



Local Land  
Services  
Northern Tablelands

# Local Strategic Plan 2016-2021





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Northern Tablelands Local Strategic Plan

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# Acknowledgement of Country

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services acknowledges the Aboriginal people residing within our region. We acknowledge the Aboriginal nations of Kamilaroi, Anaiwan, Ngoorabul, Banbai, Thungutti, Bundjalung, Gumbainggir and the various Aboriginal tribes and language groups within those nations. We take this opportunity to pay our respects to Elders past and present as well as acknowledging the future Aboriginal leaders of those nations.

## Expressions of intent from Aboriginal members of the community

Aboriginal people welcome the relationships being forged within the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services region, and look forward to strengthening relationships with community and government agencies. Connection to the land is of great importance to Aboriginal people, and is expressed through social, physical and spiritual lore. It is important for Aboriginal people to get back “On Country” to practice traditional knowledge obtained from their Elders, that can be passed onto future generations, utilising both traditional as well as modern techniques. In implementing the Local Strategic Plan, Aboriginal people are looking forward to sharing their knowledge, as respected contributors in all aspects of land management.



# Minister's foreword

**The Hon Niall Blair MLC**

**Minister for Primary Industries**

**Minister for Land and Water**

The Local Land Services State Strategic Plan was developed in partnership with land managers and the community to set a clear path for assisting rural and regional communities to be resilient, productive, profitable and sustainable.

Together with the 11 local strategic plans nested under it, the 10-year State Strategic Plan sets the long-term agenda for Local Land Services at both the state and local levels.

These plans define the priorities of the organisation and outline the way services will be delivered to build resilient communities, meet local needs and contribute to state-level priorities.

All plans have been developed with extensive community consultation, emphasising the importance of having farmers, land managers and community members at the heart of decision making.

Local Land Services represents a fundamental shift in the way advice, services and assistance are provided. When it comes to decision making, this model is underpinned by local involvement and accountability, with a strong customer focus at its core.

Using the best available science and support, delivered by experienced and knowledgeable staff, the organisation works in partnership with passionate and committed land managers and community members to deliver balanced social, economic and environmental results.

The strategies outlined in this suite of plans provide a clear and consistent direction across NSW to make the most of current opportunities and guide delivery of the most relevant programs and initiatives to support producers and communities across the state.



## Chair's foreword

**Hans Hietbrink**

**Chair, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services**

The Northern Tablelands Local Land Services Local Strategic Plan balances the requirements and ambition of the Northern Tablelands region with the overall direction of Local Land Services at a state level. It also efficiently integrates the business systems and functions of the organisation at a regional level.



It is a five-year plan that identifies priorities and strategies to guide the delivery of actions that will improve economic, social and environmental outcomes on the Northern Tablelands.

Local Land Services is a developing organisation with a range of skill sets and cultures. While it is important to build on the successes of the past, it is also important to consider the future and how and where we want to be - not just as an organisation but also as a region.

We have the highest livestock carrying capacity in NSW, with the most cattle and the fourth highest number of sheep of any Local Land Services region in NSW. We are stewards of the headwaters of major river catchments flowing to the coast and the Murray Darling Basin. This means that actions in our part of NSW can have flow on effects in other regions and industries. We, therefore, need to ensure our actions have positive impacts on industry and the environment.

This plan outlines the way we do business. It sets out how we make decisions locally and how we deliver value-for-money services, based on the needs of our customers, stakeholders and investors. It sets goals and holds us accountable for positive outcomes.

Importantly, the Local Strategic Plan emphasises the strength in partnerships with grass roots organisations driven by local people. Additionally we continue to promote a whole of government approach to the delivery of services and partnerships.

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services will be here when it matters for agriculture, the environment and people. An erratic climate and competing social, environmental and economic demands add complexity to the task. The Local Strategic Plan aims to foster the resilience in our people and our landscape to tackle these challenges and ensure a thriving economy, resilient community and a healthy and productive landscape.

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services is always keen to hear local issues and needs so that we can work on solutions together. We have offices in Armidale, Inverell, Glen Innes and Tenterfield and our doors are always open to new ideas and input that will be beneficial to our region.

# Intent of the plan

## Introduction

The State Strategic Plan sets the vision and goals for Local Land Services for the next ten years and outlines the strategies through which these goals will be achieved. The five-year Northern Tablelands Local Strategic Plan contributes to these goals through the alignment of local initiatives to the State direction, tailored to the specific needs of our region.

The Local Strategic Plan shows how business systems, functions and services of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services integrate to provide value for money for our customers, stakeholders and investors. A series of performance indicators provide guidance on what success will look like and how investors and stakeholders will be able to measure our performance.

Success will be driven by local decision making and service delivery supported by a transparent, responsive and accountable local board. This will be combined with the benefits of greater consistency, leverage and more effective use of resources stemming from being part of one organisation.

## Previous and future services

Local Land Services consolidates the operations of 27 formerly separate entities into one NSW Government agency under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. Local Land Services progresses the functions of the former Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, Catchment Management Authorities and extension elements of the Department of Primary Industries into an improved frontline customer service in agriculture, environment, biosecurity and emergency management.

## Local delivery and decision making

Local decision making and accountability are the foundation of Local Land Services planning and operations. Northern Tablelands is one of 11 local regions responsible for service delivery and local strategies.

The local Strategic Plan describes how Northern Tablelands Local Land Services will do business. It provides a framework for how we will deploy our resources in a transparent and responsible manner and describes how Northern Tablelands Local Land Services will deliver services to address State and local priorities.

## Governance, transparency and reporting

Local Land Services is in the business of creating value for its customers, investors and stakeholders. A key component of the strategy is to increase our focus on customer service and report to investors and stakeholders on performance and customer satisfaction more effectively. Transparent evaluation and reporting underpins the implementation of the strategy and is integral to how Local Land Services will work for and with its investors and customers.



In addition to our own reporting processes, our performance will be independently audited on a regular basis by the Natural Resources Commission through the Performance Standard for Local Land Services. Reports from this process are made public and this provides additional assurance that Local Land Services will deliver quality outcomes for investors, stakeholders, customers and communities.

## Strategic direction

The State and Local Strategic Plans are consistent with the *Local Land Services Act 2013* which requires the development of State and Local Strategic Plans which set the vision, priorities and overarching strategy for Local Land Services with a focus on appropriate economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*, the State and Local Strategic Plans must have regard to:

- any State priorities for Local Land Services
- the provisions of any environmental planning instrument under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- any other existing natural resource management plans
- sound evidence-based practices to support primary industries, resilient communities and healthy landscapes
- the need for engagement of the community, including the Aboriginal community.

State and local alignment is an essential part of the Local Land Services model, where strong, highly devolved, local delivery is balanced with the benefits and resources of being part of a single, larger organisation.

The State and Local Strategic Plans also reflect best practice strategic planning and delivery. For Local Land Services, this means the plans are simple, aspirational and evidence based while addressing investor preferences and the requirements of the Performance Standard for Local Land Services, putting the customer at the centre of the organisation.



## About Local Land Services

Local Land Services was established under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* to provide quality, customer-focused services to landholders and the community across New South Wales.

We work with land managers and the community to improve primary production within healthy landscapes and assist rural and regional communities to be profitable and sustainable into the future.

We provide primary production advice, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency management functions through 11 local regions (Figure 1), around 800 staff and a budget of approximately \$175 million.

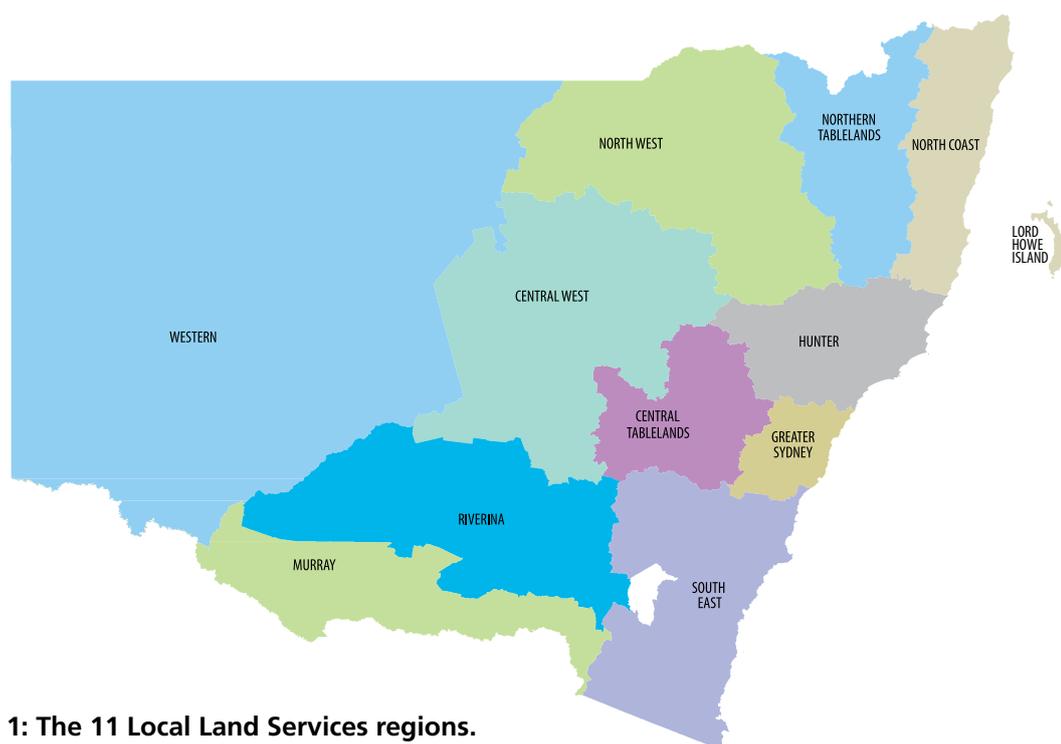
The State Strategic Plan sets the overarching strategy for the whole organisation.

Local Land Services is governed by the Board of Chairs, which has an independent chair and the chairs of the 11 local boards. The Board of Chairs is responsible for Local Land Services' strategy, governance and organisational oversight and reports directly to the Minister for Primary Industries.

Local regions are in charge of providing all front line services. Each region has a local board that is responsible for corporate governance, approval of regionally appropriate programs, development of a local strategic plan and budgets in line with local and state priorities, and communications and engagement with their local communities.

Regions vary in geographic and organisational size and approach their local priorities in different ways, which is why it is so important to be locally focused.

Local community advisory groups provide input into the development of plans, projects and services and are an integral link between Local Land Services and the community it serves.



**Figure 1: The 11 Local Land Services regions.**

## What we do

Local Land Services works with our customers, stakeholders and investors to:

- **Enable.** We provide resources, incentives, training, information and advice to build the capacity of our customers and stakeholders.
- **Provide assurance.** We actively work to protect NSW from invasive animal and plant species, and livestock and plant diseases that may damage landscapes, industries, markets and production.
- **Manage natural resources.** We work with communities to better manage our water, land, soil, vegetation, biodiversity and cultural heritage. This includes managing travelling stock reserves and areas of significance to Aboriginal communities.
- **Broker relationships.** We are a bridging organisation, connecting people, organisations, funding and information and facilitating productive collaborations and partnerships.
- **Share knowledge.** We provide a hub for the latest, independent scientific and other forms of knowledge about fully functioning and productive landscapes in NSW.
- **Play our part.** We work with other agencies to achieve whole of government results for the landscapes and people of NSW.

## Customers, stakeholders and investors

**Customers** Any land manager within the State, irrespective of whether they are private or public land managers, ratepayers or non-ratepayers.

**Stakeholders** Organisations that collaborate and partner with Local Land Services directly to support customer service delivery.

**Investors** Organisations and individuals who invest in Local Land Services and leverage outcomes from this investment.



# Vision, mission and values

The vision of Local Land Services demonstrates that the heart of Local Land Services is to strive to support local communities and the landscapes in which we live.

Our mission reflects our core operational focus – to be a quality service to people – enabling and supporting primary producers and land managers.

Our values demonstrate what is important in the culture of the Local Land Services team in the conduct of our public service responsibilities.

## Vision

Resilient communities in productive healthy landscapes

## Mission

To be a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources

## Values

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Accountability | Performance |
| Collaboration  | Service     |
| Innovation     | Trust       |
| Integrity      |             |



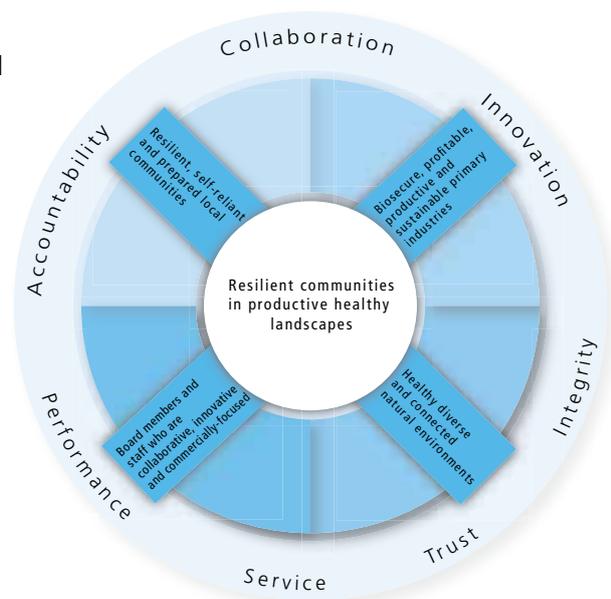
# The Local Land Services Strategy

The State Strategic Plan and the Northern Tablelands Local Strategic Plan will assist Northern Tablelands Local Land Services achieve its vision of resilient communities in productive healthy landscapes (Figure 2).

To achieve this vision, Local Land Services needs to align all of its work with its mission of being a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources.

This will see four goals pursued.

- Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities.
- Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries.
- Healthy, diverse and connected natural environments.
- Board members and staff who are collaborative, innovative and commercially focused.



**Figure 2: An overview of Local Land Services' vision, goals and values.**

This strategic approach is designed to deliver products and services that achieve triple bottom line results at the property, community, landscape and industry scales through the improved management of biosecurity, natural resources, agricultural productivity and emergency management. These products and services will be tailored to meet local needs.

It also gives Northern Tablelands Local Land Services the agility and responsiveness to meet the needs of external investors and other stakeholders and address state and national priorities. This includes the development and implementation of a range of partnerships with key organisations at state and local level.

Local Land Services will continue to work to develop a values-based culture with people who are engaged, accountable and add value to our customers. In line with the organisation's commitment to build on the past and implement the Performance Standard for Local Land Services, our strategy will be reinforced by continuous improvement processes which will improve our strategies, culture, products, services, processes and outcomes over time.

## The Northern Tablelands region

The Northern Tablelands Local Land Services region is situated in northern inland New South Wales. The region has a diverse climate, ranging from temperate to sub-tropical, with considerable differences in climate between the east and the west, and great variety in its landforms, hydrology, vegetation, and soils. Natural resources and land use in the region reflect climatic and geographic influences. Grazing predominates as the agricultural land use, with cropping occurring in the north-west of the region. Mixed farming, horticulture, viticulture and other agricultural enterprises add to the regional diversity. The east of the Northern Tablelands is characterised by significant areas of public land, established for conservation. Major industries and town viability are focused around agricultural production.

### *Regional risks and emerging issues*

Maintaining or improving soil health, fertility and groundcover to support livestock, cropping and other industries is central to maintaining a resilient region. Finding a balance between profitable agricultural production and the maintenance or improvement of natural ecosystems is a major challenge.

Climate variability, and the projected impacts from climate change, means that droughts and extreme rainfall events are likely to be more common occurrences in the near and distant future. Providing the tools and skills for the community to buffer against these impacts via extension, training and emergency management capabilities, is central to the delivery of the Local Strategic Plan.

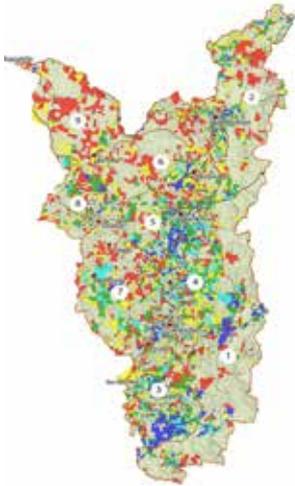
Our connection to Queensland, the coast and the plains means that the Northern Tablelands region is at risk of the introduction and export of animal pest and diseases and plant pest and diseases through the movement of livestock, commodities and other goods. Surveillance and reporting of plant and animal pests and diseases must be maintained and improved through strategic actions.

With 47,000 hectares of Travelling Stock Reserves in a high livestock production landscape, the ongoing management of this public asset for the prescribed legislative uses will be an ongoing concern while there is limited funding.

Our region has a high incidence of vertebrate pests impacting on the agricultural sector and environment. Impacts from feral pigs, wild rabbits, the widespread European red fox and emerging threats such as wild deer, require active and coordinated management. Predation from wild dogs continues to have social and agricultural impacts and wild dog management will continue to be a key business undertaking for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.

Nine socio-ecological landscapes – areas distinguished by their unique integration of biophysical and socio-economic characteristics, have been identified for the Northern Tablelands region as a planning tool to assist in regional response to these issues.

## Regional profile



**Top:** Cattle per rateable hectare  
**Centre:** Native vegetation priorities  
**Bottom:** Townships on the Northern Tablelands

### AGRICULTURE

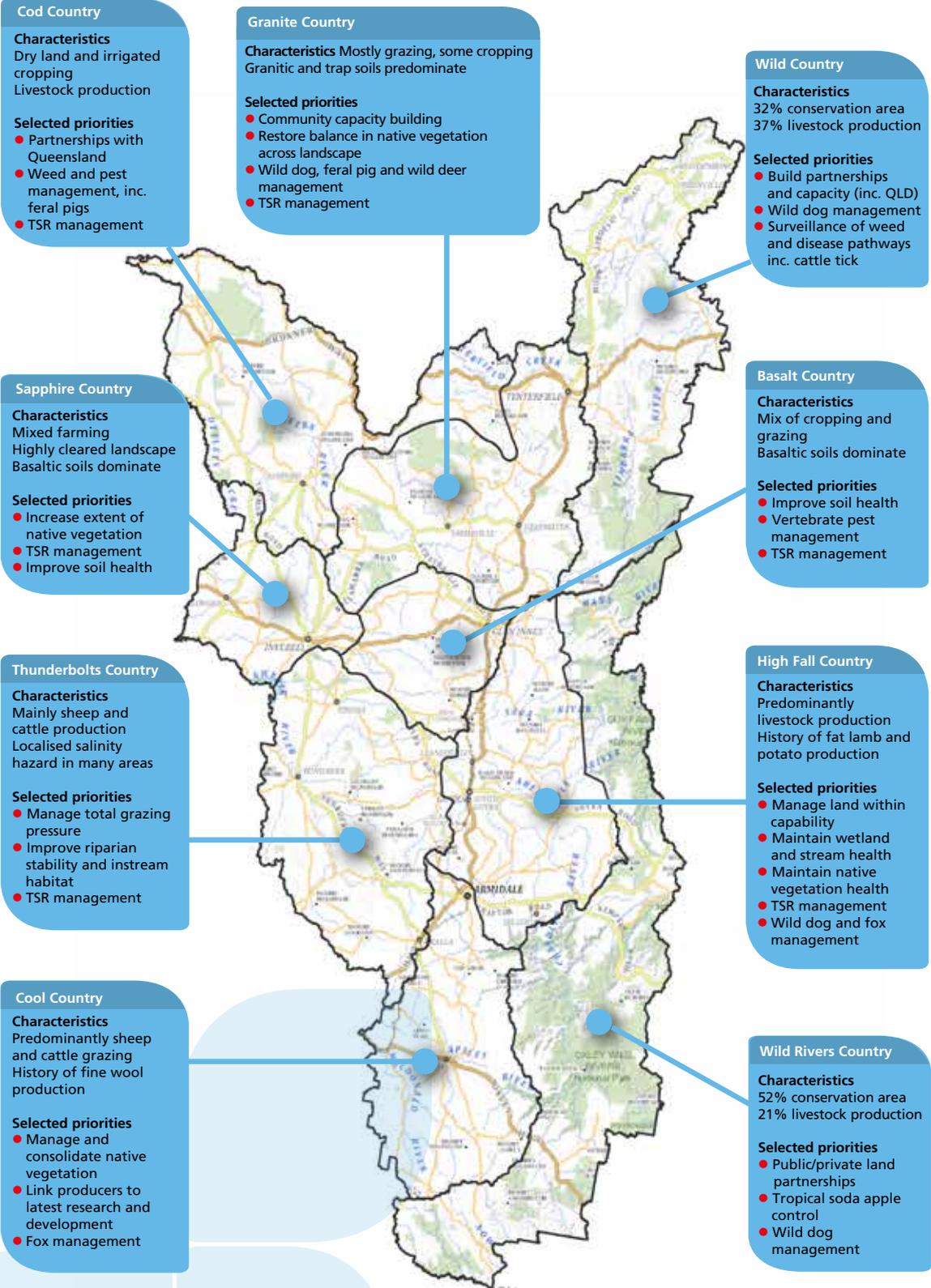
- Grazing is the major land use at 56% of the region.
- Highest livestock carrying capacity of all regions of NSW.
- 90% of landholders have livestock on their property with 73% stocking cattle.
- 47,000 hectares of Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs) within the region.
- Agricultural commodities produced in the region are worth over \$320M with 90% of this from beef, sheep and wool.
- Increase in diversification with cotton, cheese, truffles, glasshouse tomatoes, wine and olives produced successfully.

### ENVIRONMENT

- 40,000 square kilometres is the total area.
- Height above sea level ranges from 1,536m at Round Mountain near Ebor, down to 257m at Yetman in the north west.
- High rainfall area with averages ranging from 650mm per annum on the western slopes to over 1,200mm on the eastern fall.
- 60% of total rainfall occurs in the summer.
- Coastal flowing rivers of the Clarence, Macleay and Manning have their headwaters on the eastern escarpment.
- Inland flowing rivers have their confluence with the Gwydir, Namoi and Macintyre river systems of the Murray-Darling Basin.
- 39% native woody vegetation cover.

### PEOPLE

- Total population: 72,000 centred around the towns of Armidale, Glen Innes, Guyra, Inverell, Tenterfield, Uralla, Walcha and numerous small villages.
- Around 30% of landholders own most of the agricultural land (averaging 1,700 hectares per property).
- Property size varies from 10 to 9,518 hectares, averaging 365 hectares.
- Around 50% of landholders have 250 hectares or less.
- 25% of landholders surveyed had been involved with industry and/or Landcare groups.



# Strategic direction

## Local Land Services Statewide goals and strategies

The four goals of the State Strategic Plan are to be achieved through twelve broad strategies that highlight the functions, services and priorities of Local Land Services. These are given operational context through this Local Strategic Plan.

| <b>GOAL 1: Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities.</b>   | <b>GOAL 2: Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries.</b> | <b>GOAL 3: Healthy, diverse and connected natural environments.</b> | <b>GOAL 4: Board members and staff who are collaborative, innovative and commercially-focused.</b>       |   |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <b>STRATEGY 1:</b> Provide data, information and knowledge that supports and enables land managers, customers and government to improve decision making.   |  |   | <b>STRATEGY 10:</b> Develop engaged and accountable people with a strong customer and stakeholder focus. |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 2:</b> Provide products and advisory services that support and enable customers to implement improved practices.   |  |   |  |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 3:</b> Provide products and services that support and enable customers, land managers and the community to prevent, prepare, respond and recover from biosecurity and natural disaster events. |  |   |  |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 4:</b> Collaborate with investors, stakeholders and external organisations to deliver improved products and services to customers.   |  |   |  |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 5:</b> Ensure local people participate in decision making.   |  |   |  |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 6:</b> Connect research and development with advisory services to address priority data, information and knowledge gaps and barriers to improved practice.                                     |  |   |  |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 7:</b> Deliver services that support Aboriginal people to care for Country and share traditional land management knowledge.  |  |   |  |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 8:</b> Deliver consent and compliance services that educate and protect communities, landscapes and industries.  |  |   |  |   |
| <b>STRATEGY 9:</b> Manage Crown Land vested in Local Land Services for environmental, social, and economic outcomes.   |  |   |  |   |
|  |  |   |  | <b>STRATEGY 11:</b> Foster a values-based culture which emphasises collaboration, innovation and continual improvement. |
|  |  |   |  | <b>STRATEGY 12:</b> Ensure a safe, efficient, effective and sustainable organisation.                                   |

## *Northern Tablelands Local Land Services local focus*

The Local Strategic Plan describes how Northern Tablelands Local Land Services will strategically deliver the services and priorities outlined in the State Strategic Plan. Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has adopted a position statement that summarises and presents the local expression of Local Land Services in our region: *Agriculture. Environment. People. Here When it Matters.*

This represents the core focus of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services. It is the branding 'touchstone' for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services board and staff, integrating the vision, mission and values of Local Land Services into a single statement.



The statement and stylised image of the tablelands environment will be used in communicating our 'brand' and strategic purpose. Northern Tablelands Local Land Services are here for **agriculture** - we are here for the **environment** - most of all, we are here for **people** in rural communities. We are **here when it matters** in times of natural disaster, drought, flood or bushfire and vigilant in protecting our livestock industries from pest and disease.

As the NSW governments front-line Agri-service in the Northern Tablelands, being 'here when it matters' for our ratepayers and local communities will be central to our ongoing success.

## *Northern Tablelands Local Land Services strategic direction*

The Local Strategic Plan describes how Northern Tablelands Local Land Services do business.

**Collaboration** and **building capacity** of farmers is central to the effectiveness of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services. By working with people and engaging with all sectors — public, private, non- profit, individuals and community groups — effective and lasting solutions to shared problems can go beyond what any sector could achieve on its own. We will continue to partner with individuals and organisations that seek to deliver similar activities, with partnerships with ‘grass roots’ organisations driven by local people of prime importance.

The provision of a relevant and technically credible **extension and advisory services** to landholders, industry and community is a focus for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services across all operational functional areas as we strive to increase the capacity of land managers in managing their natural resources and agricultural enterprises for sustainability and profit.

A high standard of **legislative compliance** as our core business will ensure that Local Land Services meets the obligations and expectations of industry and community at local, regional, state and national scales.

The provision of **quality services** and outcomes, prioritising our core business and excelling in these areas is important for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.

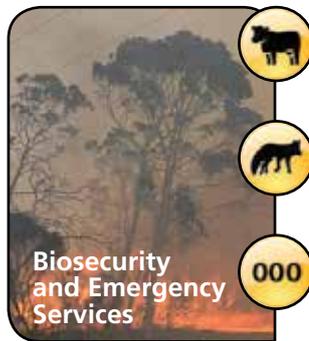
Above all, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services will be a **people focused**, service oriented organisation working to build trust and establish relevance in our local communities and be responsive to the needs of local people and the broader agricultural sector in NSW.

## *Priority objectives for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services*

The Northern Tablelands Local Board has identified a series of **priority objectives** to be achieved through the operations of the Local Land Services business. Northern Tablelands Local Land Services staff are organised under four Business Units, which are each accountable for delivering a range of functions (Functional Areas). A summary of the priority objectives that are the focus and responsibility of each of the business units within Northern Tablelands staffing team structure is provided on the following page. Also provided is feedback from the 2014 survey of over 1,000 landholders in the region, indicating reference data of relevance to each objective.

## Business unit

(Staff team structure)



## Priority objective

(Functions)

Northern Tablelands livestock are Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) and residue free and market access is maintained.

Predation and impacts from invasive species are reduced.

Northern Tablelands is equipped and prepared for all tiers of emergency responses as per Department of Primary Industries business plan.

## Related landholder survey statistics, 2014

9% of landholders had prepared a biosecurity management plan.

71% of landholders have problems with feral animals (55% foxes, 53% rabbits, 43% pigs and 20% wild dogs). 64% of landholders have problems with weeds, the most common are Blackberry and African Lovegrass.

37% of landholders understand the involvement of the Local Land Services in emergencies.



Landholders understand the opportunities for on-farm vegetation management under the legislation.

Landholders have a greater capacity to manage their land for profitable, sustainable, productive agriculture.

Public investment is delivered for the benefit of the Northern Tablelands community with measurable on ground change.

Be a good neighbour, managing Travelling Stock Reserves to achieve full cost recovery while maintaining condition.

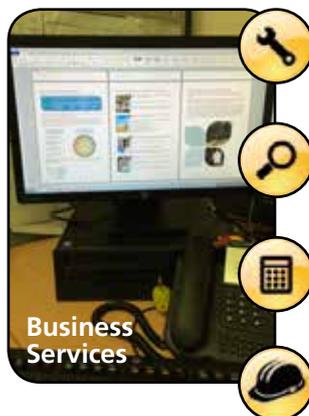
28% of landholders believe that native vegetation is important to the health of their property.

71% of landholders rated their ability to obtain reliable advice about natural resource management as poor.

Over 60% of landholders believe that improving grazing management, nutrition and managing seasonal conditions will improve profitability.

25% of landholders indicated they had received some external funding to undertake work on their property.

66% of landholders are satisfied with current Travelling Stock Reserve management.



Northern Tablelands Local Land Services provides a service that is friendly, accessible and responsive to customer and community needs.

To be fiscally responsible, accountable and transparent.

Ensure business viability through the management of risk.

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has a skilled, engaged and cohesive team operating in a safe workplace.

58% of landholders indicated they were generally supportive of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.

97% of landholders want us to focus on the real issues around sustainable agriculture and maintain our identity.

96% of landholders want us to keep a strong focus on costs and ensure we are cost-effective.

47% of landholders asked that we efficiently manage resources to provide the best service to our constituents.

38% of landholders indicated they had used services provided by Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.



Planning supports continuous improvement in Local Land Services operations.

Communities have the opportunity to contribute to the direction of Local Land Services.

Commercial services add value to the services offered in the Northern Tablelands.

73% of landholders were unsure if Northern Tablelands Local Land Services was doing a good job in assisting in land management in the region.

20% of landholders believe Northern Tablelands Local Land Services could improve their services through better communication and consultation with landholders.

45% stated that a priority action was to improve management and control of pest plants and animals.

## Planning framework

The State Strategic Plan is designed to guide Local Strategic Plans, which in turn guide operational/business plans and then personal workplans for staff. The personal workplans align with and contribute to results outlined in each of the planning documents. This provides internal alignment and focus and a single line of sight from day-to-day delivery to strategy.

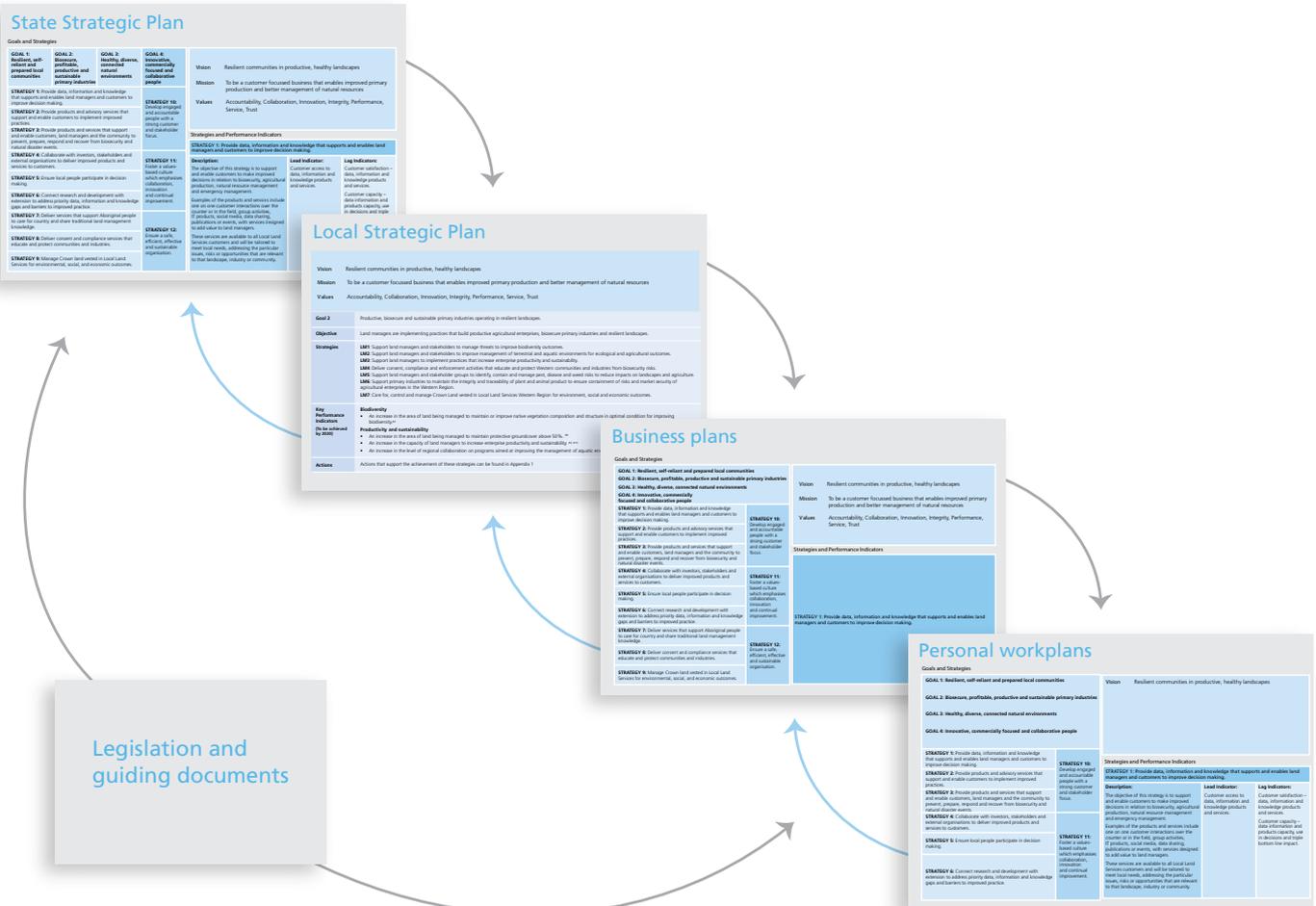
The State Strategic Plan exists as part of an overall framework that links NSW, Australian and local government plans and initiatives through all levels of its operations. See Legislation and guiding influences on page 37.

The legislation and policy that informed development of the Local Strategic Plan are relevant at different scales. Some legislation, such as the *Local Land Services Act 2013* and the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* has a direct impact on how Local Land Services operate, where as others such as the *National Plant Biosecurity Strategy*, provide guidance.

The State Strategic Plan lays out the overarching goals for the State and actions that contribute to these goals at the regional level are derived locally. The Local Strategic Plan is part of an overall framework employed by the Northern Tablelands local board that purposefully links the vision, mission and values of the NSW Government, the NSW Public Service Commission and Local Land Services through all levels of operations.

A hierarchy of planning directs the Local Land Services business, with the Local Strategic Plan at its core (Figure 4). Annual Functional Area Plans give operational 'life' to achieve the Local Strategic Plan.





**Figure 4: Overview of planning framework from the State Strategic Plan to personal work plans and back again.**

# Implementation

The work of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services in the next five years will continue to support rural people in managing their land, water and biodiversity resources for future generations and safeguarding agriculture, recognising that viable farmers are needed to support a healthy environment.

Supporting the vision and mission of Local Land Services, Figure 5 depicts a series of key milestones and service oriented performance indicators that will be achieved by Northern Tablelands Local Land Services over the 5 years of the Local Strategic Plan (based on Table 2).

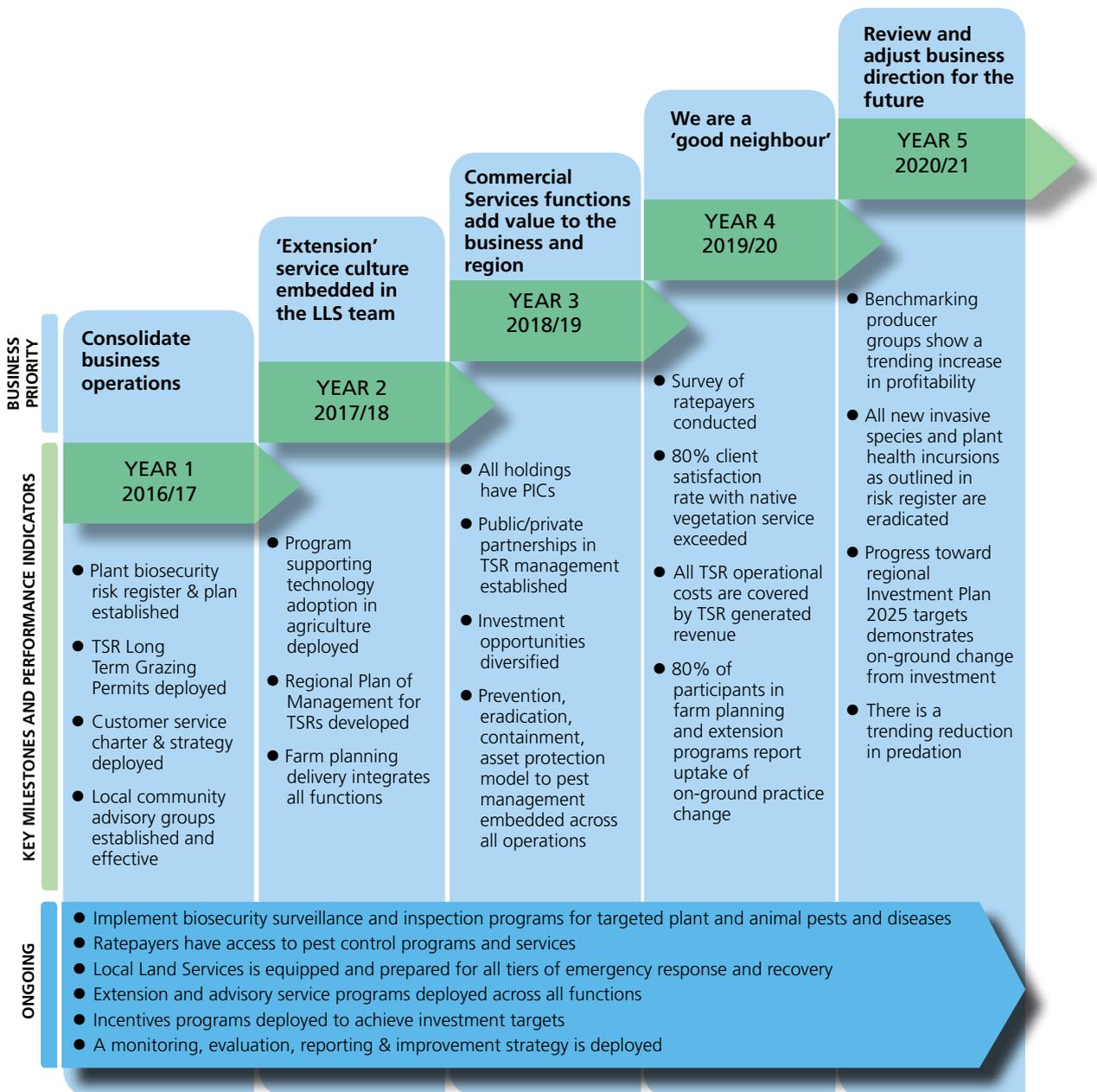


Figure 5: Annual business priorities and key milestones for the Local Strategic Plan.

## Principles to guide implementation and investment

### *Performance Standard for Local Land Services*

The principles and expectations for organisational performance, detailed in the Local Strategic Plan, are compliant with the *Local Land Services Act 2013* and are guided by the Performance Standard for Local Land Services (the Standard). The success of Local Land Services will be measured against these principles. The development of the Local Strategic Plan focused on the eight principles that make up the Standard and these principles are embedded in business planning, from the Local Land Services State Strategic Plan through to Functional Area Plans (Figure 4). The eight principles, and how we address them, are:

- **Leadership** – Northern Tablelands Local Land Services facilitates the implementation of actions that deliver positive social, economic and environmental outcomes through collaboration
- **Governance** – Our business systems and audits are used to improve efficiency and transparency
- **Community ownership** – Local board members and our local community advisory groups contribute to local decision making. Collaborative governance is at the core of our business
- **Customer satisfaction** – Continual evaluation of customer feedback and provision of staff training maintains high quality customer service
- **Evidence-based decisions** – Legislation, policies and plans from all levels of government and community are used to make informed and targeted decisions
- **Collaboration** – A collaborative governance model is central to our business
- **Risk management** – Evaluation of risk at all levels of planning and board decision making
- **Understanding scale** – Geographic and temporal scales of delivery are defined for all actions and levels of planning.

The Standard supports and drives an adaptive and innovative approach to planning, by ensuring that the dynamic and complex interactions between agricultural production and natural resource management are addressed in a logical and robust manner.

### *Northern Tablelands Investment Plan 2025*

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has prepared a 10 year investment plan that outlines the priorities for working with the community to achieve positive agricultural and environmental outcomes in the region. The *Northern Tablelands Investment Plan 2025*, received comprehensive community input during its development through Catchment Action Plans. It is a non-statutory plan that has a social and biophysical emphasis and geographically identifies where public and private investment should be applied.

While the Local Strategic Plan is focused on the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services business direction, the Investment Plan 2025 is focused on the needs of the region and will only be achieved through implementation by a range of stakeholders. Key elements of the Investment Plan 2025 are provided in the Appendix.

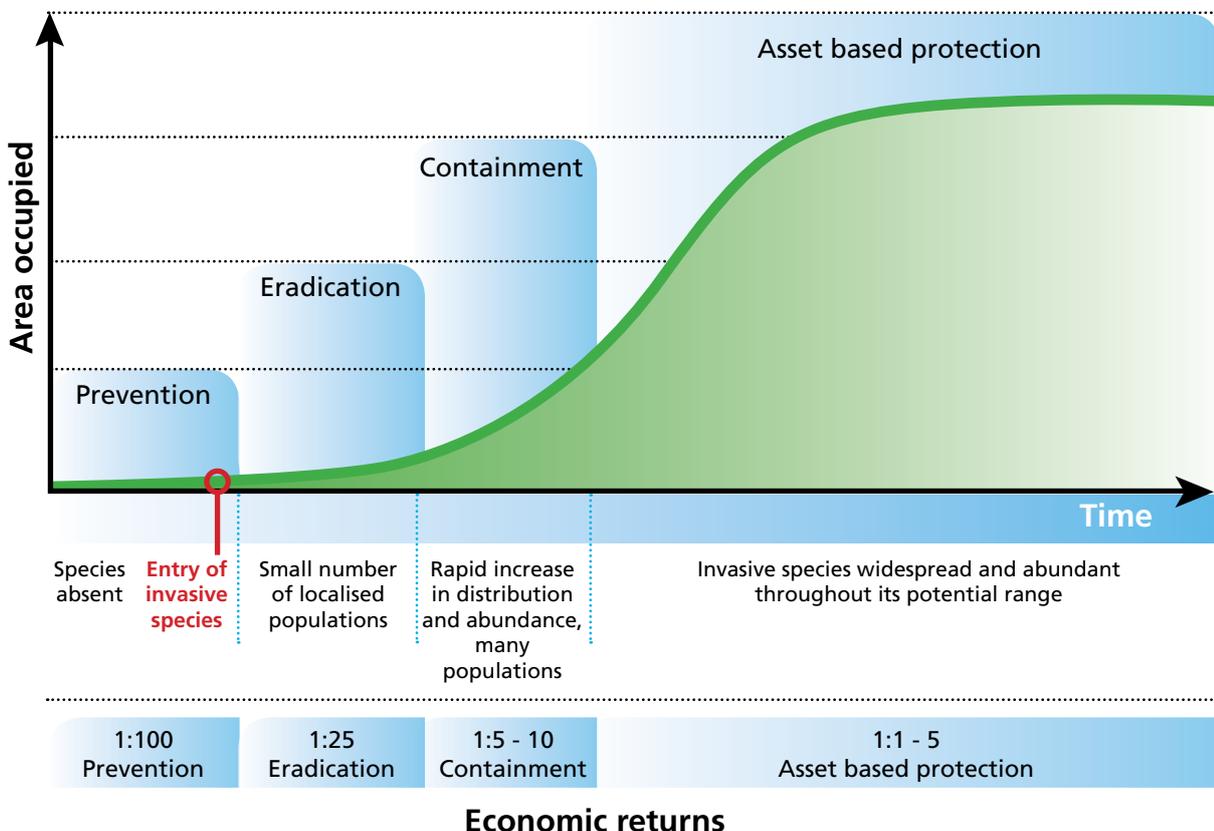
## Return on investment

A high return on investment from our operations is important across all Functional Areas to ensure efficient deployment of resources.

Collaborative programs working with producers, industry and established groups and organisations will be important in leveraging better 'value for money'. In the biosecurity context, significant returns will be achieved through effective surveillance and rapid response - prevention of exotic animal disease outbreaks such as foot and mouth disease will save the Australian economy billions of dollars.

With a significant vertebrate pest burden and extensive livestock production, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has adopted the invasion or 'PECA' curve (Prevention, Eradication, Containment, Asset protection) as a guiding principle, which highlights the return on investment for different phases of invasive species (or disease) management. Figure 6 illustrates that a high return on investment is achieved through preventing entry of exotic and new threats, followed by early intervention and eradication if they do appear, as opposed to investing in the management of widely established or endemic invasive species (or disease). This principle can generally be applied broadly to all pests, diseases and weeds.

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services will continue to provide services that support people in the management of endemic pests and diseases, however proactive resource allocation in the long term will be geared toward maximising returns to the agricultural sector through the PECA hierarchy.



\*Invasion Curve sourced from Biosecurity Victoria, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria

Figure 6: Generalised invasion (PECA) curve showing actions appropriate to each stage.

## Operational planning

The operations of the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services business are managed through a series of 'Functional Areas' that align priority objectives to functions and services. This division allows different business units to concentrate on their own area of operation whilst ensuring that integration occurs across and between individual teams, programs and projects.

Functional Area Plans are an annual operational or business planning tool that describe:

- Principles and objectives of the Functional Area
- Relationship to other Functional Areas
- Risk management
- Stakeholder analysis and communications necessary to achieve outcomes
- Activities and initiatives for the financial year
- Operational budget
- Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement
- Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Although these plans are developed annually, actions are aimed at achieving the five year strategies of the Local Strategic Plan for the long term benefit of the Northern Tablelands.

Table 1 provides a short description of the Functional Areas within Northern Tablelands Local Land Services including their function and priority objectives (see page 18 for alignment of the responsible staff business unit).

**Table 1: Description of Functional Areas within Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.**

| Functional Area                                 | Short description of function  | Priority objective   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Animal Biosecurity &amp; Welfare</b>         | Operations in animal biosecurity and welfare under the <i>Local Land Services Act 2013</i> , <i>NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021</i> , <i>Animal Biosecurity &amp; Welfare Business Plan</i> and related legislation and policy. | Northern Tablelands livestock are Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) and residue free and market access is maintained.   |
| <b>Invasive Species &amp; Plant Biosecurity</b> | Operations in vertebrate pest management, weeds and plant biosecurity under the <i>Local Land Services Act 2013</i> , <i>NSW Wild Dog Strategy</i> and <i>NSW Invasive Species Plan</i> .  | Predation and impacts from invasive species are reduced.   |
| <b>Emergency Management</b>                     | Prevention, preparedness, response and recovery operations in support of Department of Primary Industries in the Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area Supporting Plan   | Northern Tablelands is equipped and prepared for all tiers of emergency responses as per Department of Primary Industry business plan.   |
| <b>Native Vegetation Access</b>                 | Extension, advisory and statutory services under the <i>Native Vegetation Act 2003</i> and related responsibilities arising from the biodiversity review.  | Landholders understand the value of native vegetation on farm and in the landscape.<br><br>Landholders understand the opportunities for on farm vegetation management under the legislation.   |
| <b>Sustainable Agriculture</b>                  | Agricultural and land management extension and advisory services that support profitable, sustainable and productive agriculture and contribute to the recommendations of the <i>Agriculture Industry Action Plan</i> .            | Landholders have a greater capacity to manage their land for profitable, sustainable, productive agriculture.<br><br>Public/private sector collaboration in delivery of extension.<br><br>Increase involvement of young people in agriculture. |

Table 1. continued

| <b>Functional Area</b>                    | <b>Short description of function</b>  | <b>Priority objective</b>  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Investment &amp; Partnerships</b>      | Investment and collaboration to achieve the targets of the <i>Northern Tablelands Investment Plan 2025</i> in line with investor preferences. | Public investment is delivered for the benefit of the Northern Tablelands community with measurable on ground change.<br><br>On ground investment exceeds the expectations of state and federal government investors.  |
| <b>Travelling Stock Reserves</b>          | Care, control and management of the Travelling Stock Reserve asset in line with legislated prescribed use.                                    | Provide equitable access to travelling stock reserves for a range of stakeholder groups.<br><br>Maintain and improve environmental and agricultural values of the asset.<br><br>Manage travelling stock reserves to achieve full and real cost recovery while maintaining condition.<br><br>Be a good neighbour. |
| <b>Customer Service</b>                   | Service and front line support to Local Land Services clients.  | Northern Tablelands Local Land Services provides a service that is friendly, supportive, professional, accurate, accessible and responsive to customer and community needs.  |
| <b>Business, People &amp; Performance</b> | Operations and administration of the Northern Tablelands business.  | To be fiscally responsible, accountable and transparent.<br><br>Ensure business viability through the management of risk.<br><br>Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has a skilled, engaged and cohesive team operating in a safe workplace.   |
| <b>Planning &amp; Engagement</b>          | Regional strategy, monitoring, evaluation and improvement. Community participation in decision making.  | Planning supports continuous improvement in Local Land Services operations.<br><br>Communities have the opportunity to contribute to the direction of Local Land Services.   |
| <b>Commercial Services</b>                | Commercial enterprise development and revenue diversification.  | Add value to the services offered in the Northern Tablelands.  |

The alignment of Functional Area activities and performance indicators to the 11 strategies of the Local Land Services State Strategic Plan are provided in Table 2.

**Table 2: Alignment of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services activities and performance indicators against State strategies.**

| State Strategies  | Northern Tablelands Functional Area    | Northern Tablelands activities  | Northern Tablelands performance indicators   | Delivery schedule |
|---|--|---|--|-------------------|
| <p><b>Strategy 1:</b><br/>Provide data, information and knowledge that supports and enables land managers, customers and government to improve decision making.</p> | Emergency Management                   | <p><b>1.1.</b> Implement awareness and capacity building programs within the community, industry, Local Land Services and other agencies.</p>   | All agreed State and National LLS/DPI Business Plan performance indicators for Emergency Management are met. | Ongoing           |
|   |  | <p><b>1.2.</b> Review pest programs to ensure that they share core principles of integrated control, shared responsibility, seasonality and cost efficiency.</p>                              | A trending reduction in predation.   | Ongoing           |
|   | Invasive Species and Plant Biosecurity | <p><b>1.3.</b> Implement systems to enable ratepayers to have access to technical knowledge and reactive programs.</p>  |  |                   |
|   |  | <p><b>1.4.</b> Establish risk register and planning for plant biosecurity.</p>  |  |                   |
|   |  | <p><b>1.5.</b> Implement a program to ensure that landholder obligations are communicated and where necessary enforced.</p>   | All new invasive species and plant biosecurity incursions as outlined on risk register are eradicated.       | Ongoing           |
|   | Native Vegetation Access               | <p><b>1.6.</b> Deploy an extension program to improve knowledge and understanding of the role of native vegetation in enhancing agricultural production, sustainability and biodiversity.</p> |  |                   |
|   | Investment and Partnerships            | <p><b>1.7.</b> Record and distribute performance stories for investors and community.</p>   | Increasing trend in people valuing the role of native vegetation on-farm.                                    | Ongoing           |

Table 2. continued

| State Strategies  | Northern Tablelands Functional Area    | Northern Tablelands Activities  | Northern Tablelands Performance Indicators   | Delivery schedule |
|---|--|---|--|-------------------|
| <p><b>Strategy 2:</b><br/>Provide products and advisory services that support and enable customers to implement improved practices.</p> | Sustainable Agriculture                | <p><b>2.1.</b> Create a strong team that will provide a credible, unbiased and trusted advisory and extension service built upon sound scientific knowledge and evidence based practices.</p> |  | Year 1            |
|   |  | <p><b>2.2.</b> Establish local networks with public, private and industry groups to support information delivery.</p>   |  | Ongoing           |
|   |  | <p><b>2.3.</b> Deploy a pastures and livestock extension program to enable and support new innovations and technology adoption in agricultural production.</p>                                | Trending increase in profitability ratio in Local Land Services benchmarking groups.                       | Years 2-5         |
|   |  | <p><b>2.4.</b> Provide reactive, flexible and locally relevant advisory services in response to emergencies.</p>  | 80% of participants in farm planning and extension projects reporting uptake of on ground practice change. | Ongoing           |
|   | Invasive Species and Plant Biosecurity | <p><b>2.5.</b> Deliver integrated farm planning program to provide best practice knowledge to producers in a 'peer to peer' learning environment.</p>   |  | Years 1-5         |
|   |  | <p><b>2.6.</b> Deliver soil and pasture extension to benchmark and improve soil fertility and growth.</p>   |  | Years 2-4         |
|   |  | <p><b>2.7.</b> Undertake a needs analysis and develop an engagement strategy for engaging 'young' people in agriculture.</p>  | Increasing number of people under 40 years of age attending events.  | Years 1-3         |
|   |  | <p><b>2.8.</b> Implement systems to enable ratepayers to have access to technical knowledge and reactive programs.</p>  | All new invasive species and plant biosecurity incursions as outlined on risk register are eradicated.     | Ongoing           |

Table 2. continued

| State Strategies   | Northern Tablelands Functional Area    | Northern Tablelands Activities   | Northern Tablelands Performance Indicators   | Delivery schedule |
|--|--|--|--|-------------------|
| <b>Strategy 3:</b><br>Provide products and services that support and enable customers and the community to prevent, prepare, respond and recover from biosecurity and natural disaster events. | Animal Biosecurity and Welfare         | <b>3.1.</b> Implement surveillance and inspection programs.  | All NSW Animal Biosecurity and Welfare Strategic Plan performance indicators are met.                        | Ongoing           |
|  |  | <b>3.2.</b> Staff undergo annual technical training.   |  | Ongoing           |
|  |  | <b>3.3.</b> Capture and record high risk and intensive production data.  |  | Years 1-3         |
|  | Emergency Management                   | <b>3.4.</b> Deploy an emergency management training program.   | All agreed State and National LLS/DPI Business Plan performance indicators for emergency management are met. | Ongoing           |
|  |  | <b>3.5.</b> Integrate prevention, preparedness, response and recovery across all business units.   |  | Ongoing           |
| <b>Strategy 4:</b><br>Collaborate with investors, stakeholders and external organisations to deliver improved products and services to customers.  | Invasive Species and Plant Biosecurity | <b>4.1.</b> Train staff in response for all key risks.   | All Invasive Species Plan outcomes and outputs are met.  | Ongoing           |
|  |  | <b>4.2.</b> Establish risk register and planning for plant biosecurity.  |  | Year 1            |
|  | Planning and Engagement                | <b>4.3.</b> Conduct a partner analysis.  | Local community advisory group networks established and operate in accordance with terms of reference.       | Year 1            |
|  |  | <b>4.4.</b> Maintain a structured collaborative network of community consultation and support.   |  | Ongoing           |
|  | Sustainable Agriculture                | <b>4.5.</b> Deliver knowledge, leadership and skill development programs with strategic partners.  | Trending increase in profitability ratio in LLS benchmarking groups.   | Years 2-4         |
|  | Native Vegetation Access               | <b>4.6.</b> Provide advice to collaborative stakeholder groups developing Northern Tablelands LLS Biodiversity Strategy.   | Increasing trend in people valuing the role of native vegetation on-farm.                                    | Year 2            |
|  | Investment and Partnerships            | <b>4.7.</b> Develop collaborative partnership model with Landcare.   | All State and Commonwealth investment funds delivered as per contract.                                       | Year 1            |
|  |  | <b>4.8.</b> Implement 'Healthy Rivers' and 'Trees on Farms' programs, delivering public investment in priority areas to assist people manage rivers, vegetation, threatened species and soils. |  | Years 2-5         |

Table 2. continued

| State Strategies  | Northern Tablelands Functional Area    | Northern Tablelands Activities  | Northern Tablelands Performance Indicators   | Delivery schedule |
|---|--|---|--|-------------------|
| <b>Strategy 4:</b><br>Collaborate with investors, stakeholders and external organisations to deliver improved products and services to customers, cont'd                  | Investment and Partnerships            | <b>4.9.</b> Secure participatory engagement of major partners through output or outcomes based contracts.   | All progress towards regional targets demonstrates on ground change resulting from investment.         | Years 1-5         |
|   |  | <b>4.10.</b> Implement strategic approach to increase current levels of investment in our region through an increased range of investors.                                       |  | Years 2-3         |
|   | Travelling Stock Reserves              | <b>4.11.</b> Promote and support public/private partnerships with interest groups or stakeholders to draw in additional investment to high value TSRs through external funding. | All operational costs covered by TSR generated revenue (%).  | Years 1-3         |
| <b>Strategy 5:</b><br>Ensure local people participate in decision making.   | Planning and Engagement                | <b>5.1.</b> Maintain an Aboriginal reference advisory group.  | Local Community Advisory Group networks established and operate in accordance with terms of reference. | Ongoing           |
|   |  | <b>5.2.</b> Establish and maintain a multi-stakeholder community advisory group.  |  | Ongoing           |
|   |  | <b>5.3.</b> Conduct ratepayer surveys.  |  | Years 1 & 4       |
|   |  | <b>5.4.</b> Local board conducts regional consultation tours.   | Increasing number of people under 40 years of age attending events.                                    | 6 monthly         |
|   | Sustainable Agriculture                | <b>5.5.</b> Establish and support young agriculture professionals and on farm manager's network.  |  | Year 2            |
|   | Investment and Partnerships            | <b>5.6.</b> Implement community action planning at sub-catchment scale.   | All progress towards regional targets demonstrates on ground change resulting from investment.         | Year 1-2          |
| <b>Strategy 6:</b><br>Connect research and development with advisory services to address priority data, information and knowledge gaps and barriers to improved practice. | Invasive Species and Plant Biosecurity | <b>6.1.</b> Implement the PECA model (Prevention, Eradicate, Containment, Asset protection) in the business over the long term.   | All new invasive species and plant biosecurity incursions as outlined on risk register are eradicated. | Years 1-3         |
|   | Sustainable Agriculture                | <b>6.2.</b> Partner with University of New England School of Environmental and Rural Science to deliver highlight events and align with research.                               |  | Year 1            |
|   |  | <b>6.3.</b> Implement livestock and mixed farming projects to deliver research outcomes (in partnership with Department of Primary Industries).                                 |  | Years 1-5         |

Table 2. continued

| State Strategies   | Northern Tablelands Functional Area | Northern Tablelands Activities  | Northern Tablelands Performance Indicators   | Delivery schedule |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| <b>Strategy 6:</b><br>Connect research and development with advisory services to address priority data, information and knowledge gaps and barriers to improved practice, cont'd | Investment and Partnerships         | <b>6.4.</b> Establish measures for social return on investment and public value.  | All progress towards regional targets demonstrates on ground change resulting from investment.         | Year 2-3          |
|  |                                     | <b>6.5.</b> Develop consistent methodology for recording and reporting on ground outcomes from investment in extension.   |  | Year 1            |
|  |                                     | <b>6.6.</b> Collaborate with OEH, NPWS and community groups to fill research gaps regarding upland wetlands and threatened species.                                   |  | Year 2            |
|  | Planning and Engagement             | <b>6.7.</b> Adaptively manage the Local Strategic Plan.<br><b>6.8.</b> Adaptively manage the Investment Plan.   | All statutory planning completed.  | Year 1            |
| <b>Strategy 7:</b><br>Deliver services that support Aboriginal people to care for Country and share traditional land management knowledge.                                       | Planning and Engagement             | <b>7.1.</b> Maintain an Aboriginal Reference Advisory Group.  | Local community advisory group networks established and operate in accordance with terms of reference. | Ongoing           |
|  | Investment and Partnerships         | <b>7.2.</b> Support Aboriginal land managers to implement natural resource management projects and business enterprises.  | All State and Commonwealth investment funds delivered as per contract.                                 | Ongoing           |
| <b>Strategy 8:</b><br>Deliver consent and compliance services that educate and protect communities, landscapes and industries.   | Animal Biosecurity and Welfare      | <b>8.1.</b> Implement surveillance and inspection programs.   | All NSW Animal Biosecurity and Welfare Strategic Plan performance indicators are met.                  | Ongoing           |
|  |                                     | <b>8.2.</b> Ensure all holdings have Property Identification Codes.   |  | Years 1-3         |
|  | Native Vegetation Access            | <b>8.3.</b> Provide access to consistent high quality services to assist landholders interpret native vegetation legislation and vegetation management opportunities. | 80% client satisfaction rate with native vegetation legislation service delivery.                      | Ongoing           |
|  |                                     | <b>8.4.</b> Deliver an extension program to support the native vegetation legislative framework.  |  | Years 1-3         |

Table 2. continued

| State Strategies   | Northern Tablelands Functional Area | Northern Tablelands Activities  | Northern Tablelands Performance Indicators                                | Delivery schedule   |           |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|-----------|
| <b>Strategy 9:</b><br>Manage Crown land vested in Local Land Services for environmental, social and economic outcomes. | Travelling Stock Reserves           | <b>9.1.</b> Provide dedicated service delivery to support management of TSRs.   | 95% satisfaction from surveyed LGP holders, apiarists and permit holders. | Ongoing   |           |
|  |                                     | <b>9.2.</b> Review Long Term Grazing Permit (LGP) system to better support management of and access to the TSR asset.   |   | Year 1  |           |
|  |                                     | <b>9.3.</b> Deploy pasture assessment tool to manage grazing and maintain asset condition.  |   | Ongoing   |           |
|  |                                     | <b>9.4.</b> Develop a regional plan of management.  |   | Year 2  |           |
|  |                                     | <b>9.5.</b> Develop a single system to enable monitoring of TSR use and management across Northern Tablelands Local Land Services region.                         |   | Year 2  |           |
|  |                                     | <b>9.6.</b> Deploy a TSR 'Good Neighbour' program.  |   | Year 2  |           |
|  |                                     | <b>9.7.</b> Identify cultural heritage on TSRs and complete due diligence in accordance with legislative requirements.  |   |   |           |
|  |                                     | <b>9.8.</b> Conduct infrastructure assessment and prioritisation plan for infrastructure repair and maintenance.  |   | All operational costs covered by TSR generated revenue (%). | Years 2-3 |
|  |                                     | <b>9.9.</b> Complete an assessment of TSRs to enable categorisation of TSRs and enable informed management to achieve a balance between asset protection and use. |   | 100% maintenance of condition index from baseline.          | Year 1    |
|  |                                     | <b>9.10.</b> Review or develop site management plans for TSRs with special significance. Adopt best management practices.   |   |   | Year 3    |

Table 2. continued

| State strategies   | Northern Tablelands Functional Area | Northern Tablelands Activities   | Northern Tablelands Performance Indicators                  | Delivery schedule   |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Strategy 10:</b><br>Develop engaged and accountable people with a strong customer and stakeholder focus.                | Customer Service                    | <b>10.1.</b> Develop and deploy a customer service charter and strategy.   | Decreasing trend in number of complaints.                   | Ongoing   |
|  |                                     | <b>10.2.</b> Attract, develop and retain critical skills within the organisation to drive service excellence.                              |   | Year 1  |
|  |                                     | <b>10.3.</b> Conduct an annual customer survey to set a benchmark, identify gaps and ascertain customer expectations.                      | Trending increase in customer satisfaction.                 | Ongoing   |
|  |                                     | <b>10.4.</b> Deploy and manage a fully integrated customer service database.   |   | Year 1  |
|  |                                     | <b>10.5.</b> Conduct training and multi-skilling of all front line staff to ensure accuracy and consistency with a customer centric focus. |   | Year 1  |
|  |                                     | Travelling Stock Reserves  | <b>10.6.</b> Adopt and implement a client service strategy. | 95% satisfaction from surveyed LGP holders, apiarists and permit holders. |
| <b>Strategy 11:</b><br>Foster a values-based culture which emphasises collaboration, innovation and continual improvement. | Business, People and Performance    | <b>11.1.</b> Establish a culture development program.  | 95% staff retention rates.                                  | Year 1  |
|  |                                     | <b>11.2.</b> Implement a training and development Strategy.  |   |   |
|  |                                     | <b>11.3.</b> Complete performance development plans for all staff.   |   |   |

Table 2. continued

| State strategies  | Northern Tablelands Functional Area  | Northern Tablelands Activities  | Northern Tablelands Performance Indicators        | Delivery schedule          |         |
|---|--|---|---|----------------------------|---------|
| <b>Strategy 11:</b><br>Foster a values-based culture which emphasises collaboration, innovation and continual improvement, cont'd | Commercial Services  | 11.4. Conduct market environment analysis.  | Increasing operating revenue.                     | Year 1                     |         |
|   |  | 11.5. Develop a commercial business strategy.   |   | Year 2                     |         |
|   |  | 11.6. Deploy a public policy advocacy strategy.   |   | Year 2                     |         |
|   |  | 11.7. Diversify investment opportunities  |   | Year 3                     |         |
|   |  | 11.8. Review and monitor Local Strategic Plan.  |   | Ongoing                    |         |
|   |  | 11.9. Review and monitor Investment Plan  |   |                            |         |
|   |  | 11.10. Develop and deploy a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement strategy. |   | Year 1 and ongoing         |         |
|   | <b>Strategy 12:</b><br>Ensure a safe, efficient, effective and sustainable organisation. | Business, People and Performance  | 12.1. Develop an annual audit plan.               | Annual unqualified audits. | Ongoing |
|   |  |   | 12.2. Develop Work Health & Safety Risk Register. |                            |         |
|   |  |   | 12.3. Review systems against business needs.      |                            |         |
| 12.4. Develop & implement a succession strategy.  |  |   |   |                            |         |
| 12.5. Develop an integrated reporting framework for all stakeholders.   |  |   |   |                            |         |
| 12.6. Undertake an annual organisational risk assessment.   |  |   |   |                            |         |
| 12.7. Develop business risk register.   |  |   |   |                            |         |

## Measuring success

Local Land Services has a responsibility to demonstrate to its customers, investors and stakeholders that its strategies are sound and effective. All strategies, programs and systems will be required to monitor, evaluate and report on performance.

Measuring and reporting on progress against key performance indicators is particularly important, as are practices that promote reflection and learning to inform decision making.

Local Land Services uses the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement framework for assessing the state and trend of asset conditions and allows a comparison of results against planned immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes. This enables a systematic and objective assessment of the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of policies, projects and programs.

The data collected and the results of evaluations are necessary tools for Local Land Services to make informed decisions about our priorities and investment decisions. The data and information collected will be integrated into statewide data sets wherever possible; will be fully accessible through open government; and will contribute to whole-of-NSW reporting on the state and trend of asset conditions.

Local Land Services is working with the Natural Resource Commission to develop a method of performance evaluation that drives a consistent approach across and between regions. It will rely on a consistent set of metrics to guide internal business performance, direction setting, adaptation and meet multiple investor needs, and promote innovative and commercially-driven transformation over time.

Key components of the framework include:

1. a core set of state-wide key performance indicators, metrics and outcome statements
2. a performance evaluation framework, including indicative tools, systems and practices
3. an overview of opportunities to innovate and transform over time
4. a roadmap to implement the framework

Local Land Services will be reporting publicly on progress against this performance framework, which will be in place by 1 July 2016. Public reporting is in line with legislative requirements under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*.

## Learning and development

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services fosters adaptive management and continual improvement across the organisation. In its simplest form, adaptive management is about a three step continuous improvement cycle: 'plan–do-learn'. This is achieved through strategic planning, implementation and knowledge management and then adapting plans based on key learnings. Each step in the adaptive management cycle is linked, to ensure continuous improvement over time.

A triple loop learning approach is applied to evaluate for adaptive management and drive continuous improvement at different scales of planning: annual plans, business implementation plans, strategic plans and governance. Each loop entails progressing to more specific levels of questioning.

The first loop of evaluation and learning occurs frequently, at least annually, and involves regular monitoring, auditing, evaluating and reporting of actions. This level of learning leads to incremental changes in projects and actions.

The second loop of learning focuses on challenging, and potentially reframing, strategies and objectives, as well as examining evidence and assumptions that underpin our strategic approaches, regional objectives and the projects that underpin them.

The third loop of evaluation and learning focuses on challenging, and potentially transforming governance arrangements, value systems, vision and mission, and other high level processes. This level of learning can lead to changes in our direction and goals (e.g. transforming our business to accommodate climate change adaptation needs).

While learning at the second and third loops typically occurs at longer intervals than at first loop, learning at all levels will occur when the need arises. This approach allows us to review our efforts on a number of scales by asking key questions and making decisions using best available evidence at each point.

This approach will result in Local Land Services continually improving the way in which it delivers services to its customers, stakeholders and investors.

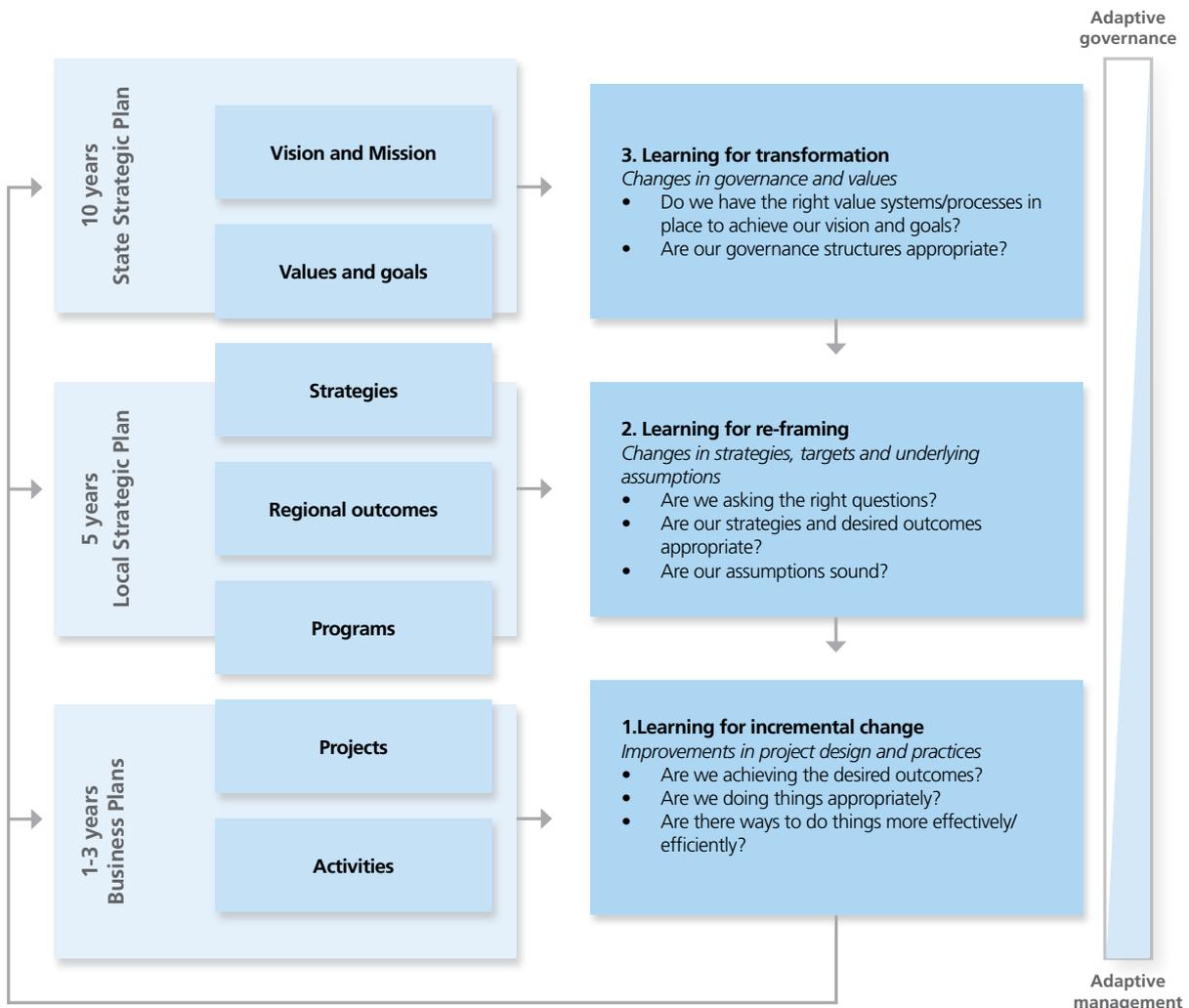


Figure 7: Triple loop learning applied to the Local Land Services planning framework (adapted from Murray Catchment Action Plan 2013).

# Legislation and guiding influences

The State Strategic Plan exists as part of an overall framework that seeks to link a range of NSW, Australian and local government plans and initiatives through all levels of its operations.

As a NSW Government entity, Local Land Services is responsible for contributing to the NSW Premier's and State Priorities as well as other plans such as the Agricultural Industry Action Plan, the NSW Biosecurity Strategy and the OCHRE: Aboriginal Affairs Plan. Local Land Services also contributes to the strategic objectives and outcomes of the Australian Governments National Landcare Programme.

In addition, a range of NSW and Australian Government legislation, policies and plans have influenced the development of the State Strategic Plan.

When combined, these plans, policies and strategies lay out the overarching goals for NSW and Australia. The actions that contribute to these overarching goals are appropriately reflected at state and local level in the state and local strategic plans and their goals, strategies, objectives, actions and key performance indicators.

## National

*Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

*Quarantine Act 1908*

*Water Act 2007*

International agreements such as:

Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

*Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030*

*Australian Weeds Strategy 2007*

*Close the Gap 2014*

*Native Title Act 1993*

*National Plant Biosecurity Strategy 2010*

*Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper 2015*

National Landcare Programme

## State

NSW making it happen: Premier's Priorities and State Priorities

Portfolio commitments and priorities

*Local Land Services Act 2013*

*Local Land Services Regulation 2014*

Local Land Services State Strategic Plan 2016-2026

*Native Vegetation Act 2003*

*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*  
*Water Management Act 2000*  
*NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021*  
*NSW Animal Biosecurity and Welfare Strategic Plan 2015-2018*  
*Biosecurity Act 2015*  
*NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015-2022*  
*NSW Wild Dog Strategy 2012-2015*  
*NSW State Emergency Management Plan 2012*  
*Noxious Weeds Act 1993*  
*Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*  
*State Agriculture and Animal services Functional Area Supporting Plan 2011*  
*Agricultural Industry Action Plan 2014*  
*Crown Lands Act 1989*  
Department of Planning and Environment Regional Plans  
    *Strategic Regional Land Use Plan: New England North West*  
    New England North West Regional Growth Plan (once approved)  
*OCHRE Strategy 2013*  
*NSW State of the Environment 2012*  
*NSW Wetland Policy 2010*  
*Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*  
*Government Sector Employment Act 2013*  
*Performance Standard for Local Land Services – Natural Resources Commission 2015*

## **Regional**

Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Action Plan 2013-2023

Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Action Plan 2013-2023

Namoi Catchment Action Plan 2013-2023

Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan 2013-2023

Environmental planning instruments

Local Government plans

Water Sharing Plans:

Gwydir Regulated River Water Source, Gwydir Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources, NSW Border Rivers Regulated River Water Source, NSW Border Rivers Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources, Tenterfield Creek Water Source and Commissioners Waters.

Groundwater Sharing Plans:

NSW Murray Darling Basin Fractured Rock Groundwater Sources, NSW Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock Groundwater Sources, NSW Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Sources, NSW Great Artesian Shallow Groundwater Sources.

## Glossary

**Aboriginal cultural heritage:** Aboriginal cultural heritage consists of places and items that are of significance to Aboriginal people because of their traditions, observances, lore, customs, beliefs and history. It provides evidence of the lives and existence of Aboriginal people before European settlement through to the present. Aboriginal cultural heritage is dynamic and may comprise physical (tangible) or non-physical (intangible) elements.

**Adaptive management:** A management approach based on the science of learning by doing. It involves testing the response of a system then applying this understanding to future decisions.

**Biosecurity:** Means the protection of the economy, environment and community from the negative impact of pests, diseases and weeds.

**Collaboration:** Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions for joint decision making.

**Customer:** Any land manager within the state or region, irrespective of whether they are private or public land managers, ratepayers or non-ratepayers.

**Customer service:** Local Land Services exists to create value for its stakeholders and customers. A key component of our strategy is an increased focus on customer services and a preparedness to measure performance and customer satisfaction.

**Functional area:** A logical element or segment of an organisation representing a specific business function.

**Governance:** The framework of rules and practices by which an organisation ensures accountability, fairness, and transparency in an organisation's relationship with all its stakeholders (investors, customers, management, employees, government and the community).

**Landscapes:** For the purpose of this publication, the term landscapes refers to any section of land or coast and its natural features, including rivers and other water bodies.

**Investor:** Those organisations and individuals that invest in Local Land Services and leverage outcomes from this investment.

**Resilient:** The capacity of a system (or community or person) to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic structure and function.

**Stakeholders:** Organisations that collaborate and partner with Local Land Services directly to support customer service delivery.

**Travelling stock reserve:** means

- a) any route or camping place reserved for travelling stock route or camping place under the Crown Lands Act 1989
- b) any reserve for travelling stock, water reserve, reserve for access or crossing (where the reserve is for the purpose of providing travelling stock with access to or a crossing of water, whether expressly notified for that purpose or not), or
- c) any stock watering place.

## List of abbreviations

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>DPI</b>  | NSW Department of Primary Industries          |
| <b>EAD</b>  | Emergency animal disease                      |
| <b>ha</b>   | Hectares                                      |
| <b>KPIs</b> | Key performance indicators                    |
| <b>NPWS</b> | National Parks and Wildlife Service           |
| <b>OEH</b>  | Office of Environment and Heritage            |
| <b>PIC</b>  | Property identification codes (for livestock) |
| <b>SELS</b> | Socioecological landscapes                    |
| <b>TSR</b>  | Travelling Stock Reserve                      |

## References

Local Land Services (draft) *State Strategic Plan 2016-2026*, Local Land Services, Dubbo.

Murray Catchment Management Authority 2013, *Murray Catchment Action Plan 2013-2023*, Murray Catchment Management Authority, Deniliquin.

Natural Resources Commission 2015, *Performance Standard for Local Land Services*

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services 2015a, *Defining and Managing Community Expectations for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services: A Survey of Landholders*.

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services 2015b, *Northern Tablelands Investment Plan 2025: A Plan for Profitable Agriculture and Resilient Landscapes*.

Also see 'Legislation and guiding influences', page 37.

### Photograph acknowledgements

Cover: M. Mather  
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# Appendix

## *Socio-ecological landscapes used in investment planning*

Socio-ecological landscapes (SELs) are areas distinguished by their unique integration of biophysical and socio-economic characteristics and their interdependencies. Nine SELs have been defined for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services region (see Figure A1).

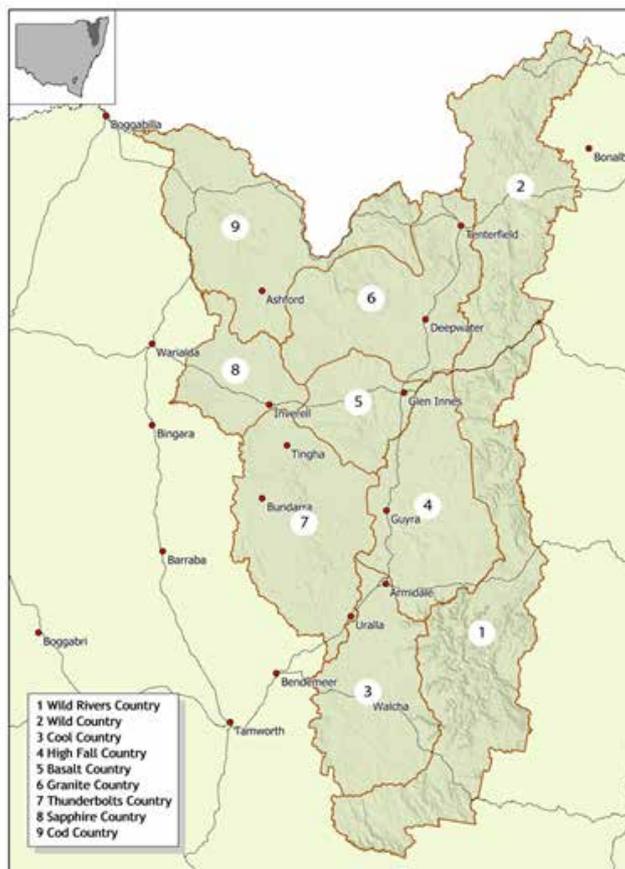


Figure A1. Socio-ecological landscapes within Northern Tablelands Local Land Services region.

## *Resilience framework*

The *Northern Tablelands Investment Plan 2025* uses resilience thinking to inform how the Northern Tablelands region and the socioecological landscapes are functioning. Understanding and managing the landscape as an integrated system is critical to achieving the vision of the plan.

The Resilience Framework summarises regional scale system relationships that influence agricultural production and natural resources across the region (Table A1). The following terms and words are used to describe these relationships.

**Critical regional scale system linkages** – External connections – Identifies the most important social and biophysical links and connections that extend beyond the borders of the Northern Tablelands administrative region.

**Critical system drivers** – Identifies the most significant drivers of the landscape and are directly related to the level of threat to system resilience. Many other system drivers exist.

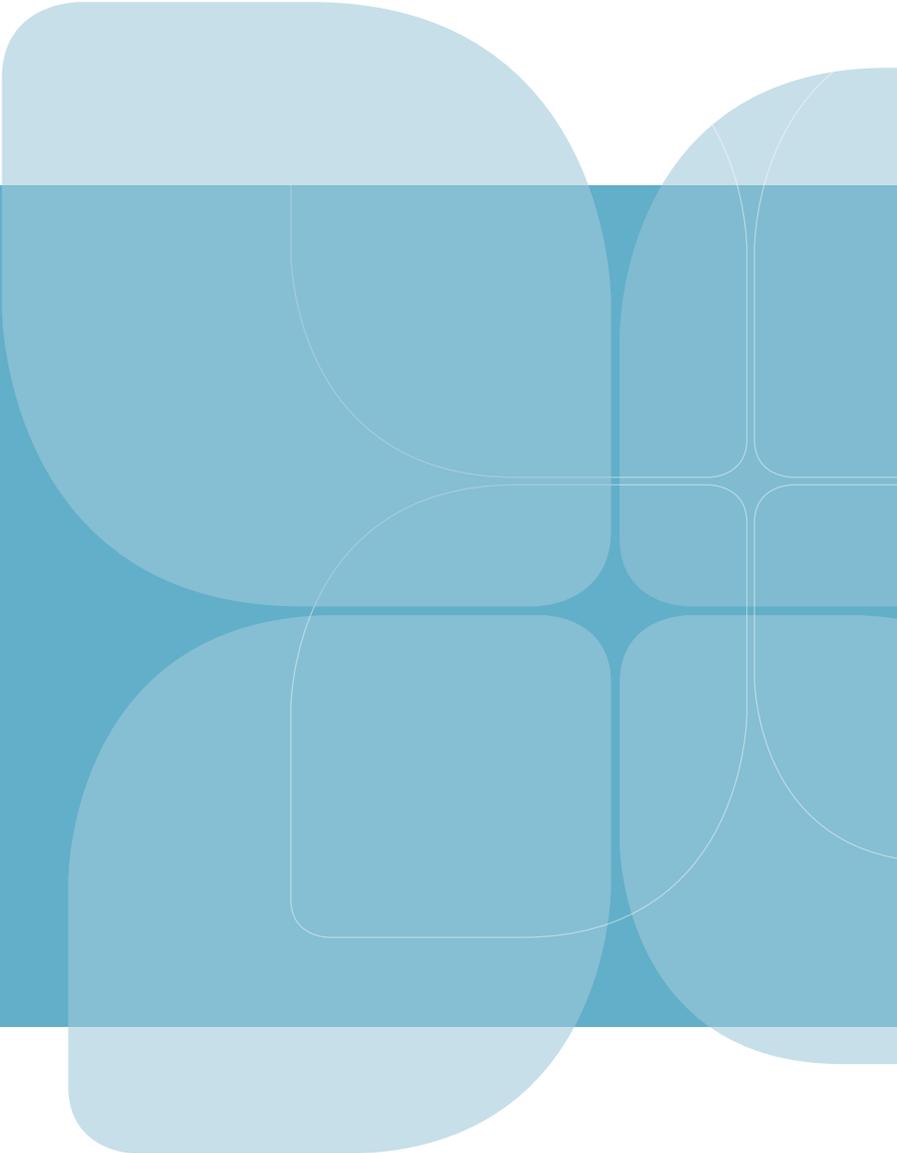
**Priority controlling variables** – The controlling variables are the aspects of the system that control whether or not it will move towards or away from a known threshold and where actions can be focused.

**Known thresholds** – Identifies the most relevant known thresholds of concern that are the focus of planning.

Table A1. Regional scale linkages, drivers, controlling variables and thresholds.

| Critical regional scale system linkages   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Northern Tablelands influences on other systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headwaters of major river catchments (Macleay, Clarence, Gwydir, Border Rivers, Namoi, Hunter)</li> <li>• Murray Darling Basin river catchments</li> <li>• Recharge area for the Great Artesian Basin in the north west portion of the region</li> <li>• Clarence-Moreton basin in the north east portion</li> </ul> | <p><b>Influences to and from other systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invasive species pathways</li> <li>• East-west and north-south road networks</li> <li>• Atmosphere and climate</li> <li>• Markets</li> <li>• Plant and animal diseases</li> <li>• Livestock selling facilities</li> </ul> |
| Critical system drivers:  |   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Total grazing pressure</li> <li>2. Runoff processes</li> <li>3. Invasive species</li> <li>4. Dieback</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Deep drainage &amp; salinity</li> <li>6. Emergency animal diseases (EADs)</li> <li>7. Drought</li> </ol>  |
| Priority controlling variables:   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groundcover and pasture biomass</li> <li>• Soil organic matter</li> <li>• Surveillance and reporting for EADs</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rainfall use efficiency</li> <li>• Native vegetation extent and condition</li> <li>• Vertebrate pest populations</li> </ul>  |
| Known thresholds:   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groundcover 70%</li> <li>• Soil organic carbon 2.0%</li> <li>• Pasture biomass 1,500 kg GDM/ha</li> <li>• Litter 2 t/ha</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native vegetation cover 30%</li> <li>• Wetland State 1 to 2 Transition</li> <li>• Stream condition State 1 to 2 Transition</li> <li>• Profitability ratio 0.8 total cost: total income</li> <li>• Endemic pest populations 70% annual reduction</li> </ul>                   |

**To view a full version of the Northern Tablelands Investment Plan 2025 go to:** [http://northerntablelands.lis.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/566630/investment-plan-2015-web.pdf](http://northerntablelands.lis.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/566630/investment-plan-2015-web.pdf)



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