development
► Diversification of rural activities;
► Extractive resource activity conflicts with rural living and environmental objectives;
► Communications – reduced mobile phone and internet coverage making business connections difficult;
► Lack of high profit activities;
► Opportunities for eco & rural tourism;
► Outdoor sport and recreation;
► Knowledge-based industries;
► Food related industries such as cooking schools, wineries and farm-gate tastings; and
► Rural retreats for health and spirituality.

4.6.4. Rural communities
► Demographic changes, including naturally aging population plus inward migration of baby boomers and outward migration of young people,
► Decline in housing affordability,
► Growing division between urban and rural communities, including land use conflicts and infrastructure / service delivery
► Individual and community uncertainty over the future of rural areas
► Capacity of rural communities to respond to changing circumstances
► Distance and access to services combined with increasing transport costs
► Access and availability of public transport
► Community wellbeing and safety
► Communication of issues affecting rural communities to Government
► Limited employment opportunities;
► Limited education and training opportunities;
► Social infrastructure and support services;
► Social isolation and boredom – can lead to antisocial behaviour; and
► Place making and identity of rural towns and villages.

4.6.5. Values
► Biodiversity values including flora and fauna;
► Good quality agricultural soils;
► Subtropical climate;
► Scenic amenity of landscapes and landforms;
► Branding – the identity and reputation of the Sunshine Coast
► Cultural heritage values;
► Carbon offsets;
► Flood mitigation; and
► Inter urban breaks/identity.

4.6.6. Natural resource management
► Ownership of environmental responsibilities;
► Effective land management techniques;
► Sustainable agricultural techniques for future production;
► Managing degradation of land and soil quality and associated runoff – controlling nutrient loads, erosion, etc;
► Low-lying areas susceptible to Acid Sulphate Soils which form a constraint to development and agricultural uses;
► Control of weeds;
► Control of pest animals;
► Preservation of cultural heritage and scenic amenity;
► Catchment management; and
► Effective resource use, water management and on-site reuse.
Acid Sulfate Soils Map Notes
Data for this map has been sourced from:

Digital Elevation Model data supplied by Dept of Natural Resources and Water
Soils Map Notes

Data for this map has been sourced from:

Soils data supplied by Dept of Natural Resources and Water (Sunshine Coast Land Suitability Study, 1987) - southern and central areas
Soils data from former Noosa Shire database
Mineral and Extractive Resources Map Notes

Data for this map has been sourced from:

Noosa Plan - Mining Leases, haulage Route, Area of Potential Extractive or Mining Resource Influence, Area of Protection,
Monastery Plan - Mineral and Extractive Resources SMR, Haulage Route and Haulage Buffer
Caloundra City Plan - Extractive Resource Overlay, Resource Separation Area and Haulage Route
5.0 Policy Framework

The Australian Government has responded to external markets by adopting a “Free Trade” policy and continues to advocate for a “level playing field in world markets”. This is principally because the Australian economy is a relatively small one and cannot support the subsidisation of Australian agricultural products in order to make them more competitive in world markets. In contrast the United States and the European Union, in particular, have been able to afford the subsidisation of their agricultural products which gives their producers an unfair advantage on the world markets (that is, created “a playing field that is not level”).

As a result of adopting this stance the Australian Government has also adopted two other important policies over the long term in an attempt to improve the efficiency of Australian agricultural industries. The first is the Diesel Fuel Rebate Scheme which has been in effect under various names since 1957. This policy reduces the cost of energy in the production of agricultural products. This has effectively contributed to Australian farmers substituting diesel fuelled machinery for labour in order to “get efficient” and therefore more competitive on world markets.

The second policy is the Rural Adjustment Scheme which supports farmers who decide to exit farming and eases their transition into another part of the economy. In various forms this policy has been implemented since 1935, but more significantly since 1971 with the advent of the Rural Reconstruction Scheme which was renamed the Rural Adjustment Scheme in 1976. This policy’s intention is to support farmers who decide to leave farming altogether. It has also contributed to allow the remaining “more efficient” farmers to expand and enjoy the increased economies of scale as a result. This trend towards larger farms has seen the emergence of very large corporate farming in Australia.

An example of the Federal Government’s policy of Rural Adjustment has been the assistance given to the dairy industry to restructure after deregulation in 2000. This has been $1.94 billion and is the largest amount ever provided by the Commonwealth Government for rural adjustment to any industry. Part of this package included the ‘Dairy Exit Program’ which provided an optional tax-free exit payment of up to $45,000 for eligible dairy producers wishing to leave the industry.

5.2. Current State Government

5.2.1. Integrated Planning Act 1997
The Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA), forms the foundation of Queensland’s planning and development assessment legislation. The purpose of the IPA is to balance community well-being, economic development and the protection of the natural environment by providing a framework for managing growth and change within the State. The main elements of this framework include:
- One system for all development related assessments by local and State governments (IDAS);
- Local government planning schemes as the main instrument for planning and development assessment;
- State planning policies;
- Regional planning;
- Infrastructure planning; and
The Sustainable Planning Bill 2009 was recently been released, resulting from review of the planning legislation. Potential changes directly relevant to rural planning are:

- Introduction of limited prohibitions at State, regional and local levels;
- Establishment of standard administrative definitions;
- Establishment of standard planning scheme provisions; and
- Changes to decision-making rules for applications.

5.2.2. SEQ Regional Plan

In July 2009 the Queensland Government released the South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plan 2009-2031, which superseded the 2005-2026 version of the Plan. This is the statutory regional planning strategy that guides growth and development in SEQ, and is used in conjunction with local planning schemes. The document is largely a forward planning document with many policies aimed at advancing a vision for the SEQ Region. It has direct relevance for plan making and development assessment.

The Regional Plan also divides land within one of a number of land use categories, specifically Urban Footprint, Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area and Rural Living Area. The majority of the rural lands of the Sunshine Coast are located within the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area (RLRPA). These lands have regional landscape, rural production or other non-urban values, and the Regional Plan protects these areas from encroachment by inappropriate development, particularly urban or rural residential development. It is intended that this designation maintains existing land use rights so that significant activities such as agricultural production, access to natural resources, water storage, tourism, outdoor recreation and nature conservation can continue.

The Rural Living Area (RLA) comprises areas currently designated for rural residential development in local government planning schemes, and where further rural residential development through infill and consolidation is permitted under the Regional Plan. Pockets of RLA are scattered across the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast.

Rural Policies

The rural and natural landscape areas of SEQ support many environmental, rural production, recreational, cultural and scenic features that are highly valued by the residents of South East Queensland. The Regional Plan recognises that these natural environment and economic resources underpin the SEQ Region’s liveability and form a substantial component of the economy. The majority of land within the RLRPA is privately-owned. These areas will be protected from urban development and rural residential subdivision. The Regional Plan also proposes policies to help rural communities, towns and villages remain viable. This will be challenging where land is not good quality productive land, and in areas adjacent to urban development and where water accessibility is limited.

The primary Regional Policy that deals with the RLRPA is Desired Regional Outcome 5 Rural Futures: *Rural communities are strong and viable with sustainable economies contributing to the health, wealth, character and liveability of the SEQ Region.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle 5.1 Rural Futures Strategy</th>
<th>Recognise the significant and increasing role rural areas and rural landholders play in SEQ; ensure healthy, productive and sustainable rural futures; and enhance the interdependence of urban and rural communities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.1.1</td>
<td>Ensure sustainable rural communities consistent with the Rural Futures Strategy for South East Queensland (SEQ Rural Futures Strategy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 5.1.2</td>
<td>Implement the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy to coordinate rural policies through planning schemes, policies and other programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 5.1.3</td>
<td>Improve coordination of rural issues and service delivery, rural land use policy and implementation through appropriate engagement with stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 5.2 Rural planning</td>
<td>Conserve and manage rural areas to enhance their contribution to the regional economy, rural industries and regional landscape values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.2.1</td>
<td>Consolidate future rural population growth within existing towns and villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.2.2</td>
<td>Ensure the consolidation of future rural population growth within existing towns and villages does not fragment productive rural land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.2.3</td>
<td>Encourage the development of sustainable rural areas by supporting innovative planning approaches consistent with the Rural Precinct Guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.2.4</td>
<td>Minimise the impact of climate change and rising energy costs on regional food production by enhancing and encouraging compatible agricultural enterprises in proximity to urban areas and associated market outlets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.2.5</td>
<td>Ensure land use and water management policies and regulations do not unreasonably constrain the development of agriculture, agribusiness, appropriate ecotourism and recreation opportunities in rural areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.2.6</td>
<td>Protect areas of good quality agricultural land from incompatible development and provide for the expansion of agricultural production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 5.2.7</td>
<td>Identify strategic agricultural production areas consistent with the nature and diversity of the region’s productive capacity and agricultural land uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 5.3 Rural communities</td>
<td>Ensure rural communities benefit from regional growth, and participate fully in the planning and development of the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.3.1</td>
<td>Provide and maintain appropriate levels of infrastructure and services to rural towns and villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.3.2</td>
<td>Accommodate the required growth of rural villages through the planning scheme revision process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 5.3.3</td>
<td>Assist rural communities to identify strategies for economic development and growth that capitalise on their rural character, local attributes and cultural heritage values.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principle 5.4 Rural enterprises
Maintain a sustainable rural production sector that capitalises on existing advantages and is ready to meet changing circumstances.

Policy 5.4.1
Strengthen rural industries by increasing compatibility, adaptability and productivity, value-adding and improving access to markets.

Policy 5.4.2
Identify and support sustainable, new and innovative rural industries and uses for rural land.

Policy 5.4.3
Recognise the potential contribution of places of cultural heritage significance in rural areas to rural economic development.

Program 5.4.4
Promote better understanding, knowledge and community support for agricultural industries.

The Regional Plan provides guidance on how these policies are to be implemented in rural planning, particularly suggested planning approaches.

There are several other Regional Policies that specifically relate to rural areas, particularly Sustainability and Climate Change, Natural Environment, Regional Landscape and Natural Resources. These policies support the promotion of strong and viable rural communities and a sustainable rural economy, whilst at the same time being environmentally responsible. They essentially address:

► The need for the SEQ Region to grow and change in a sustainable manner and become resilient to the effects of climate change and oil supply vulnerability;

► The need to recognise and protect the natural environment and features, including biodiversity areas, waterways and floodplains;

► The need to recognise, protect and enhance the landscape, cultural and recreation values of rural land;

► The need to recognise and protect natural economic resources in rural areas;

► The need to address social planning matters, particularly community identity and wellbeing;

► The need to contain urban and rural residential development within the Urban Footprint and Rural Living Area;

► The need to promote and support businesses in rural areas, including reducing regulatory impediments; and

► The need to efficiently manage water use and water quality in rural areas.

Regulatory Provisions
The Regional Plan regulates subdivision and land use in the RLRPA through the Regulatory Provisions. This consists of restricting:

► Subdivision of rural land below 100 hectares, unless in a recognised rural precinct (discussed below);

► urban activities¹, except within established villages; and

► Expansion of rural residential areas outside areas already designated in the planning scheme.

¹ As defined in the Regional Plan and including residential, industrial, retail and commercial activities.
The regulatory provisions seek to support diversification of rural economies by allowing a range of developments, including:

► Small to medium-scale tourist activities (accommodating less than 300 people)
► Small-scale industry and business activities;
► Community facilities (such as schools and churches) and
► Sport and recreation facilities.

Obviously such development is still subject to compliance with the relevant planning scheme.

While planning schemes generally prevail in RLAs, the Regulatory Provisions make development applications for urban activities impact assessable in the RLA.

**Rural Precincts**

Local authorities may determine that the Regulatory Provisions applicable to the RLRPA (explained above) need to be varied in order to achieve the desired outcomes for certain rural areas. This could be to protect or promote any rural activities. The Regional Plan provides for local authorities to create ‘rural precincts’, which could have subdivision and land use controls that differ from the generic Regional Plan provisions. These new provisions relating to these precincts must still uphold the principles and policies of the Regional Plan. The Final Draft Implementation Guideline No. 6 (Rural Precinct Guidelines), released in May 2007, outlines the requirements for establishing these rural precincts.

Possible rural precincts include (but are not limited to):

► Agriculture
► Intensive animal production
► Nature conservation
► Ecotourism
► Water supply catchments

Several precincts within the existing Sunshine Coast planning schemes have been nominated as interim ‘rural precincts’ for the purposes of the Regional Plan. This is outlined in the Interim Implementation Guideline No. 3 (Rural Precincts), released in April 2006, and means that the minimum lot sizes for these precincts are those outlined in the respective Planning Scheme, rather than the generic 100 hectare minimum lot size in the Regional Plan.

The Implementation Guideline No. 6 (Rural Precinct Guidelines) states that the subdivision controls of these interim rural precincts will remain in force until Council establishes rural precincts as part of an approved Rural Precinct Plan. Any rural land not within these precincts will revert back to the generic Regulatory Provisions within the Regional Plan. The Guideline specifies a comprehensive process that Councils must follow to prepare a Rural Precinct Plan. Planning scheme amendments must then be undertaken to implement the statutory components of the Plan.
Rural Futures Strategy for South East Queensland 2009
The Rural Futures Strategy for South East Queensland 2009 was released by the Queensland Government as a companion document to the Regional Plan. It includes land use planning principles and actions to improve the delivery of services and infrastructure to rural and semi-rural communities in South East Queensland. The Strategy details the actions for supporting sustainable rural industries and communities, in the following areas:

► Economic development—opportunities for rural communities to develop strong economies and benefit fully from SEQ Regional population growth and a strong and viable rural industry sector
► Healthy and productive rural landscapes—rural landscapes that support profitable and sustainable rural industries and communities and that protect significant environmental values
► Water resources—secure, reliable water supplies that support rural industries and communities
► Community development—social and economic infrastructure to support services and enhance the quality of life of rural communities
► Leadership and collaboration—successfully implementing the Rural Futures Strategy.

5.2.4. State Planning Policies

Development and the Conservation of Agricultural Land (1/92)
Development and the Conservation of Agricultural Land State Planning Policy (1/92) is a statutory instrument that addresses the conservation of good quality agricultural land and provides guidance to local authorities on how this issue should be addressed when carrying out their planning duties.

The general aim of this SPP is that planning powers should be used to protect such land from those developments that lead to its alienation or diminished productivity.

The SPP requires that State and local authorities must know the location and extent of good quality agricultural land. Also that local government planning provisions should aim to minimise instances of incompatible uses locating adjacent to agricultural operations.

Good quality agricultural land has been identified on the Sunshine Coast.

Development in the Vicinity of Certain Airports and Aviation Facilities (1/02)
Development in the Vicinity of Certain Airports and Aviation Facilities State Planning Policy (1/02) is a statutory instrument expressing the State’s interest concerning development in the vicinity of those airports and aviation facilities considered essential for the State’s transport infrastructure or the national defence system.

This SPP has effect when Development Applications are assessed, when Planning Schemes are made or amended, and when land is designated for community infrastructure.

Generally the SPP will apply to areas:
► Beneath or in the vicinity of the operational airspace of the airport;
► In the vicinity of aviation facilities;
► Within an airport’s 20 ANEF contour; and
Within public safety areas at the end of airport runways.

The Sunshine Coast Airport has been identified as being applicable to this SPP.

**Planning and Managing Development Involving Acid Sulfate Soils (2/02)**

Planning and Managing Development Involving Acid Sulfate Soils State Planning Policy (2/02) is a statutory instrument that sets out the State’s interests concerning development involving acid sulfate soils in low-lying coastal areas.

This SPP has effect when Development Applications are assessed, when Planning Schemes are made or amended, and when land is designated for community infrastructure.

For the purpose of the SPP, acid sulfate soils include both potential acid sulfate soils and actual acid sulfate soils. The SPP applies to all land, soil and sediment at or below 5m AHD where the natural ground level is less than 20m AHD. The SPP applies to development involving any of the following activities:

- Excavating or otherwise removing 100m³ or more of soil or sediment; or
- Filling of land involving 500m³ or more of material with an average depth of 0.5 of a metre or greater.

The SPP outlines the process for identification and treatment of acid sulfate soils.

This SPP has been identified as being applicable to the Sunshine Coast.

**Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of Flood, Bushfire and Landslide (1/03)**

Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of Flood, Bushfire and Landslide State Planning Policy (1/03) is a statutory instrument expressing the State’s interest in minimising the adverse impacts of these 3 natural hazards on people, property, economic activity and the environment when making decisions about development.

For the purposes of this SPP, flood, bushfire and landslide are defined below:

- Flood: the temporary inundation of land by expanses of water that overtop the natural or artificial banks of a watercourse i.e. a stream, creek, river, estuary, lake or dam.
- Bushfire: an uncontrolled fire burning in forest, scrub or grassland vegetation, also referred to as a wildfire.
- Landslide: a movement of material downslope in a mass as a result of shear failure at the boundaries of the mass.

This SPP has effect when Development Applications are assessed, when Planning Schemes are made or amended, and when land is designated for community infrastructure.

The SPP requires the identification of natural hazard management areas within which minimising risks to the community should be a key consideration in development assessment and the preparation of planning schemes.

The SPP aims to ensure that key types of community infrastructure are able to maintain operation during and after a flood, bushfire or landslide event.
The whole SPP applies to the Sunshine Coast.

**Housing and Residential Development (1/07)**
The Housing and Residential Development State Planning Policy (1/07) does not have influence on areas outside of the Urban Footprint as defined by the SEQ Regional Plan.

This SPP does not apply to rural areas in the Sunshine Coast.

**Protection of Extractive Resources (2/07)**
Protection of Extractive Resources State Planning Policy (2/07) was created to manage development near or within Key Resource Areas (KRA). KRA are areas where extractive resources of State or regional significance are located.

Outcome sought by the Policy:
‘The Policy outcome is to identify those extractive resources of State or regional significance where extractive industry development is appropriate in principle, and protect those resources from developments that might prevent or severely constrain current or future extraction when the need for the resources arises.’

This SPP has effect when Development Applications are assessed, when Planning Schemes are made or amended, and when land is designated for community infrastructure.

There are 3 elements of the Key Resource Area outlined in the SPP:
- Resource/processing area – indicates the extent of the extractive resource and any existing or future processing operations;
- Separation area for a resource/processing area – area surrounding the resource/processing area needed to maintain separation of people from undesirable levels of noise, dust, ground vibration, or air blast overpressure that may be produced as residual impacts from the resource/processing area; and
- The associated transport route with a separation area of 100metres either side of the road or rail reserve boundary or, if no reserve the centre line of the indicated route.

Extraction can include ripping, blasting or dredging. Processing can include crushing, screening, washing, blending or grading, wastewater treatment, and associated activities can include storage, rehabilitation, loading, transportation, administration and maintenance facilities.

There are several KRAs nominated on the Sunshine Coast.

**5.2.5. Coastal Management Plans**
The SEQ Regional Coastal Management Plan 2006 (SEQ Coastal Plan) is a statutory instrument under the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995. It provides specific regional direction on coastal management outcomes in support of the State Coastal Management Plan, which sets out overall policy for coastal zone management in Queensland.

The SEQ Coastal Plan will help to manage growth and associated change along the South-East Queensland coast in the most sustainable way to minimise impacts on coastal resources. The SEQ Coastal Plan identifies, protects and manages the important coastal resources and values through
regional policies, a key coastal site, resource maps, the coastal management district and coastal building lines.

The former Maroochy Shire and Caloundra City areas are included in the plan’s area. The former Noosa Shire falls within the area covered by the Wide Bay Coastal Management Plan still in draft form.

5.2.6. SEQ Infrastructure Plan and Program
The SEQ Infrastructure Plan and Program 2005-2026 (the Infrastructure Plan) was released in April 2005 and outlines the Queensland Government’s infrastructure priorities to support the Regional Plan. It establishes priorities for regionally significant infrastructure to be provided in an appropriate and timely manner. Understandably, the majority of planned infrastructure is either located within or directly serving urban areas. The following is infrastructure being planned that relates to rural areas:

- Upgrading of several State-controlled roads within rural areas. This will have little impact on rural planning (generally along existing road reserves).
- Construction of the Traveston Crossing Dam and investigation into upgrading the South Maroochy supply system (Wappa and Cooloolabin Dams). Land uses within water supply catchments must be controlled to minimise the risk of pollution to potable water. Provisions in the Planning Scheme relating to protection of water supply catchments will need to be reviewed following the outcome of the Strategy. The Strategy also proposes to investigate options to improve rural water supplies and use efficiency. The South East Queensland Irrigation Futures Program aims to achieve a reduction in irrigation water use of up to 10% across SEQ by 2009; however this currently has limited relevance to the Sunshine Coast.
- Consideration of the aviation needs of the Sunshine Coast, as part of a General Aviation Strategy being prepared for South East Queensland. This may have impacts on rural land in the vicinity of the Sunshine Coast Airport. However, this will be addressed as part of Council’s Maroochy Airport Structure Plan.

5.2.7. Other Legislation
Although the IPA seeks to integrate development approval processes, several approvals applicable to rural land will unlikely to be included with Planning Schemes. These include:

- Certain vegetation clearing (under the Vegetation Management Act 1999);
- Certain dam construction (under the Water Act 2000);
- General building works (under the Building Act 1975);
- Management of pest plants and animals;
- Chemical use and storage;
- Workplace health and safety; and
- Environmental health.
5.3. **Current Sunshine Coast Regional Council Policy**

### 5.3.1. Corporate Plan

Council’s business and service delivery operations are guided by the Corporate Plan. The Vision contained within Council’s Corporate Plan 2009-2014 is to be Australia’s most sustainable region – vibrant, green, diverse. There are 8 themes supporting this vision which are:

- Robust economy;
- Ecological sustainability;
- Innovation and creativity;
- Health and well-being;
- Social cohesion;
- Accessibility and connectedness;
- Managing growth; and
- Great governance.

Under the theme of Robust economy is an emerging priority for a strong rural sector. The Strategies for achieving this are:

- To develop a Sunshine Coast Rural Futures Strategy;
- To strengthen rural industry by safeguarding agricultural land and advocating for sustainable agricultural practices; and
- To assist with the establishment of a local, rural-based fresh food business cluster.

While this is the most directly relevant theme for this project there are other themes and priorities within the Corporate Plan of importance to the long term sustainability of rural areas and rural communities. For instance the impact of climate change is identified as an emerging priority as is the preservation of our natural environment, and healthy creeks and waterways. Other emerging priorities for social cohesion include equity and opportunities for all, strong community groups and networks and a sense of identity and belonging. Better public transport and affordable access to contemporary communication services (including better telecommunications in rural areas) are also priority issues.

### 5.3.2. Growth Management Position Paper

One of the most significant early actions of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council was the preparation and adoption of a Growth Management Position Paper. It outlines the general land use intent for the rural areas. Strategies of the GMPP which are of particular relevance to the Rural Futures project include:

O2. *Healthy and resilient ecosystems will be maintained as these systems contribute to environmental, lifestyle, cultural and amenity values and distinguish the Sunshine Coast as an ecologically sustainable sub-region.*

IT4. *The integrated transport system provides north-south connectivity as well as connecting the coast with the hinterland and future transport corridors needed for the transport system are protected for that purpose.*
RL4. The protection of the Sunshine Coast’s diverse landscape, cultural heritage and scenic amenity values preserves the physical character, appearance, and experience of the Regional Landscape and in turn the lifestyle and tourism industry reliant on these values.

RL6. Rural and natural landscapes that separate and distinguish the Sunshine Coast from other parts of the SEQ Region and at smaller scales, comprise the non-urban areas that reinforce the identity of centres, towns and neighbourhoods and buffer high impact land uses, are maintained.

Ru1. Identify opportunities to encourage enterprise in existing and emerging industry sectors such as agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, tourism and events, creative, knowledge based industries, outdoor sports and recreation, leisure, health and wellbeing, carbon trading and production of energy from renewable sources that are acceptable to the local community.

Ru2. Conserve good quality agricultural land for current and future agricultural purposes, prevent fragmentation or degradation and encourage innovative farming practices which protect the environment.

Ru3. Protect rural activities from incompatible uses including residential or rural residential development.

Ru4. Facilitate the growth of on-farm operations that value-add to farm produce such as packing, processing, cooking, tastings or farm gate sales.

Ru5. Facilitate the growth of farm forestry practices and related timber-based enterprises.

Ru6. Encourage rural based and low impact, nature-based tourism that facilitates an appreciation for the Sunshine Coast’s rural activities, diverse landscapes, cultural heritage, subtropical climate, fresh air, native vegetation and wildlife and allows for active or passive recreational pursuits.

Ru7. Identify areas (within Rural Precincts) suitable for larger tourist facilities that are environmentally, culturally, economically and socially sustainable and which complement the values of the Sunshine Coast.

Ru8. Support rural-based businesses through the extension of critical services and networks into the hinterland towns and villages.

5.3.3. Existing Planning Schemes

The Noosa Plan
The Noosa Plan is the planning scheme for the northern portion of the Sunshine Coast. The majority of the rural areas are included in the Rural Zone although there are significant rural living communities included in the Rural Settlement Zone. This zone is particularly focussed around Cootharaba, Doonan, Tinbeerwah, Lake MacDonald, and Black Mountain and in areas close to the rural towns of Cooroy, Pomona and Cooran. The Open Space Conservation Zone covers predominately public land with high biodiversity values.

Agricultural Uses are divided into Cultivation, Animal Husbandry and Forestry, each of which is further divided into types dependent on intensity and operation. Traditional cultivation or animal husbandry constitutes self-assessable development in the Rural Zone, while more intensive forms are subject to code assessment or even impact assessment dependant on the nature of the use. Forestry is generally subject to code assessment but largely for the purpose of registering the site and protecting harvesting rights.

Other land uses that would be anticipated in the Rural Zone include home-based businesses, roadside (farm gate) stall, extractive industries, landscape and rural supplies, veterinary practices, B&B’s, farm stays and other rural visitor accommodation. A house and a granny flat are allowed on rural properties
and where the property accommodates agricultural uses there is provision for a caretaker’s residence although this cannot be subdivided.

Within the Rural Settlement Zone a narrower range of uses is allowed, as there is more potential to impact on the lifestyle of neighbours. For instance if the lot is greater than 2 hectares in area traditional forms of cultivation and animal husbandry are supported but more intensive forms are not consistent with this zone. Small scale operations such as B&B’s and home-based businesses are still allowed providing they meet code requirements.

Maroochy Plan 2000
Maroochy Plan is the planning scheme for the central portion of the Sunshine Coast. The rural areas are situated within five precincts; Sustainable Cane Lands, Sustainable Horticultural Lands, Sustainable Pastoral Lands, Water Resource Catchment Area and General Rural Lands. Rural living communities are included within the Sustainable Rural Residential Precinct. The rural areas are situated off the coastal strip and on the periphery of rural towns and focused between and around the towns of Palmwoods, Eudlo, Yandina, Mapleton, Woombye, Bli Bli, Montville, Eumundi, and Kenilworth.

Agricultural uses are divided into agriculture, animal husbandry, intensive animal husbandry, aquaculture and forestry, each of which is further divided into types dependent on intensity and operation. Traditional agriculture, animal husbandry and plantation forestry constitutes self-assessable development in the rural precincts, while more intensive forms are subject to code assessment or even impact assessment dependant on the nature of the use and when situated within the Water Resource Catchment Area precinct. Forestry is subject to code assessment when native forest harvesting occurs.

Other uses anticipated in rural precincts include bed and breakfast, home based business, detached house, stable, aquaculture, road side stall, home based business and extractive industries are considered accepted rural uses within these precincts depending on the intensity and operation.

Within a rural residential precinct, less uses are permitted due to their impacts on neighbours and smaller land size. Generally, small operations of bed and breakfasts and home based businesses and agriculture and animal husbandry are supported on lots greater than 4 hectares, with forestry accepted on lots greater than 2 hectares.

Caloundra City Plan
The Caloundra City Plan is the planning scheme for the southern portion of the Sunshine Coast. The rural areas are situated within the Rural Precinct and Rural Residential Precincts. These precincts are situated on the periphery of rural towns and focused between and around Beerburrum, Glass House Mountains, Beerwah, Landsborough, Mooloolah, Peachester, Maleny and Conondale.

Rural Uses are divided into Animal Related Uses, Crop Related Uses and Accommodation Related Uses. Animal and crop related uses are further divided into types dependent on intensity and operation. Accommodation Related Uses includes Rural holiday accommodation. In addition special provision is made for Rural Service Industry.

Consistent uses included in the rural precinct class are agriculture, animal husbandry, native forest harvesting, aquaculture, rural holiday accommodation, rural produce store and a stable. Agriculture, some animal husbandry, native forest harvesting, rural produce stall and a stable are self assessable when complying with the relevant codes within the Rural Precinct.
Uses considered consistent with a rural residential precinct are a bed and breakfast, caretaker’s residence, detached house and home based business. Agriculture, native forestry harvesting, bed and breakfast, home based business of all scales are code assessable within a rural residential precinct.

There is currently considerable variation in how the three planning schemes deal with rural development, including land use definitions, levels of assessment, development requirements, application fees and infrastructure contributions. These issues are considered in Council’s Draft Rural Land Use Planning Background Study.

5.3.4. Local Laws

There are a number of Local Laws that have varying implications for the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast. These are comprised of Local Laws that existed within the former Noosa, Maroochydore and Caloundra local government areas. These Local Laws include:

- Noosa Shire Council Local Law No.9 – Commercial Use of Roads
- Caloundra City Council Subordinate Local Law 06.03 – Roadside Stalls
- Maroochy Shire Council Local Law 08 – Roadside Vending and the Use of Roads and Footways
- Noosa Shire Council Local Law No.17 - Temporary Homes 2006
- Caloundra City Council Subordinate Local Law 06.01 – Temporary Accommodation
- Noosa Shire Council Local Law No.19 – Caravan Parks
- Noosa Shire Council Local Law No.10 – Vegetation Management 2003
- Maroochy Shire Council Local Law 19 – Protection of Vegetation
- Noosa Shire Council Local Law No.12 – Control of Nuisances
- Noosa Shire Council Local Law No.16 – Control of Advertising
- Maroochy Shire Council Local Law 11 – Control of Advertising
- Caloundra City Council Subordinate Local Law 06.05 – Advertising
- Caloundra City Council Subordinate Local Law 02.01 – Activities on Council Facilities and Other Public Places
- Caloundra City Council Subordinate Local Law 10 – Parks and Reserves

The intent of the Laws in most cases is aimed at protecting the amenity of the area as well as maintaining safety and public order. This protection in turn requires persons on rural properties to comply with regulations related to, for instance the removal of vegetation, the provision of food or drink at roadside stalls and the accommodation of persons in a temporary home. While the protection of amenity and the provision of public order are necessary in the hinterland areas, the Local Laws themselves can in some cases complicate and make it difficult for applicants to conduct rural enterprises. Additionally, in some cases the Local Laws are a duplication of requirements already contained within the planning schemes.

In general, the Local Laws have similar requirements. These requirements include the attainment of a permit or a licence. On attainment of a permit or a licence the applicant is then responsible for complying with the conditions of the permit or licence. Such conditions vary in their implications for the applicant however may involve costly requirements such as taking out insurance against personal injury.
and property damage. The conditions of a permit or licence also indicate the term for which the permit is granted or whether or not the permit can be renewed.

In some cases where a Local Law Policy does not exist the term for which the permit or licence is valid may be decided by the local government. In this respect there appears that there may be a lack in certainty in the term for which the permit is valid. Additionally, once a permit is attained there is no guarantee that the permit will be renewed. Therefore the attainment or a permit for the provision of a small scale enterprise such as the selling of local produce on the roadside may only be granted on a temporary basis where the conditions of the permit may have resulted in costly requirements for the applicant.
6.0 Emerging Trends and Future Drivers

The potential drivers of rural area land use decisions in the future are regional, national or global in nature but all will have significant impacts on the Sunshine Coast’s rural areas. Future rural planning needs a precautionary approach and plan for unusual change in the rural areas. The greatest challenge for the Rural Futures Strategy will be to continue to provide for those landowners that are adapting to the current and past trends but to also facilitate the changes that may occur as a result of future trends.

6.1 Urban Growth

The population of the Sunshine Coast was approximately 295,000 in 2006. Since the 1980s the Sunshine Coast has been one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. That growth is planned to be sustained to at least 2031 according to the planning framework of both State and Local Governments.

The projected population of the Sunshine Coast in 2031 is indicatively 497,000 people. The SEQ Regional Plan 2009 projects a dwelling demand of 98,000 new dwellings on the Sunshine coast through the period to year 2031.

This forecast population growth puts pressure on Local Governments to allow urban development on peri-urban and rural land and provide the infrastructure associated with urban development. This then leads to concerns about the loss of good agricultural land and the fragmentation of farms. An example of this is the proposed water storage infrastructure that the State Government is proposing to build at Traveston to provide water for the expanding urban population of South East Queensland.

6.2 Sea changers and Tree changers

The Sunshine Coast’s population growth is being driven by internal migration from metropolitan cities and inland areas. Described as the “seachange” phenomenon by demographers Ian Burnley and Peter Murphy, or the “Big Shift” by demographer Bernard Salt, the implications of this movement are very significant for the Sunshine Coast.

The social implications of seachange migration are profound. In spite of new population growth, many coastal communities such as the Sunshine Coast are characterised by higher levels of unemployment, lower than average household incomes, and greater levels of socio-economic disadvantage along with higher numbers of seniors than other parts of Australia.

One of the effects of the seachange population migration is that housing affordability on the coastal strip of the Sunshine Coast is declining significantly. House prices jumped considerably on the Sunshine Coast from 2002 onwards. This is causing a consequential migration of the less affluent to more affordable housing in the rural hinterland towns of the Sunshine Coast.

In parallel with this phenomenon is the treechange population migration (otherwise known as rural retreating) which is a trend for ‘baby boomers’ to seek out lifestyle property in country towns, or near country towns, usually within a two hour drive of a capital city. The driver of the treechange migration are people wanting a simpler life in a pleasant town with all amenities not too far from their interests in the city.

The rural areas of the Sunshine Coast are therefore under pressure from established Sunshine Coast residents moving to cheaper housing in the rural towns and from Treechangers moving to the rural areas for lifestyle reasons.
6.3. **Sunshine Coast Rural Economy**

One of the major challenges in planning the rural lands of the Sunshine Coast is anticipating the future use of the cane lands. This is because of the high proportion of the rural land previously utilised for cane.

Much of the sugarcane land that was previously under cultivation prior to the closure of the Moreton Sugar Mill is now lying fallow. Rural and urban land uses are competing for these lands as has happened in the past but now the pressure from urban developers is greater. It was found in 2005 that 48% of cane farmers had put up part, or their entire farm for sale attracted by the potential to realise a significant capital return.

A CSIRO report examining the “Future Use of Sunshine Coast Cane Landscapes” has indicated that of the 10,000 hectares that were used to grow sugar cane approximately 30% of it can grow other crops successfully without the threat of flooding. The remaining 7,000 hectares are vulnerable to flooding and intermittent waterlogging and this limits perennial farming or forestry opportunities. The CSIRO report believes that a rural future for the canelands may include a combination of sugarcane production, other cropping or pastoral pursuits, recreational or ecotourism uses and the provision of ecosystem services.

There is potential for a significant proportion of the sugar cane land to return to sugar cane production if the Biocane Company becomes a commercially viable enterprise. This enterprise is attempting to commercially produce an animal feedstock called “Cow Candy”. All three levels of government have provided significant funding to this company but it remains to be seen whether the company becomes commercially viable.

Other major rural industries that have been slowly declining are the dairy and the pineapple industry in the past few decades. Pineapple farms have been sold off for residential development particularly around Palmwoods and Woombye. Small niche rural industries are emerging such as the intensive horticultural production of flowers, salad vegetables and herbs. Other producers are value-adding to their primary production and there is the emergence of wineries, specialist confectionary and preserves. However, these enterprises are not large consumers of land and it is not anticipated that they will become so.

In the current global economy there is an acute degree of uncertainty surrounding the use of the Sunshine Coast’s rural lands. The financial attraction for landowners to remain in farming nationwide is declining and this is reflected in the average age of farmers increasing substantially. Urban developers are arguing that the best and highest use of the land is residential urban development. Others in the community are concerned that the open and green space, ecosystem services and other values that the rural areas hold should be protected from urban development.
6.4. Climate Change

‘Climate Change’ has emerged to become one of the defining political issues of this decade. The Queensland Government released the Queensland Greenhouse Strategy in 2004. This strategy acknowledges the growing scientific consensus that the greenhouse effect is changing the world’s climate and that Queensland will be vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Further, in 2007, the Queensland Government announced the state’s new climate change strategy, ClimateSmart 2050 (Policy), facilitated by the Office of Climate Change. The Policy outlines a ‘long term strategy to secure a clean energy future for the State based on investing in the development and deployment of clean coal technologies’.

For landowners and primary producers in the rural areas climate variability has been one of the key issues in managing their properties for generations, and they have become adept at managing that particular type of risk. What is of concern now, however, is permanent change in the climate regime. Current modelling is indicating that:

► Queensland is getting hotter and drier, and warming faster than the global average;
► Rainfall has declined along the east coast south of Cairns and coastal rainfall now falls in shorter, more intense bursts; and
► Tropical cyclone numbers have decreased, but intensity has increased.
► While rural landowners are already highly skilled risk managers they are still potentially vulnerable to climate change impacts in the areas of:
   ► Water access rights (to water from municipal water storages and rivers/creeks); and
   ► Water storage on their own property.

However, rural landowners may also have considerable opportunities from the emerging carbon trading markets and emerging fuel production initiatives in the near future. The carbon markets are an attempt to help mitigate carbon dioxide emissions through a trading of carbon credits. This may potentially give the rural landowner, local governments, community groups and even schools an opportunity to become “carbon farmers”.

Land use planning can aid the rural sector in adapting to climate change by addressing these emerging constraints and opportunities. Examples are:

► Good Quality Agricultural Land – identification, prioritisation and protection of the best soils for agricultural production, keeping in mind that relocalisation of agricultural production may become more diverse in nature (for instance a local dairy industry may re-emerge).
► ‘Carbon farms’ – the planning scheme may have to consider distinguishing between areas designated “farm forestry for sustainable timber production” and farm revegetation areas planted for the purpose of carbon trading (some form of certification would have to be recognised).
► Water Management Plans – examination of the Water Act 2006 and the new requirements of the Queensland Water Commission and any implications arising from that for land use planning such as the requirements for Water Efficiency Management Plans to be submitted when applying for a water intensive agricultural use.
► ‘Watercycle farms’ – potential synergies between recycled water production facilities (Sewage Treatment Plants) and intensive farming operations are opportunities that may require the...
designation of such areas in the planning scheme (with appropriate restrictions on potential polluting of the waterways). Rainwater harvesting farms may also emerge, as they have done in North Queensland, particularly on the hinterland ranges.

6.5. Peak Oil

‘Peak Oil’ is the term given to that period in time when world crude oil production reaches a peak and then begins to irreversibly decline. It is of concern because: (1) economic growth relies to a very large extent on oil consumption; and (2) oil use pervades almost every sector of the economy, including agriculture.

The rural sector of the economy is potentially vulnerable to declining global oil supplies because of its complete dependence on oil. The reasons for this dependence are:

► The high proportion (85%) of energy use in the rural sector of the economy being provided by oil derived fuels (particularly the use of diesel);
► The rural sector is highly dependent on export markets and the resultant need for long haul transport of its products to ports and overseas;
► The rural sector has become highly mechanised in order to compete with overseas competitors. This substitution of labour by oil consuming machinery has been facilitated by the Australian government providing a diesel fuel rebate;
► The rural sector depends on pesticides which are predominantly manufactured from petroleum products;
► The rural sector depends on plastics, waxed cardboard, polyethylene films and other oil derived products for packaging and storage.

If world oil production peaks then the rural sector will have to adapt to meet the challenge of rising fuel prices. It will have to adapt to a new paradigm of more expensive transport and more expensive farm inputs (such as pesticides, plastics, fertilisers, etc). This adaptation is likely to focus on a relocalisation of agricultural production, freight transport by rail and a greater proportion of agricultural production relying on organic and rotation cropping methods. As well there may be fuel farms (e.g. ethanol, biodiesel) that need to be regulated for their impacts on surrounding land uses.

Land use planning can aid the rural sector in addressing these changes by:

► Protecting agricultural land from urban development;
► Allowing agricultural production to be closer to the periphery of urban settlements
► Allowing organic agricultural production to be “inside” urban areas (urban agriculture)
► Allowing direct selling of produce through designated community market areas
► ‘Fuel farms’ may emerge through solar, wind, ethanol and/or biodiesel farms. These uses of land may need to be considered.

Rural communities are also vulnerable because they generally have reduced levels of access to public transport, telecommunications, and social services and are therefore car dependant.
6.6. Increasing Importance of Environmental Management and Ecosystem Services

Over the past 20 years, land use activities have been subject to increasing requirements for environmental management (e.g. regulation of chemical storage and use, vegetation clearing and land use). In broad terms, environmental accountability is required on all stakeholders to minimise the negative impacts of activities on the environment that the community enjoys. Protection of the environmental values of the Sunshine Coast is critical for a sustainable future for the region.

An emerging derivative of environmental management is the increasing recognition of ‘ecosystem services’. This is the term given to the goods and services provided by natural (and semi-natural) ecosystems that benefit, sustain and support the well-being of people. They include the production of food and medicines, the regulation of climate and disease, provision of productive soils and clean water, and landscape opportunities for recreation and spiritual benefits. In short, ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. Ecosystem services are derived from the diversity of complex interactions between the components and processes that occur within an ecosystem. The SEQ Ecosystem Services Framework defines three categories of ecosystem services: Provisioning, Regulating, and Cultural Services. 28 ecosystem services have been incorporated in the Framework, as outlined in Table 7.

Ecosystem services are to a large extent unrecognised and therefore are not adequately valued in industrial economies. They do, however, provide fundamentally important inputs to the economy, and human well-being is also inextricably linked to the provision of ecosystem services. Failing to understand or adequately value the significance of these services to the community (and its economy), can result in serious adverse impacts on the sustainability and liveability of the Sunshine Coast. If the services are lost, their replacements, if possible, can be prohibitively expensive. A healthy economy is not sustainable in the absence of these services, many of which are free and shared widely by the community.

The maintenance of ecosystem services is vital for the sustainable development of the Sunshine Coast and the well-being of its residents. The rural areas of the Sunshine Coast contribute all of the nominated ecosystem services, and as such can be considered as vital ‘green infrastructure’ for the Sunshine Coast. Due to the number and significance of ecosystem services provided by the rural areas, their future needs to maintain the supply of ecosystem services that the Sunshine Coast community values. This is particularly relevant in recognition that the community is more dependent than most on the Sunshine Coast’s natural assets, and of the key drivers influencing the future of the region.
Table 7: The list of ecosystem services incorporated into the SEQ Ecosystem Services Framework (SEQ Catchments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecosystem Service Categories</th>
<th>Provisioning Services Products obtained from ecosystems</th>
<th>Regulating Services Benefits obtained from regulation of ecosystem processes</th>
<th>Cultural Services Nonmaterial benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>► Food</td>
<td>► Air quality</td>
<td>► Iconic species</td>
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<td></td>
<td>► Water for consumption</td>
<td>► Habitable climate</td>
<td>► Cultural diversity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>► Building and fibre</td>
<td>► Water quality</td>
<td>► Spiritual and religious values</td>
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<td></td>
<td>► Fuel</td>
<td>► Arable land</td>
<td>► Knowledge systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>► Genetic resources for cultivated products</td>
<td>► Buffering against extremes</td>
<td>► Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>► Biochemicals, medicines and pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>► Pollination</td>
<td>► Aesthetic values</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>► Ornamental resources</td>
<td>► Reduce pests / diseases</td>
<td>► Affect on social interactions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>► Transport infrastructure</td>
<td>► Productive soils</td>
<td>► Sense of place</td>
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<td>► Noise abatement</td>
<td>► Iconic landscapes</td>
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<td>► Recreational opportunities</td>
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<td>► Therapeutic landscapes</td>
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7.0 Opportunities and Constraints for Rural Areas

7.1. Opportunities
The key issues listed at section 0, including local and global trends, are going to present both challenges and opportunities for rural areas.

At the highest level there is opportunity to enhance the Sunshine Coast’s rural profile and reputation in all sectors. For instance, the Sunshine Coast hinterland can strengthen its brand as: a quality lifestyle destination for both visitors and residents; as a region of good food and wine; for ecological interaction and awareness; for cultural heritage; for best practice agriculture and for outdoor recreation events. There is opportunity to celebrate and build on the various natural and community values and to protect them long term.

This will rely on strong representation in all regional branding and communication including that of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council.

7.1.1. Opportunities for Rural Economy
- A relocalised regional economy to increase the demand for local produce for local consumption.
- Enhance the profile of the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast through strong representation in all regional branding and communication.
- To expand on current food production and food processing capabilities and develop as a leading quality food region in Queensland.
- To explore opportunities to build on changing consumer preferences and a stronger focus on healthy foods.
- To expand and provide support to ensure the continued growth of niche, small and specialised food ventures in order to maximise their chances of success and market growth.
- The Sunshine Coast can strengthen its brand as a quality destination for visitors and residents, for regional food and wine, eco cultural and agro tourism, outdoor recreation events, etc.
- Improve local workforce through population growth and utilisation of semi-retirees and backpackers.
- Training and mentoring of young primary producers by retired farmers.
- New residents often bring new enterprises, particularly knowledge-based enterprises with them and this can expand the economic base of the receiving environment.
- A growing population creates a larger consumer base and can injects more money into the local economy.
- Growth generally leads to prosperity of the construction industry and can have the opportunity to provide best practice innovation within the industry.
- Many tree changers or young active retirees will have high levels of disposable incomes to invest in the area, it may create increased demand for specialised goods and personal and professional services.
- Utilise financial capital, knowledge and skills of new rural residents to invest in rural production and businesses.
The natural advantages of the Sunshine Coast hinterland, including the scenic “clean/green” landscape and the subtropical climate make it attractive for eco, farm or retreat based tourism.

Utilise the climatic and biophysical attributes of the Sunshine Coast (e.g. rainfall, soils, land availability and proximity to markets) to increase high value agricultural production, in response to climate change impacts in other areas.

The clean green image is conducive to be becoming a recognised organic/low spray/best practice production area dictating higher market prices and a strong component of the regional branding image.

The Sunshine Coast has good quality agricultural soils and is therefore conducive to extending to a wider variety of agricultural pursuits.

Opportunities exist for value adding to primary production through on-farm secondary processing, cooking schools, farm tours, tastings etc and for food and wine trails to establish identifying the destination as a “regional foodie destination”.

To promote, support and build on existing website(s) showcasing local food production, markets and farm gate experiences.

Diversification of primary production away from previously traditional industries like cane and dairy to emerging sectors that may be more profitable and less land intensive; (trialling of alternative crops).

Opportunities to grow produce particularly in demand by local processors and the restaurant industry on the Sunshine Coast, this may include expansion of aquaculture industry, diversification of poultry industry, and other gourmet meats as well as herbs, Asian greens and more unusual or difficult to find vegetables.

To develop a transition strategy from traditional farming for the land previously used for sugar cane.

To harness the principles of the Noosa Biosphere Reserve in presenting opportunities for new environmentally focused industries and enterprises.

Increase plantation and farm forestry for sustainable local timber production and supply of building material.

Utilise carbon trading initiative to establish native vegetation on degraded areas not suitable for other agriculture.

Opportunities for increased animal husbandry including breeding of stud bulls, breeding and training of horses and breeding of domestic pets (as well as breeding and raising livestock for food production).

7.1.2. Opportunities for Rural Community

Improve the relationship and inter-connectivity between urban and rural communities.

Build on the actual and perceived community values of the hinterland as an attraction for new residents.

Increase the diversity of residents in order to enhance the rich social fabric.

A managed increase of growth in rural towns could create opportunities for housing diversity including some higher densities around town centres, train stations and other transport hubs and housing specifically for older residents or those with special needs.
Growth of rural towns makes the provision of services more cost efficient and likely.

Growth of rural towns and growth of services and facilities within them make them more attractive to “in demand” skilled professionals such as doctors.

Increased numbers of retirees can increase the number of residents able to volunteer in the community sector.

To improve relationships and understanding between primary producers and rural lifestyle residents.

Where the rate and style of growth and change is managed there is opportunity for place making involving local people in decision making, increasing local ownership of the outcomes, which in turn decreases likelihood of vandalism and disconnectedness.

Growth should lead to increased employment and education opportunities for young people which should reduce boredom and potentially retain more young people within the community.

Opportunities for celebration of the Sunshine Coast’s Indigenous and historical cultural heritage and therefore and understanding of who we are.

7.1.3. Opportunities for Rural Environment

Celebration of the rural values can raise their profile and assist with their protection.

Opportunities for government to improve the pathways, interpretative signage and other infrastructure that helps people appreciate and understand the areas natural landforms, ecosystems and cultural heritage.

Utilise the scenic amenity values of the rural areas for tourism and outdoor recreation.

Deliver environmental outcomes through increased uptake of best practice in land and resource management, for instance cooperation between land owners, Landcare and catchment groups leads to protection of and enhancement of riparian buffers.

Increased participation of people involved in volunteering in environmental management, such as Bushland Care.

Increased participation in voluntary programs such as Land for Wildlife to improve habitat conditions for local wildlife.

People are generally quite environmentally aware these days and actively pursue environmentally sound outcomes (for instance recycling, and water conservation have become a normal part of life.

7.2. Challenges

Rural challenges arising from urban growth and other trends on the Sunshine Coast can be categorised as follows:

7.2.1. Challenges for Rural Economy

- Poor planning has allowed urban and semi-urban development to encroach into rural lands, creating conflict of interest and risking productivity.
- Good quality farming land has become fragmented through subdivision over the years.
- Pressure for additional urban land has lead to land speculation making it less desirable to continue farming.
Rural industries must compete with high paying industries like mining when attracting potential workers.

There is increased global competition for produce.

Uncertainty of impacts of climate change and long term water security.

Approaching peak oil.

Biosecurity – risks associated with introduced pests and diseases.

Lack of primary producers, due to different priorities and expectations for various generations. Current farmers are ageing and not motivated, whilst younger generations have different career priorities, with farms not being transferred within families.

High start up or diversification / expansion costs, including those associated with regulation.

Deregulation of rural industries (e.g. dairy industry).

Over-reliance on one industry is risky (e.g. dairy, sugar cane, pineapples).

Sterilisation of productive land due to fragmentation and lifestyle.

Missed opportunities associated with farming land being used just for lifestyle purposes.

High compliance costs associated with best practice environmental management.

Increasing input costs such as fuels, fertilisers, pesticides and potentially water.

Environmental objectives may conflict with rural production.

Rural areas suffer from reduced mobile phone and broadband access making communication and business networks harder.

7.2.2. Challenges for Rural Community

Encroachment of non-rural landholders and residents, which has contributed to changing values and conflicts.

Increased demand for rural living due to lifestyle or necessity may affect housing affordability. In particular, those priced out of coastal towns due to increased housing prices may be forced to move to rural areas away from urban services.

That rural towns and areas are not able to deliver the same level of services as a city or major centre, and new residents may expect these to be provided.

Competing with faster growing urban areas for infrastructure spending.

Lag in infrastructure provision to service population growth.

If the population continues to age and new residents are substantially baby boomers health services and aged care services will be particularly stretched.

Individual or community uncertainty about the future of rural areas may lead to a disheartening or detachment, making communities less resilient to change.

Distance can hamper communication between rural communities and decision makers.

Disharmony can arise between rural property owners and local residents when property owners sell properties to developers.

Isolation can occur when aged people remain on rural properties remote from services.
Lack of education, employment or social infrastructure often drives younger residents away or in some cases leads to boredom and anti-social behaviour.

Lack of public transport particularly affects young people, old people and low income earners.

7.2.3. Challenges for Rural Environment

- Growth places all natural environments and systems under increased pressure.
- Larger properties may require more maintenance than first thought and become neglected over time (spread of weeds and pest species).
- Newer residents may not understand the risks associated with introduced plant and animal species and exacerbate existing problems of weeds and feral animals etc.
- Newer residents may be used to certain levels of service (such as reticulated water and sewerage) and may need to adapt to different and more efficient behaviours.
- Extractive industries and traditional agriculture often conflict with environmental objectives.
- Impacts of infrastructure required to service population growth, such as roads, rail, water and electricity.
- Current land management practices are not best practice.
- The perceived value of environmental protection and amenity has a short-term mindset.
8.0 Council Actions to Address Issues

There is a wide range of Council projects and programs, including those completed and current, relevant to the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast. They reinforce the importance of the rural areas to Council and suggest that despite the lower population and rate base, every directorate within Council dedicates resources to the ongoing functioning and sustainability of rural areas.

8.1 Completed

8.1.1. Agriculture and Agricultural Land Studies

Over the last 10-15 years the three former Councils of the Sunshine Coast carried out various studies into agricultural lands and their capabilities, as well as future options for their use. Of particular relevance are:

Maroochy Rural Enterprise Project (Maroochy Shire Council)

The Maroochy Rural Enterprise Project (MREP) by the former Maroochy Shire Council commenced in 2006, “to help the rural areas of Maroochy Shire become more economically viable in order to safeguard their environments and social structures”. The MREP developed methods to bring together the relevant stakeholders to increase the opportunities for people living in the hinterland, to improve their quality of life in economic, environmental and social terms. These methods included community consultation (Touchstone Group), provision of information (see below) on rural enterprises and issues, and building relationships between Council and organisations such as the State Government.

MREP Publications:

► Enterprising Rural Business Guide – A first step guide to setting up and expanding your business in the Maroochy Hinterland.

► Enterprising Farms – A guide and information for New and Existing Primary Producers.

► Enterprising Food Directory – A guide to food and beverage producers in the Maroochy hinterland.

► Working and Living in the Hinterland Guide

CSIRO Reports into the future of the Sunshine Coast canelands

In 2006, CSIRO, which was commissioned by SEQ Catchments, released the report, ‘Future Use of Sunshine Coast Cane Landscapes’. This report found that making economic returns from broad acre cropping (including cane) on the majority of cane lands is difficult to achieve. This is due to the small size of farms, and that much of the land (approximately 7,000 hectares) is flood prone, poorly drained and there is a limited set of farming or forestry opportunities. The balance of the cane land (approximately 3,000 hectares) is suitable for a wide range of crops. The report indicated that a rural future for the cane lands could be more likely based on a combination of land uses, such as cane supply for processed stock food (BioCane), other agricultural crops and products, outdoor recreation activities, and public environmental management and conservation (ecosystem services).

The follow-up report by CSIRO, ‘Achieving Sustainable Land Use on the Sunshine Coast Former Cane Lands: Scoping solutions beyond land use planning’ (2008) was commissioned by local cane growers, and was based on the conclusions of the first report that there are no broadscale economically viable agricultural alternatives to cane on the floodplain. The report, therefore, focussed on the need to...
maintain the supply of ecosystem services from the land that the Sunshine Coast community values (such as biodiversity and scenic amenity). The report investigated a range of possible futures for the cane lands, along with the key instruments that could be used. The possible future scenarios investigated for the cane lands were:

1. No significant change in land use policy or public investment in ecosystem services. Reduction in broadacre agriculture will result in reduced, ad hoc and small scale provision of ecosystem services.
2. Enhanced development incentives in land use policy and increased public investment in ecosystem services, which will result in increased, yet still small scale, provision of ecosystem services.
3. Extensive public investment in ecosystem services, including stewardship payments as a competitive land use option.
4. Restricted urban development, with resultant private investment in the provision of large-scale ecosystem services.

Neither of the CSIRO reports revealed a clear and viable future direction for the cane growers or for sustainable rural alternatives to cane growing. The reports did, however, recognise that a strategic approach to the future of the canelands was needed.

**Maroochy River Recovery Project**
The Maroochy River Recovery project was initiated by the former Maroochy Shire Council in response to the decline of the ecosystem health of the Maroochy River. Around $12 million was invested over four years on projects such as erosion and sediment control and riparian rehabilitation, together with a $34 million Maroochydore Sewerage Treatment Plant upgrade.

**Maroochy River Value Project**
The Maroochy River Value Project (2008) aimed to derive a partial economic value of the Maroochy River system. There were three key results from the study:
1. A conceptual model describing how the catchment derives value from the River;
2. Estimate of the Total Economic Value (TEV) of the Maroochy River (using factors such as property values, tourism, water supply and wastewater disposal); and
3. Interrogation of the TEV of the River to potential future scenario options.

**8.1.2. Other Projects of Significance**
The following are other completed projects with significance to rural lands.

**Meridan Plains Extractive Resource Area Investigation (Caloundra City Council)**
The Meridan Plains Extractive Resource Area is located on rural land within the Mooloolah floodplain to the east of the Bruce Highway and between Caloundra Road and the proposed future Greenfield Major Development Area of Palmview.

The area is a key regional sand resource and is expected to resource future growth needs for more than 50 years. The investigation will identify social, economic, and environmental issues related to the extraction of sand and will inform changes to City Plan and provide a Master Plan to manage issues.

Council resolved in December 2006 to undertake an investigation into the future planning of the Meridan Plains Extractive Resource Area to determine if the current policy position in Caloundra City Plan 2004
should be reviewed and if so, set out the framework and principles for that review.

**SCYE (Strengthening Communities through Youth Engagement) (Noosa Shire Council)**

Through the Noosa Social Plan it was identified that young people living in the Noosa Hinterland are at a high disadvantage due to lack of access to activities, events, services or transport to get to these things provided in other areas.

Through this community capacity building project young people were able to:

- Identify their needs, experiences and visions for their community;
- Find and create partnerships with community elders, business, supporters;
- Gain skills in developing and delivering their own community events/activities/projects; and
- Establish connections and understandings that will support their ongoing contribution in their local communities.

### 8.2. Current

There are several projects underway, either by Council or with input from Council, which are contributing to a sustainable future for the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast. Below is a highlighted list of projects, many of which have the potential for expansion and or combining with other aligned projects across the organisation.

**Economic Development Rural Action Plan**

The Economic Development Rural Action Plan outlines work being undertaken or planned to be undertaken for the rural areas over the next five years. It identifies four major target areas:

- Business support and incubation;
- Development of local food and beverage;
- Investment options; and
- Engagement.

A total of 30 projects have been identified under these target areas, varying in actions, duration and resource requirements.

**Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme**

The Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme will be a legal document that sets out rules for land use and development, and its main functions are to:

- Allocate land for various purposes;
- Describe how places are to be developed;
- Match land use with infrastructure demand;
- Protect the environment and manage resources; and
- Provide a tool to assess development proposals.

The challenge in replacing the three existing planning schemes will be to maintain the distinct character and identity of the many communities that make up the Sunshine Coast whilst managing the economic, social and environmental pressures arising from the predicted population growth.
Rural Land Use Planning Background Study
The Rural Land Use Planning Background Study reviews the way the existing planning schemes regulate development in the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast and identifies any potential “roadblocks” to rural enterprises. This study includes recommendations which should inform the new Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme, as well as short term changes in development processes, that might help facilitate a broader range of sustainable rural enterprises while still protecting the environmental and lifestyle values of the hinterland.

Climate Change Strategy
The Climate Change Strategy documents the risks associated with climate change and peak oil, and outlines the likely consequences for Council and the community. It provides a local government context and aims to ensure that the Sunshine Coast Regional Council is well placed to protect local communities and capitalise on opportunities associated with climate change and transition to alternative energy sources.

Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme
The Federal Government recently released the consultation paper, Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper (July 2008), which outlined the Government’s intentions for a national Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. This was reported to Council at the 8 September 2008 General Committee Meeting. The Scheme is a cap and trade system, intended to help Australia shift to a low carbon economy and reduce its emissions. Industries captured by the scheme that generate carbon pollution will need to acquire a ‘pollution permit’ for every tonne of greenhouse gas emissions that they emit. There may also be opportunities for environmental offsets for carbon sequestration, which could be located on the cane lands.

Biodiversity Strategy
The Biodiversity Strategy will provide an in-depth expert investigation into the range and scale of native flora and fauna communities within the Sunshine Coast, identifying the most threatened communities in the process. The Strategy aims to produce the following key outcomes:
- Identification of a network of habitat cores, mosaics and linkages, including details of individual flora and fauna communities of the Sunshine Coast;
- Identification of threats to biodiversity in the Sunshine Coast and their relative significance, including the threat to biodiversity from the development pattern permitted by the Planning Schemes and the SEQ Regional Plan; and
- Prioritisation of well defined spatial areas for protection and management based on the significance of the fauna/flora community, the level of threat to the viability of the area and its wider contribution to the network of habitat cores, mosaics and linkages in the Sunshine Coast.

Waterways and Coastal Management Strategy
The Waterways and Coastal Management Strategy will provide a framework for managing the Sunshine Coast’s natural rivers, wetlands and lakes, its coastal foreshores and its constructed lakes and canals. Background information of Sunshine Coast waterways and coastal foreshores will be provided. The Strategy will then identify key challenges for waterway management and outline management strategies to address these challenges.
Maroochy River Recovery Project
Phase 2 of the Maroochy River Recovery project will focus on redefining Council’s approach to landscape rescue, by building “green infrastructure” across degraded landscapes to strengthen and re-connect high value nature assets and optimise the services to the community that healthy ecosystems provide. The project will use a combination of conventional, new and emerging natural resource management tools to achieve multiple environmental, social and economic outcomes. Maroochy River Recovery Phase 2 will target the highest priority reach of the Maroochy River estuary, and will consist of a suite of projects and programs that will drive this initiative forward, including using the Environment Levy and other funding mechanisms to acquire and manage environmental land, conservation agreements, compensatory habitat, greenhouse offsets, stewardship payments and riparian rehabilitation.

Flooding and Stormwater Management Strategy
The Flooding and Stormwater Management Strategy will address flooding and stormwater management issues across the Sunshine Coast and will provide a coordinated approach that ensures efficient use of Council resources and maximum benefit for the community and environment.

Flooding Investigations
Various flooding investigations are also being undertaken that will help to guide land use policy decisions. These investigations include:

► Flood Estimation Project, which will review and upgrade major flood studies and associated flood mapping. The majority of the cane lands are included in the Maroochy River floodplain.
► Flood Hazard Analysis, which will identify differing degrees of hazard for people or infrastructure that may be experienced within a floodplain during a major flood event.
► Flood Damage Analysis for the Maroochy River floodplain, which will estimate property damage due to flooding for different events.
► Climate Change Scenario Modelling, which will determine the sensitivity of our catchments (particularly the Maroochy River floodplain) to hydrologic changes in the climate. This will include increases to flood risk to certain land.

Sunshine Coast Housing Needs Assessment
The Sunshine Coast Housing Needs Assessment identifies existing dwelling stock and characteristics, identifies current housing issues, analyses trends, and forecasts likely future needs across the Sunshine Coast. The assessment identifies a range of appropriate housing options that respond to the identified housing needs, including targets for housing type, size and affordability, and provides a number of recommendations for the development of a housing policy and strategy. Both residential and visitor accommodation has been assessed. This includes review of retirement housing, key worker housing and affordable housing. While the study does not specifically break down urban and rural areas its primary relevance to Rural Futures will be in relation to the larger rural towns where a diversity of housing could most easily be achieved.

Affordable Living Strategy
The Affordable Living Strategy will discuss the concept of affordable living and provide a policy direction that will enable the residents of the Sunshine Coast to better live within their means. While numerous and complex elements impact the affordability of our lives including employment, housing, transport and locational aspects, the Strategy will have a particular emphasis on ‘housing’ and its implication on affordability. Additional detailed studies will be completed in the next planning phase of the Affordable
Living Strategy development. These will include a Social Infrastructure Plan and a Health and Equity Policy.

Open Space Strategy
The Sunshine Coast Regional Council’s Open Space Strategy will set the direction for the planning, development and management of an Open Space Network controlled by Council and ensure adequate provision and protection is provided to sustain and enhance this valuable resource. The strategy will identify and analyse the range of outdoor recreation settings potentially available to cater for not only the needs of the local population but also visitors to the Sunshine Coast. The strategy’s focus will be the urban park network although it will integrate with rural areas and include bushland or rural parks including valuable links across the urban footprint between rural areas.

Arbovirus disease reduction
The fish breeding program is expanding the fish hatchery at Lake McDonald to breed suitable fish to supply to rural residents to place in dams water bodies in order to control reduce mosquito breeding and thereby reducing arbovirus diseases. The results will improve the health and well being of rural residents and raise the awareness of mosquito borne disease and in doing so will assist residents to take a greater responsibility for the control and reduction of mosquitoes.

Alternative Agricultural Crops and Products
Despite the conclusions of the CSIRO reports that there are limited viable agricultural alternatives to cane on the floodplain, a number of new agricultural crops and products are being investigated by various stakeholders. Two of these are BioCane and pongamia. The BioCane project is an initiative by Sunshine Coast farmers and the community in response to the collapse of the raw sugar industry. BioCane Limited uses green sugar cane biomass to produce stock feeds, as an alternative to raw sugar, and has developed links to an emerging Asian market for this product. Maroochy Shire Council directly supported the project by providing $500,000 over four years, and was also instrumental in obtaining State and Federal Government funding. Council is currently working with the company to help develop the market and production aspects of the enterprise.

The Pongamia project is a community-based project that explores the practicalities of Pongamia as an alternative viable crop for the cane lands. The seed pods of the Pongamia tree are suitable for bio-diesel production that has the two-fold environmental benefit of growing trees that store carbon while producing oil for fuel. This could potentially form the basis for a new industry on the Sunshine Coast. Council is providing in-kind support for this project.

Centres Planning – hinterland towns along the railway line
Because of the proposed realignment of the North Coast railway line the town centres of the railway towns face possible, and in some cases quite substantial, change. It has been proposed to undertake an integrated place-based planning process for all Sunshine Coast towns and villages located on the railway. Through a consultative and integrated approach a clear vision for each town and village should be established. Planning outcomes, solutions and actions that seek to ensure achievement of the vision should be prepared. Hinterland towns are the economic and community hubs of activity for the rural areas, therefore creating and enhancing vibrant, attractive and well functioning town centres should help ensuring strong, sustainable rural communities.

Eco-Tourism Planning
The previous Noosa Council commenced a planning project on ecotourism. It sought to advance the development of a Rural Precinct Plan to facilitate ecologically sustainable tourism in rural areas. The Rural Precinct Plan would allow for specific land use and subdivision controls that vary from generic regulations within the SEQ Regional Plan. This project is currently on hold pending further decisions on Rural Futures, but could quite easily be rolled out across the whole Sunshine Coast.

As part of the project, an assessment has been done of the existing nature-based and rural-based tourism sector. It has revealed a number of challenges for the industry, some of which are directly related to Council policy.

It’s also become apparent that there has been a lack of industry development for the Sunshine Coast’s tourism industry, and while efforts are being made to market the region as a destination there has been relatively little development or innovation in the industry.

**Floating Land**

Floating Land is a biennial site-specific sculpture symposium. The setting is at Lake Cootharaba, within the UNESCO Noosa Biosphere environment. Conceived in 2001, the 5th Floating Land festival was held in June 2009. The Floating Land has gained national and international recognition for nurturing art and environment themes.

**Growing Rural Business Enterprises**

Aimed at empowering small businesses to creatively manage and respond to challenges. The project has special provision to target rural Hinterland located businesses. Programme delivery is via a combination of virtual classroom delivery utilising Wimba technology, face to face workshops, and cluster mentor sessions offered in coastal and rural based locations, including the Hinterland Business Centre at Maleny. Partnership contributions include in-kind industry commitments, a $271,000 Australian Government BESB grant, and local government contribution of $45,000.

The programme offers 100 businesses quality training and mentoring. Growing Creative Business commenced February 2008 and is scheduled to conclude June 2009. TRAC Consulting has been engaged to deliver the training. As at December 2008, 77 businesses have been linked to 35 trained mentors 27 of these are rural located businesses. The final intake will occur February 2009 with rural Hinterland and Nambour businesses as the main target market audience.

**Hinterland Library Branches**

Library services are provided at Beerwah, Kenilworth, Nambour, Maleny, with a mobile service visiting hinterland locations. Hinterland Programs and Services are varied and include storytelling, school holiday activities, free JP’s (Maleny and Beerwah), book clubs, bulk loans services to aged care facilities, genealogy collections, free computer lessons (Nambour, Maleny and Beerwah) and learn online resources, Carebus visit to Nambour (periodically) – providing free information on health issues, respite care, disabilities etc, internet access, and many more.

**Sunshine Coast Rural Wireless, Noosa Clever Networks and Connecting the Coast**

Sunshine Coast Rural Wireless will allow broadband accessibility for all across the rural hinterland, provide the ability for online training accessibility, provide high speed access to online services such as health provision, community consultation and governmental support programs, provide equality of access of digital technology to the rural areas as currently exists in the urban areas.
The project will link with the existing Connecting the Coast program to provide access to high speed broadband internet access which will improve business efficiency and effectiveness, access for training and skills improvement as well as the potential to improve accessibility to health provision. The Sunshine Coast Regional Council has the capacity to build a rural wireless network to almost 100% of the local government area (including some adjoining areas), having delivered Broadband access as part of the “Connecting the Coast Project” Federally funded under the Clever Networks ISD Program. Council has all the necessary partnerships in place to complete the roll out of wireless broadband to the rural areas. Refer www.connectingthecoast.com.au for further information on the urban rollout of a broadband solution for the Sunshine Coast.

Rural Capital Works Projects
There is an extensive Rural Capital Works program within the 2008/09 and 2009/10 financial years. A listed 290 projects were provided to inform this background paper. The capital works program supports all of the overall values and functions of the rural areas from adding value to the scenic amenities of the Glasshouse Mountains to ensuring that the rural areas have good vector control. Table 8 provides examples of projects being delivered or proposed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aquatic Centres and Caravan Parks</td>
<td>North Shore Caravan Park; upgrade of facilities and amenities</td>
<td>$1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Buildings and facilities</td>
<td>Mill Place Project Stage 2</td>
<td>$3.5 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water and Sewerage</td>
<td>Pomona (infill) sewerage renewal</td>
<td>$4.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and Parks (asset replacement)</td>
<td>Shade cover on local playground, Beerwah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape and Amenity</td>
<td>Landsborough Sportground Masterplan; Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve Masterplan Implementation.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Reserves</td>
<td>Vegetation protection improvements</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Development</td>
<td>Development of Sport and Recreation Infrastructure around Caloundra: Beerwah Sports Ground.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks Bushlands and Open Spaces</td>
<td>Muller Park. Bli Bli</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beach Access and Foreshores</td>
<td>Coochin Creek, Boat Ramp and trailer bay design, community consultation, associated permits and construction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master Plans</td>
<td>Maleny Streetscape – Maple Street, detailed design – stage 2</td>
<td>$387,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridge Management</td>
<td>Petrie Ck Roads replacement of existing timber bridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Road Infrastructure</td>
<td>Montville, Razorback Road -</td>
<td>$900,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Streetscapes</td>
<td>Maleny Streetscape, Maple St – stage 1</td>
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<td>TravelSmart</td>
<td>Cooroy development of a hinterland integrated transit centre to increase passenger numbers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waste Management</td>
<td>Construct Nambour Resource Recovery Centre</td>
<td>$2.6 million</td>
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</table>
9.0 Conclusion
This Background Study provides a sound grounding for the preparation of the Sunshine Coast Rural Futures Strategy. Whilst all efforts have been made to include detailed information as requested, some data was not available at the required accuracy. This is a reflection of the general lack of information relating to rural areas and activities. Despite this, the information included in this paper is sufficient to meet the objectives of the project and inform the vision, principles and implementation actions within the Strategy.

In reviewing the key issues, opportunities and constraints of the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast, 8 key focus areas have emerged:

(1) Building Rural Communities
(2) Sunshine Coast Food
(3) Healthy Rural Landscape
(4) Rural Production
(5) Rural Tourism
(6) Business Development, Innovation and Retention
(7) Information and Communication
(8) Governance

Development of the Rural Futures Strategy needs to recognise Council’s particular role in guiding and facilitating the future of the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast. To achieve the outcomes of the Strategy, further development of partnerships with public and private stakeholders will be critical, particularly landholders, businesses and the general community, and service providers such as the State Government and industry bodies.

A coordinated approach within Council will also be crucial to achieve the outcomes of the Strategy, and ensure its implementation will be timely and effective. In particular, although the breadth and depth of projects across the Council is strong, there is opportunity to remove replication of activities and improve efficiencies and outputs. There are opportunities to undertake actions immediately to produce benefits for the rural areas, as well as medium- and long-term actions to help guide the development of the rural areas and community into the future.

Analysis of the past, current and proposed activities by Council indicates opportunities for quick deliverables. Some of these have already gained substantial industry support, whilst others would be expansion of previous projects. There are also immediate opportunities to obtain and disseminate information to assist rural businesses and activities.
Unless indicated otherwise, the data provided in this document was sourced from the following locations:

ABS, Regional Population Growth, ABS Catalogue No. 3218.0
Department of Infrastructure & Planning - Population & Housing Fact Sheet October 2007.

Disclaimer: While every care has been taken in preparing these population projections, Sunshine Coast Regional Council accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of this data.
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1 Background

The rural part of the Sunshine Coast generally includes the following Statistical Local Areas:

- Noosa Balance
- Paynter-Petrie Creek;
- Maroochy Balance;
- Caloundra Hinterland; and
- Caloundra Rail Corridor;

These SLA’s do however include a number of sizable towns which are within the urban footprint, as defined by the SEQ Regional Plan. These towns are Cooran; Cooroy; Pomona; Bli Bli; Eumundi; Kenilworth; Mapleton; Palmwoods; Yandina; Mooloolah; Maleny; Glasshouse Mountains; Landsborough; Beerwah and Beerburrum. These towns form the service centres and in some cases the employment nodes for the rural area and some are projected to grow quite significantly.

The Statistical Areas Map on the following page shows these 5 Statistical Local Areas and overlays the Urban Footprint and Rural Living Areas of the SEQ Regional Plan over the top. This is designed to highlight where the hinterland towns are and where they may extend to by 2031. As can also be noticed some of the smaller rural villages such as Kin Kin and Conondale are not included in the Urban Footprint.

The total rural area comprises approximately 279,243ha, which corresponds to 89% of the Sunshine Coast’s total land area. In general, all but the coastal urban stretch between Tewantin and Caloundra South, as well as Nambour, is included.

This profile

- provides an insight into the social construction of the Sunshine Coast’s rural population in terms of age, family make-up, housing, income and employment;
- aids in the production of an integrated rural planning framework for the region to support and facilitate rural growth and change; and
- informs the Rural Futures Strategy, the new Planning Scheme for the region, and supports other projects that involve the rural areas of the region
2 Residential Population

2.1 Numbers

The Sunshine Coast rural areas had a combined estimated total population of 72,900 residents in 2001, increasing to 81,960 residents in 2006\(^1\) (refer to Figure 1). While the Sunshine Coast population as a whole increased by a total of 17.1\% over this period, the rural area increased by 12.4\%. This equates to an annual increase of 3.2\% and 2.4\% respectively.

In 2006, the Sunshine Coast rural areas contained approximately 28\% of the Sunshine Coast's total population, with a population density of 29 people per square kilometre\(^2\). The corresponding population density for the entire Sunshine Coast was 94 people per square kilometre.

Within the rural areas, it can be seen from Figure 3 that Maroochy Balance contains the highest population. However Figure 2 shows that from 2001 to 2006, the biggest change in population was in the Noosa Balance area (basically the Noosa Hinterland).

While the urban coastal areas of the Sunshine Coast have been experiencing some of the highest increases in population in the South East Queensland region over the last decade, the rural areas have witnessed their own (albeit smaller) increases. These changes are still significant in planning for the area.

\(^1\) If the urban areas of Cooran, Cooroy, Pomona, Bli Bli, Eumundi, Kenilworth, Mapleton, Palmwoods, Yandina, Mooloolah, Maleny, Glasshouse Mountains, Landsborough, Beerwah and Beerburrum are removed from these figures they drop to 56,697 in 2001 and 57,921 in 2006.

\(^2\) Excluding the urban areas of Cooran, Cooroy, Pomona Bli Bli, Eumundi, Kenilworth, Mapleton, Palmwoods, Yandina, Mooloolah, Maleny, Glasshouse Mountains, Landsborough, Beerwah and Beerburrum, the rural area contained approximately 20\% of the total population, with a population density of 21 people per square kilometre.
Figure 1 - Population Comparison, 2001-2006

![Population Comparison Graph]

Figure 2 - Population Percentage Change, 2001-2006

![Population Percentage Change Graph]
2.2 Age Profile

The median age of the rural area was 37 years old in 2001, increasing to 40 years by 2006. These figures are comparable to those of the overall Sunshine Coast. In Figure 4, the proportion of each age group of the rural areas population is shown. The three largest age groups represented in the rural areas fall into the age range 35-54 years and those 5-14 years (presumably their children). Retirees (that is, those 65 years or over) also make up a significant proportion of the overall population, at 13% of the rural population. “Pre-retirees” (those 55-64 years old) and retirees (those 65 years or over also make up a significant proportion of the overall population, at 14% and 13% of the rural population.

Figure 4 - Rural Age Distribution 2006
From Figure 5 it can be seen that every age group increased in population from 2001 to 2006, with the exception of the 25-34 year olds, which showed a minimal decrease. The age groups that showed the largest increase in population from 2001-2006 were those between 55 and 64 years of age, and those 65 years and over. In comparison, while all age groups in the overall Sunshine Coast increased between 2001 and 2006 (refer to Figure 6), the biggest increases were the 55-64 year olds (33.9%) and the 20-24 year olds (25.3%). Figure 7 shows the overall percentage change in population structure in the rural area from 2001 to 2006.

In comparing the various SLAs within the Sunshine Coast rural area, in 2006, the northern part of the region had higher proportions of people in the 45 to 64 year age groups, and lower proportions in the 20 to 24 year age group. At the same time, the southern part of the region had a lower proportion of people in the 15-19 year old group and the 35 to 54 year age group and high numbers of 55+ year olds compared to the other SLAs, while the central part of the region had a lower proportion of people in the 0 to 14 year age group. Caloundra Rail SLA had high numbers of 25-34 year olds.

In parallel with investigations into other communities of a similar structure to that of the Sunshine Coast rural areas, the emerging trend portrays a reduction in the population of “young families” (i.e. age groups between 0-14 and 25-44) in the rural population, and an increase in the older age groups (i.e. 45+).

**Figure 5 - Rural Age Distribution, 2001-2006**

![Figure 5 - Rural Age Distribution, 2001-2006](image)
Figure 6 - Sunshine Coast Age Distribution, 2001-2006

Figure 7 - Rural Population Percentage Changes, 2001-2006
3 Household & Family Structure

3.1 Size and Type of Households

The rural median household size was 2.6 people per household in 2006, equivalent to the overall Sunshine Coast median household size. In 2006, the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast had an estimated 29,522 households — an increase of 13.2% or 3,454 households from 2001. It can be seen from Table 1 below that, in 2006, 78% of the households comprised family and 22% comprised non-family households (i.e. lone person and group households). From 2001 to 2006, the number of family households increased by 12% or 2467 households; and the number of non-family households increased 18% or 987 households.

Table 1 - Sunshine Coast Rural Households, 2001-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of H'holds</td>
<td>% of H'holds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family household</td>
<td>20,414</td>
<td>78.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-family household</td>
<td>5,654</td>
<td>21.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26,068</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In considering the rural family households, Figure 8 displays the proportion of each type of family in 2006. It can be seen that in the 5 years between 2001 and 2006, there was very little change in the dominant household form. However, it is interesting to note that over this period those households across the Sunshine Coast that class themselves as ‘couple families without children’ became the majority household type, replacing the previous most common household form of ‘couple families with children’. This change was not experienced in the rural area – the dominant household type remained as those households that class themselves as ‘couple families with children’, although this is expected to reverse between 2006 and 2011, following the overall Sunshine Coast (and national) trend.

It is interesting to point out that in comparing the various rural areas of the region, the Caloundra Hinterland had a significantly lower percentage of family households, and a corresponding higher percentage of non-family (lone person and group) households. All other SLAs displayed approximately equal quantities.

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3 If the urban areas of Cooran, Cooroy, Pomona Bli Bli, Eumundi, Kenilworth, Mapleton, Palmwoods, Yandina, Mooloolah, Maleny, Glasshouse Mountains, Landsborough, Beerwah and Beerburrum are removed from these figures they drop to 20,250 households in 2006 and 20,054 households in 2001.
Figure 8 - Rural Family Characteristics, 2001 & 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple families w/ children</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple families w/out children</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent families</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other families</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Dwellings and Occupancy Rates

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of dwellings in the Sunshine Coast rural areas increased from 26,924 to 29,522 dwellings (or 9.6%). In Figure 9, the proportion of each dwelling structure is shown and indicates that the overwhelming dwelling type is separate houses (92.9%). In comparison to the Sunshine Coast, the rural area had a higher proportion of houses and a smaller proportion of units, townhouses and other dwellings in 2006. In addition, the movement habits of the rural areas were roughly comparable to those of the Sunshine Coast as a whole (approximately 76% of residents at the same address 1 year ago, and 46% at the same address 5 years ago).

Finally, there has been very little change in the occupancy rate of dwellings in the rural area. While the overall occupancy rate remains at 2.6, there has been a small increase in the number of 2 person households, and a corresponding very small decrease in all other sized households.
Figure 9 - Dwelling Types - Rural and Sunshine Coast Comparison 2006

Figure 10 - Dwelling Type - Percentage Change Rural and Sunshine Coast 2001-2006
Figure 11 - Occupancy Rate, 2006

The diagram above shows the occupancy rate of people in different categories in 2006, compared to 2001. The average occupancy rate is 2.5.

- One: 15.00%
- Two: 40.00%
- Three: 15.00%
- Four: 15.00%
- Five: 5.00%
- Six or more: 0.00%

The occupancy rate in 2006 is significantly higher than in 2001, with a notable increase in the occupancy of two-bedroom units.
4 Housing Tenure & Cost

4.1 Owning and Renting

Between 2001 and 2006, there was a significant change in the tenure status related to dwellings in the rural area. While in 2001 the most common tenure form in the rural area was fully owned dwellings (44.8%), followed by those being purchased (29.3%), in 2006 these percentages had balanced out to 38.5% fully owned and 38.8% being purchased. Hence, as seen in Figure 11, there was an increase in the number of dwellings being purchased and a decrease in the number of dwellings which were fully owned.

Figure 12 Rural Areas dwelling Tenure change 2002 -2006
As seen in Figure 13, in comparison to the Sunshine Coast, in 2006 the rural area had a higher proportion of people who fully owned or were purchasing dwellings, and a significantly lower proportion of residents who were renting.

Comparing rural SLA subregions across the Sunshine Coast in 2006, the Caloundra Hinterland area had a higher percentage of fully owned dwellings (and a corresponding lower percentage of dwellings being purchased) than the other SLAs. Conversely, Caloundra Rail had a lower percentage of fully owned dwellings and a higher percentage of dwellings being purchased, compared to the other rural SLAs. The percentage of dwellings being rented was approximately equivalent across the 5 rural SLAs.
The reason for the increase in the number of people who are purchasing dwellings in the rural area is most likely due to a combination of factors. However, factors such as the lower cost of housing (compared to the coastal locations), the (at the time) easy access to credit, and the changing demographics of the rural areas would be considered the most influential.

4.2 The Cost of Housing

Between 2001 and 2006, the average monthly mortgage repayment in the rural area grew from $820 to approximately $1,200 (an increase of over 46%). Over the same period, the average monthly mortgage repayment across the entire Sunshine Coast grew from approximately $870 to approximately $1,300 (an increase of over 49%).

Table 2- Rural Area and Sunshine Coast housing costs, 2001-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural Area</th>
<th></th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Sunshine Coast</th>
<th></th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent/week</td>
<td>$165</td>
<td>$210</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>$160</td>
<td>$245</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average mortgage repayment/month</td>
<td>$820</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>$870</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The equivalent rental payments for the rural area were $165 in 2001, increasing to $210 in 2006 (an increase of 27.3%). The Sunshine Coast figures were $160 and $245 respectively (an increase of 53.1%).
5 Income & Employment

5.1 Average Incomes

The median individual, household and family incomes for 2001 and 2006 are shown in Table 3 and Figure 15 for both the rural area and the Sunshine Coast region. Overall, the average rural area incomes are slightly lower than the corresponding average incomes across the Sunshine Coast as a whole.

Table 3 - Rural Area and Sunshine Coast median incomes, 2001-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>2001 Rural</th>
<th>2001 Sunshine Coast</th>
<th>2006 Rural</th>
<th>2006 Sunshine Coast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>$689</td>
<td>$722</td>
<td>$1,024</td>
<td>$1,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>$616</td>
<td>$640</td>
<td>$889</td>
<td>$895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$317</td>
<td>$313</td>
<td>$406</td>
<td>$426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15 - Median Weekly Incomes Comparison - Rural Area and Sunshine Coast 2006

However, when comparing changes in income between 2001 and 2006, the greatest increase was experienced by family incomes in the rural area (48.6%), while the smallest increase was experienced by individuals in the rural area (28.1%).
In addition, when comparing the 5 SLAs that comprise the rural area, some differences can be observed. Both the Maroochy Balance and Paynter-Petrie Creek SLA residents consistently experience incomes that are slightly higher than the overall rural average, while Noosa Balance and Caloundra Hinterland residents experience incomes that are slightly lower than the overall rural average.

5.2 The Workforce Population

In 2006 in the rural area, over half of the residents classed themselves as not in the labour force (52%). In addition, almost 36% (15,732 people) were employed either full time or part time. This compares to corresponding figures of 38% and 52% for the Sunshine Coast region in general (see Figure 17).

Figure 16 - Labour Force - Rural Area and Sunshine Coast Comparison, 2006 -
The rural area labour figures were significantly altered from those recorded in 2001. As can be seen from Figure 17, between 2001 and 2006 there was a large increase in the percentage of residents that moved from being employed to being no longer in the work force. However, over the same period, there was only a small decrease in the unemployment figure (6.2% down to 4.7%). The unemployment figures for the rural area are comparable to those for the Sunshine Coast overall over the same period.

A study of the labour force status of different age groups within the rural area produces no significant anomalies – the number of residents employed decreases rapidly after the age of 55 years, and this is paralleled by a corresponding rapid increase in those residents no longer in the labour force for the same age group. A similar but reduced level is displayed by those residents in the 15-19 year age bracket.

The figures experienced on the Sunshine Coast (both overall and specifically in the rural areas) follow trends witnessed in similar communities around Australia. Ignoring the state of the economy at any specific point in time, it is believed that it is the changing demographics in Australia, with the large baby boomer generation moving through the various life cycles (refer to Figure 4) that has one of the largest effects on issues such as employment rates. Over the next ten to twenty years, the number of the baby boomer generation moving into retirement will increase rapidly. Hence, while there is currently a large and mature workforce at the country’s disposal, this will begin to change as more people move into the ‘not in the labour force’ category, and proportionally less people are positioned in the ‘employed/looking for employment’ categories. How this will impact on the rural areas of the Sunshine Coast is yet to be fully investigated.

5.3 Industries and Occupations

In 2006, the top three industries in the rural areas, with respect to employment numbers, were construction (approximately 10.8% of total rural employment), retail trade (9.6%) and health care and social assistance (7.8%). In 2001, the top three industries were retail trade (13.6%) followed by manufacturing (9.8%) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (9.2%).

While the rural area shared the same three top industries as the Sunshine Coast in 2006, their ranking was different. For the Sunshine Coast in general, retail trade was positioned as the top industry (13.9%), followed by construction (12.5%) and health care and social assistance (11.1%). The rural area hence displayed a lower proportion of people working in all three top industries. However, there was little difference between the Sunshine Coast in general and the rural area with respect to the range of industries supported.
The most common occupations in the rural areas in 2006 were technicians and tradespersons (17.2% of working residents), professionals (15.8%) and labourers (13.8%). In 2001, while professionals and tradespersons were the top two occupations of working rural residents, the third most common occupation was clerical, sales and service workers.

In comparison to the Sunshine Coast, there were only minor differences in occupation percentage spread. The rural area contained a slightly higher percentage of labourers, technicians and tradespersons, while the Sunshine Coast in general contained slightly more professional, clerical and sales workers (refer to Figure 18).
6 Future Population Projections

Although the Sunshine Coast has experienced strong population growth over the last decade, the great majority of this growth has been centred on the coastal urban areas. The rural areas as defined in this profile have shown relatively little growth over this period, and future growth will be focused in urban areas, including the hinterland towns, particularly those included in the Urban Footprint.

In order to build up a future population forecast, many assumptions need to be made. In the case of the rural areas, the basic assumption is that growth will continue at a similar slow rate as has been evident to date. The forecast population of the rural areas (outside of the hinterland towns of Cooran; Cooroy; Pomona; Bli Bli; Eumundi; Kenilworth; Mapleton; Palmwoods; Yandina; Mooloolah; Maleny; Glasshouse Mountains; Landsborough; Beerwah; and Beerburrum) is as per Table 4. It shows that while the population in 2006 was estimated as 57,921 people, by 2026, this is forecast to grow to 62,817 – an annual increase of 0.4%. The slow rate is partly a result of the SEQ Regional Plan, which effectively stopped rural subdivisions.

### Table 4 Forecast Population – Rural areas 2006-2026

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>3,290</td>
<td>3,093</td>
<td>2,886</td>
<td>2,667</td>
<td>2,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>9,069</td>
<td>8,381</td>
<td>7,655</td>
<td>6,892</td>
<td>6,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>3,892</td>
<td>4,010</td>
<td>4,129</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>4,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>1,863</td>
<td>1,823</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>1,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>4,852</td>
<td>3,933</td>
<td>2,970</td>
<td>1,965</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>8,961</td>
<td>8,416</td>
<td>7,842</td>
<td>7,237</td>
<td>6,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>10,081</td>
<td>10,965</td>
<td>11,881</td>
<td>12,824</td>
<td>13,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>8,839</td>
<td>10,867</td>
<td>12,971</td>
<td>15,151</td>
<td>17,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>7,038</td>
<td>7,618</td>
<td>8,216</td>
<td>8,832</td>
<td>9,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57,921</td>
<td>59,145</td>
<td>60,369</td>
<td>61,593</td>
<td>62,817</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparison, the total population forecasts for the 5 rural SLA’s at 2026 is 133,213 persons. So the towns of Cooran; Cooroy; Pomona; Bli Bli; Eumundi; Kenilworth; Mapleton; Palmwoods; Yandina; Mooloolah; Maleny; Glasshouse Mountains; Landsborough; Beerwah and Beerburrum will clearly account for more than half of the hinterland population by then. Growth within the towns will be more substantial and will depend on the planning scheme provisions.

The SLAs of Caloundra Hinterland and Noosa Balance are expected to have particularly low levels of growth with only 3,031 and 3,214 persons respectively projected to be added between 2006 and 2026. Paynter-Petrie Creek (which takes in the towns of Bli Bli and Palmwoods) is also expected to have relatively low growth, projected to be 8,289 for the same 20 year period. Caloundra Rail Corridor, which
takes in the expanding towns of Beerwah, Landsborough, Glasshouse Mountains and Beerburrum, is expected to accommodate an additional 13,510 people between 2006 and 2026. Maroochy Balance, which takes in the towns of Eumundi, Yandina, Mapleton and Montville as well as significant rural living around these towns, currently has the highest population of these SLAs and is likewise anticipated to have the highest growth of 18,260 persons over the 20 years from 2006 to 2026.

The projected aging of the population is quite noteworthy. For each of the five SLAs mentioned above the most significant projected growth is in the age groups over 45 years of age. Of equal note is the fact that in some of these SLAs the projected change in the younger age groups are in negative numbers. That is, the number of children and young adults is actually projected to decrease despite the overall population increasing.

In terms of development it is predicted that for the SLAs of Caloundra Hinterland and Caloundra Rail Corridor, growth may be slightly slower with the higher proportion of new dwellings likely in the 2016-2026 period, while for the other rural SLAs in the central and northern part of the region the higher proportions of new dwellings are forecast for the 2006-2016 period.