

Cooperatives Alliance

Postal Address:

PO Box 486, LISMORE NSW 2480



Thursday, 2 June 2016

Director Regions
Northern
Locked Bag 9022
GRAFTON NSW 2460

Dear Sir / Madam

SUBMISSION TO DRAFT NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN

The Cooperatives Alliance ('Alliance') welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Draft North Coast Regional Plan.

The Alliance represents the interests of several major co-operative and mutual organisations. The region within which the Alliance operates and draws member organisations from is based on the Tweed, Byron, Ballina, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour Local Government Areas. In fact three co-operative members and one mutual member have their primary places of business either in Lismore or within 40 kilometres of Lismore by road. One further co-operative member is based on the Clarence River, north of Grafton. This concentration of substantial member-owned businesses within a small radius is quite unique. The Alliance represents combined turnover of more than \$850 million, a membership base of over 26,000 members and employs 1,800 people locally.

The objective of the Alliance is to improve productivity in the Alliance region and to create more jobs, improve infrastructure, create pathways and remove obstacles so that business can thrive and prosper in the region so that current and future generations can see a future and remain in the region through effective job creation. A further objective of the Alliance is to espouse the benefits of being associated with a co-operative or mutual and the values that set us apart from other corporate structures, one such value being our concern for the communities in which we operate in.

This submission is written in support of the combined submission made by the Kyogle, Lismore City and Richmond Valley Shire Councils and so focuses on recognising Lismore as a Regional City.

As mentioned earlier, the Alliance has three co-operative members and one mutual member that are based either in Lismore or within 40 kilometres of Lismore by road. Lismore needs to be recognised as a Regional City to ensure that these strong, vibrant and very successful member owned businesses and the people who rely on their success have a secured future.

Designating Lismore as a Regional City will ensure that essential services and infrastructure are maintained and improved over time which fits with the important role Lismore already plays as a hub for the Northern Rivers in terms of providing a wide range of government, professional, retail, educational, agribusiness and industrial services.

The Alliance does not want to see a lessened or stagnated role for Lismore in favour of Tweed Heads or Coffs Harbour (Lismore's closest Regional Cities to the north and south). It is somewhat impractical to think that these cities would be given the resources for future prosperity at the expense of Lismore. Are all regional centres (including Lismore) earmarked for decline because they are more than 30 kilometres from the coast? There needs to be a strong inland Regional City for the region. Alliance co-operatives such as Norco Co-operative Limited and the Northern Co-operative Meat Co rely not only on coastal road corridors but also on improving inland routes for their produce to get to markets and to customers. It is a real concern and a limiting business growth factor if inland areas are not sufficiently serviced by having a Regional City such as Lismore close by.

It is the view of the Alliance that the Government needs to focus on maintaining and improving the services and infrastructure that already exists in Lismore due to its present and past status as a major regional city. Surely the Government would not want to spend unnecessary duplicated funds to establish infrastructure in places such as Tweed Heads and Coffs Harbour when it already exists in Lismore. It seems to be more feasible and cost effective to maintain and improve what is already in place.

The Alliance values the role communities in and around Lismore have played in supporting Alliance businesses over many years. One of the principles that distinguish co-operatives and mutuals from other business structures is our concern for the community. The Alliance is concerned for the welfare of our towns and villages if a city such as Lismore does not receive a fair share of funding to boost and support employment growth. If young people leave towns such as Casino and Kyogle due to a lack of opportunities the Alliance fears they will not come back which severely impacts Alliance businesses from recruiting skilled local people into the future, in fact it puts in jeopardy the viability of some very strong businesses.

As Alliance Chairperson, I would be happy to talk to you in the event you have any questions or concerns regarding this submission. I can be contacted on mobile 0429 986 547.

Yours Sincerely,

COOPERATIVES ALLIANCE



GREG McNAMARA

Chairperson

The Cooperatives Alliance is comprised of the following member co-operatives and mutuals and valued stakeholder invitee organisations:

Northern Co-operative Meat Co Ltd

Norco Co-operative Ltd

Summerland Credit Union

Ballina Fishermens Co-op Ltd

Clarence River Fishermens Co-op Ltd

Southern Cross University

Regional Development Aust Northern Rivers

Thomas Noble & Russell

Avid Insurance Brokers