



Local Land  
Services  
North Coast

# Local Annual Report 2016



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## Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of the report January 2016 to December 2016. However, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

# Foreword

As we complete our third year of operation, the Board and staff of North Coast Local Land Services have strengthened relationships with ratepayers, landholders and communities and continued to deliver services and projects that meet the diverse needs of our region.

North Coast Local Land Services projects and partnerships grow farm productivity and healthy environments but also play a vital role in helping to protect against pests, diseases and environmental threats. This work is supported by the NSW Government Catchment Action Funding and the Commonwealth Government funded National Landcare Programme.

The North Coast is unquestionably the most agriculturally and environmentally diverse in the state. It is home to the third most biodiverse area in Australia, it is the most biodiverse region in New South Wales, and supports a progressive, diverse and engaged community.

Our response to meeting these diverse needs has been to develop an integrated approach to service delivery. We partner with public and private organisations to achieve our goals and this collaborative approach best serves the needs of the region.

Local Land Services ratepayers and our state and federal government investors expect and deserve outcomes that demonstrate 'value for money' supporting a range of triple bottom line outcomes.

The North Coast Local Land Services team is dedicated to delivering quality customer service and they are here when it matters – helping our customers and stakeholders with knowledge, networks and experience.



The Board and staff of North Coast Local Land Services also engage with the North Coast community through our very active and positive community advisory group, Aboriginal community advisory group and regional weed committee and our strong partnerships with industry and diverse range of community and environmental groups.

The North Coast Local Land Services team is committed to a triple bottom line approach to our work – we strive for sustainability underpinned by a balance in social, economic and environmental outcomes in everything we do.

**Mark Bulley**

**Acting Chair, North Coast Local Land Services**

# North Coast region at a glance



The North Coast Local Land Services Region is located in north-eastern NSW, including Lord Howe Island, and covers an area of 32,050 km<sup>2</sup>. The Region includes 568 km of coastline and extends three nautical miles out to sea.

There are more than 500,000 people who reside on the North Coast, including more than 20,000 Indigenous Australians. The major population centres are located on the coast and are connected primarily by coastal transport routes — they include Tweed Heads, Lismore, Murwillumbah, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads, Kempsey and Port Macquarie.

## Landscapes

A diversity of natural landscapes and a mix of temperate and sub-tropical climates provides for nationally and internationally recognised biodiversity, wilderness and wetland areas; combined with complex and diverse soil systems.

The escarpment ranges and foothills to the west support the headwaters of the nine large river systems that drain onto extensive coastal alluvial floodplains, which have strong connections to headland, beach, estuarine and marine environments.

While a significant proportion of the Region is within terrestrial and marine protected areas, there are many threatened species and ecological communities that occur on private land.

## Livelihoods

The North Coast has a diverse economy that reflects the provision of services to an ageing population, and the popularity of the Region as a tourist destination.

The North Coast supports a range of natural resource-based industries which underpin the prosperity of the Region. These include the beef, dairy, blueberry, macadamia, intensive horticulture, fishing and aquaculture, timber production and tourism industries.

The region has a large and capable natural resources management community and industry base that is actively engaged in the sustainable management of the region's natural resources.

## Lifestyles and culture

The North Coast has many vibrant towns, villages and communities that support diverse coastal and hinterland lifestyles. An iconic, growing and densely populated coastline provides a focus for recreational pursuits and much sought after sea change lifestyles. The Aboriginal community is a major landholder within the region.

# 2016 local achievements

544

PROPERTY VISITS  
BY VETS AND  
BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



979

GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY  
VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



233

SALEYARD INSPECTIONS

26

LIVESTOCK EXPORT  
CERTIFICATES ISSUED



542

PARTICIPANTS AT  
TRAINING EVENTS



614

HECTARES MANAGED FOR NATURAL  
RESOURCE OUTCOMES



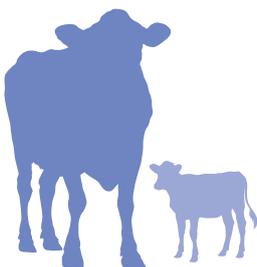
\$910,000

ALLOCATED TO LOCAL LANDCARE  
NETWORKS FOR THREE YEARS



2,139

PROPERTIES INVOLVED IN  
WILD DOG BAITING



423

PROPERTY  
IDENTIFICATION CODES  
ISSUED



797,215

HECTARES MANAGED FOR  
PEST ANIMAL CONTROL

# Local Land Services goals

Local Land Services aligns all of its work with its mission of being a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources. The strategic direction of Local Land Services is summarised in four organisational goals.

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



## Local Land Services statewide goals

The operations of North Coast Local Land Services are aligned and integrated with the four statewide goals of Local Land Services. The North Coast Local Strategic Plan describes each area of operation and outlines key strategies and activities that will achieve each statewide goal.

### Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities

*North Coast Local Land Services is committed to making a significant contribution to the North Coast region in order to see it thrive. Resilience, self-reliance and preparedness are vital ingredients in a thriving community, ensuring it is better able to withstand shocks or disturbances to the landscape, production of food and fibre and the economy, and still maintain its functions and structures.*

The following activities have been implemented by North Coast Local Land Services in 2016 which was the second year of operation under the North Coast Local Strategic Plan.

#### Emergency management and disaster relief

Emergency management is a shared responsibility that involves prevention and preparedness to minimise the impact of emergencies, responding to emergency events and conducting recovery operations to return communities, the environment and economy to business as usual. In partnership with the NSW Department of Primary Industries, we help manage livestock disease and emergencies such as drought, bushfires and floods and biosecurity events involving plants, animals and pest insects.

North Coast Local Land Services has an established incident management team in place which has the training and capabilities to quickly respond to emergencies.

##### Projects in the past year have included.

- disaster assessment for the significant storm event associated with an East Coast low in June significantly impacting on blueberry producers
- participation at the Flood Ready workshop held at Belmore River, near Kempsey
- participation at the 'Getting to know your neighbour' emergency management workshop at Casino.

#### Aboriginal communities

We support Aboriginal people to care for Country, share traditional land management knowledge and help protect and strengthen Aboriginal cultural heritage.

We're working to promote Aboriginal cultural awareness and enhance engagement throughout our region. Our goal is to support Aboriginal communities in caring for Country, particularly through employment and training opportunities to build skills and capacity in land management.

More than 160 hectares of land holding Aboriginal cultural value were managed.

##### Projects in the past year have included:

- launch of the North Coast Aboriginal Engagement Plan
- participation in NAIDOC Week celebrations
- working on Country knowledge sharing events with Local Aboriginal Land Councils at Arrawarra, Brunswick Valley, Seven Mile Beach and Lake Ainsworth
- training of Githabul Rangers in large scale bush regeneration, fire management, threatened species protection and vertebrate pest monitoring
- training of Ngurrala Green Team members in bushland regeneration activities
- partnership with Booroongen Djugun College to delivering employment, training and education programs in environmental conservation and land management.

## Sustainable agriculture

North Coast Local Land Services provides high quality advisory services to landholders in the region to improve the sustainability and resilience of the landscape, agriculture industries and communities.

We have a strong team that provides credible, unbiased and trusted advice and extension services built upon sound scientific knowledge and evidence based practices.

We increased the capacity of land managers to improve primary production and natural resource management and trained more than 2,300 customers at training events.

More than 840 hectares of land was managed for sustainable grazing in the region.

### Projects in the past year have included:

- support for beef producers in the Macleay Valley exploring opportunities for organic beef
- delivery of the inaugural BeefSpecs program, in partnership with NSW Department of Primary Industries to North Coast cattle producers
- delivery of best management practice for cultivation and grazing programs
- delivery of Understanding our Soils programs working with landholders in the Dorrigo region
- coordinated southern and northern beef producer group workshop sessions
- erosion and irrigation workshops held for blueberry producers.



# Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

Effective biosecurity and animal welfare is insurance to maintain market access for North Coast livestock and crop producers, now and in the future. North Coast produce is free of many of the pests and diseases found in other parts of the world and that's why Local Land Services works diligently with ratepayers to monitor herds, flocks, and crops across the region and shares up-to-date advice and information to boost productivity.

## Animal biosecurity and welfare

Pest animals cause serious economic losses to agricultural production, pose a risk of exotic disease, threaten the survival of many native species and cause environmental degradation. We work with landholders to minimise the impact of pests on agricultural production and the environment. In the past year district veterinarians and biosecurity officers attended 979 general consultations along with conducting 63 investigations to exclude emergency animal disease.

During 2016, district veterinarians have efficiently managed two confirmed Hendra disease cases.

## Invasive species and plant biosecurity

Invasive pests can impact significantly on the productivity and profitability of agriculture. We work with landholders to minimise the impact of pests on agricultural production and the environment. We provided education and training workshops to build the capacity of 600 land managers to support and help coordinate group control programs — bringing landholders together to control wild dogs, foxes, pigs and deer.

Working with land managers we work towards goals outlined in the regional wild dog management plan and this year adopted three additional local wild dog management plans. 2,139 landholders were involved in baiting over an area of 797,215 hectares across the region.

Another high priority is supporting land managers and producers to manage existing weeds such as pasture weeds and environmental woody weeds, and prevent the spread of new and emerging weeds which can impact negatively on agriculture. We're committed to improving the coordination of weed management in the region.

### Projects in the past year have included:

- development of relationships to support the North Coast Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan
- research into the presence and spread of tropical soda apple and ongoing support for on-ground works to reduce its spread
- ongoing commitment to the reduction of bitou bush, with density reduction across 125 hectares of Byron coastline in partnership with Byron Shire Council, Crown Lands and local DuneCare groups
- protection of the headwaters of the Clarence and Orara River regions from weed infestations in partnership with Upper Clarence Combined Landcare and Orara Valley RiverCare
- survey and mapping of a number of highly invasive weeds in the Clarence region in partnership with Muurrbay Bundani Aboriginal Corporation, EnviTE and Coffs Harbour Bushland Regeneration and Clarence Landcare

- protection of the Macleay region from noxious and emerging weeds in conjunction with Kempsey, Nambucca and Port Macquarie Councils
- trial of a multi-tenure approach to strategically controlling cat's claw creeper vine using biological control agents.

## Travelling stock reserves and stock management

North Coast Local Land Services manages travelling stock reserves for multiple users in the common interest of the whole community. We manage more than 8,400 hectares of travelling stock reserves and promote a balance of use for production, social, cultural and environmental outcomes and continuously work to maintain and improve the resource. Identification and traceability of stock is an essential part of biosecurity.

North Coast Local Land Services supports the National Livestock Identification Scheme by undertaking saleyard audits and inspections and completed 233 inspections during the year.

Some 26 livestock export certificates were issued from the North Coast during 2016 ensuring our stock are free from livestock health and disease problems. To protect market access, North Coast Local Land Services manages the Property Identification Scheme (PIC), with 423 issued during the year.



# Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

North Coast Local Land Services' team works hard to bring landholders and our customers the best available research, knowledge and skills to assist producers to be more profitable and to ensure that natural resources are available for future generations.

We support healthy environments and biodiverse ecosystems across the North Coast region by assisting landholders and communities to improve the quality of their land, soil, vegetation and water through grants and funding for on-ground projects, partnerships and training.

## Land management and biodiversity

Healthy ecosystems underpin successful, productive primary producers and communities. Through investment from the NSW and Australian governments, we support a healthy ecosystem across the landscapes of NSW.

We're focussed on implementing landscape-scale approaches to address threats to the natural environment. In particular, we are supporting land managers to rehabilitate degraded habitat, manage weeds and pests, and contribute to the recovery of threatened ecological communities.

In the past year five voluntary conservation agreements were negotiated, protecting and conserving for biodiversity enhancement 10 hectares of land, and 840 hectares received support for measures to better manage sustainable grazing.

Native vegetation benefits both on farm production and environmental health. Healthy native vegetation can increase land values and productivity while reducing operating costs.

We're aiming to improve the condition of native vegetation and riparian areas, extend habitat for threatened flora and fauna, and enhance existing wetland vegetation extent and quality. To achieve this, we have enhanced and rehabilitated three hectares of wetland and 234 hectares of coastal native vegetation.

Sound management of native vegetation to rehabilitate, enhance and protect remnants and to increase the area of native vegetation in the landscape is a key objective for land managers in the North Coast region. In the past year we have enhanced and rehabilitated 563 hectares of land and protected 152 hectares of vegetation through fencing.

With better knowledge and improved land management techniques, soil is protected by native vegetation to reduce its susceptibility to erosion.

Native vegetation is also critical for maintaining and improving habitat for many threatened flora and fauna species and for sustaining the health and function of local ecosystems, we planted 20 hectares of native species to assist in regeneration.

### Projects in the past year have included

- 326 native vegetation clearing enquiries resolved
- support for development and implementation of the NSW Biodiversity Reform and associated legislation
- connecting and rehabilitating priority habitat corridors in the north
- restoration of endangered ecological communities in the southern region

- enhancing high conservation value vegetation in the Upper Clarence
- supporting sustainable farming on the Richmond and Clarence floodplains
- supporting Tweed oyster growers to implement best practice
- protecting Byron's shorebirds
- progressing the treatment and eradication of invasive weeds and African big headed ant from Lord Howe Island
- investigations into restoration of wetlands in Clybucca in lower Macleay.

## Investment and partnerships - Landcare

We support and engage new and existing Landcare networks and groups, community and industry partners, to undertake on-ground works and capacity building activities. Working with Landcare NSW and NSW Government, we're aiming to improve land and water ecosystem management, soil health, and native vegetation protection.

North Coast Local Land Services has allocated more than \$0.91 million dollars for the operation of local Landcare networks and the delivery of regional Landcare facilitator functions for the three-year period from 2015 to 2018.

In the past year the team have worked closely with North Coast Regional Landcare, continuing to build on the formal partnership with them.

North Coast Regional Landcare represents 13 regional Landcare networks and more than 250 local groups.





# Focus on healthy soils

*Our activities have increased the capacity of land managers to adopt sustainable practices by providing resources for mentoring, information development, disseminating new information and products and piloting innovative practices.*

## The challenge

North Coast Local Land Services undertakes a range of projects and activities that focus on the importance of soil.

Sustainable soil and land management is central to ensuring a healthy environment, productive food systems and improved rural livelihoods.

The best pathway to a healthy soil is to increase organic matter above and below ground level.

High organic matter in soils means improved soil structure, improved rainfall and air infiltration, increased water holding capacity, plants with deeper roots, resistance to erosion, improved availability of essential nutrients, nitrogen phosphorus and sulphur as organic matter is decomposed.

Land managers on a wide variety of soil types and climates can achieve healthy soils.

The projects North Coast Local Land Services has implemented assist farmers to grow their knowledge of soil properties, how to improve their soils and manage grazing animals and ground cover whilst maintaining healthy soils.

## Work undertaken

Across the region, a range of expert resources have been undertaking landholder workshops, training and field days, focusing on the importance of good soil management.

This includes information from technical specialists in:

- soil biology
- pasture and grazing management
- effluent management
- compost
- soil analysis.



## Benefits

- excellent capacity building with many participants involved in soil samples and analysis for the first time
- increased knowledge and awareness of the potential agronomic benefits of increasing soil organic carbon
- farms using an on-farm resource for benefit rather than waste, for example, irrigating dairy effluent onto pastures
- farmers able to choose a change of practices that interested them and that suited their farm, operation and landscape.

## Key achievement

Our activities have increased the capacity of land managers to adopt sustainable practices by providing resources for mentoring, information development, disseminating new information and products and piloting innovative practices.

## In collaboration with

- Agricultural Information and Monitoring Service (AIMS)
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare
- Bellinger Landcare
- Hastings Landcare.

# Saving the coastal koala from extinction

*"There are so many different aspects to disaster response, it is vital we are all familiar with each other and understand individual roles so when and if the real thing happens, we can provide the best support possible to protect our community."*

## The challenge

Coastal populations of koalas continue to decline as a result of fox and dog attacks.

North Coast Local Land Services, in partnership with Byron Shire Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Brunswick Valley Landcare have been addressing this threat through a three year partnership program to monitor and trap these invasive animals.

The program's success has relied on local landholders between the Pacific Highway and Tyagarah Nature Reserve to get involved.

## Work undertaken

Landholders on neighbouring properties to the Tyagarah Nature Reserve and Belongil Estuary were encouraged to participate with monitoring and camera monitoring to monitor the movement of wildlife and pest animals.

Images of native animals and foxes, wild dogs and cats have painted a clear picture of how pest animals are using local bush corridors.

## Benefits

- encouraging the community to engage in protection of Byron's native fauna
- community involvement is based on landholder interest – monitoring, camera monitoring, trapping
- better targeting of management or control efforts such as trapping or locating and destroying dens
- information gathered will be used to protect the coastal koala.



## Key achievement

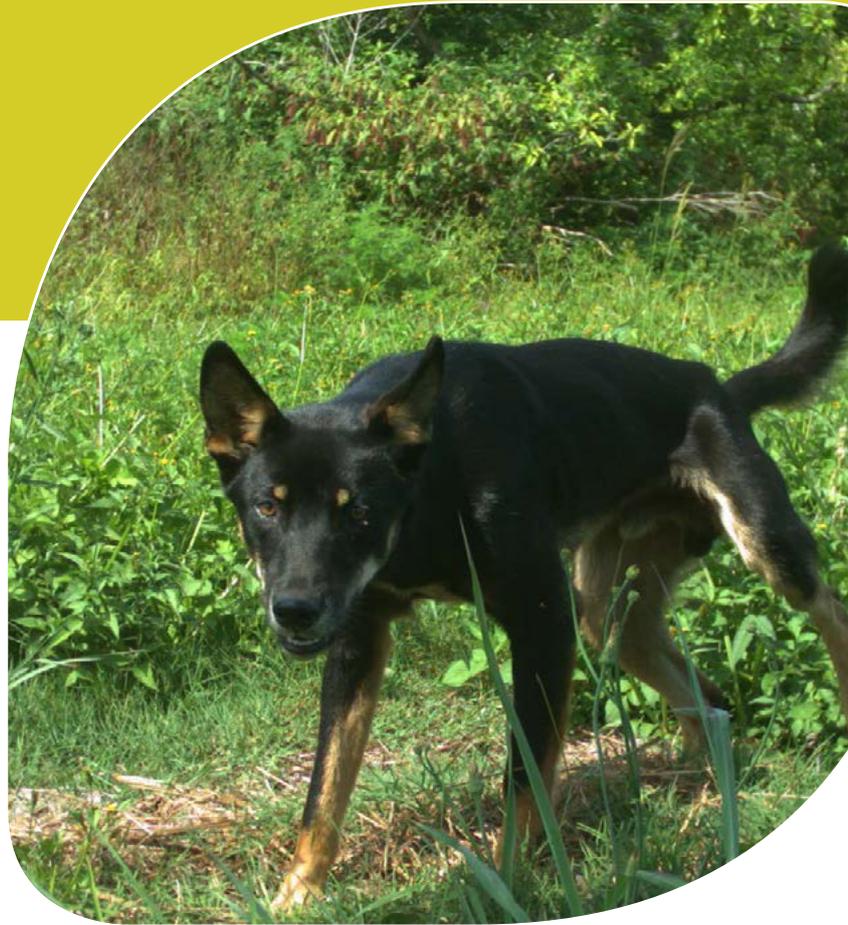
Building strong collaborative relationships with landholders who neighbour with the nature reserve and estuary leading to enhanced pest management and control methods.

## In collaboration with

- Byron Shire Council
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Brunswick Valley Landcare.

# Improving landholder involvement in wild dog groups

*More than 65 coordinated groups involved in the Autumn campaign covering nearly 420 properties and 265,000 hectares of land.*



## The challenge

Wild dogs are considered a serious pest in Australia attacking livestock and native animals, potentially spreading diseases and threatening human health, safety and wellbeing. Wild dog attacks on livestock and pets, lethal or otherwise, also cause emotional distress to landholders.

North Coast Local Land Services supports landholder groups with a range of control techniques including ground baiting, trapping and the use of technology, including monitoring with remote cameras. The biosecurity team have been working hard to encourage landholders to cooperate with their neighbours, rather than tackling their problem individually.

## Work undertaken

The most effective approach for controlling wild dogs brings together all land managers in a coordinated approach - wild dogs don't respect human boundaries which is why it's important for all land managers to work together.

Effective wild dog management involves understanding how wild dogs function within a landscape and then using the appropriate control methods, this could be baiting, trapping, canid pest ejectors (CPE) shooting or a combination of these methods.

North Coast Local Land Services biosecurity officers have been working hard to encourage land managers to work together with the aim of increasing participation in wild dog control programs across the region.

Over the last three years that effort is starting to see results with more land managers getting involved in group programs, rather than just trying to tackle the problem on their own. More than 65 coordinated groups involved in the Autumn campaign covering nearly 420 properties and 265,000 hectares of land.

## Benefits

- The number of groups involved in wild dog baiting programs has increased from 94 to 198 in three years.
- The number of holdings participating in groups has increased from 407 to 1,014 and the total number of holdings participating has increased from 1,552 to 1919.
- The wider community benefit greatly from the efforts of those who are active and regularly partake in pest animal control.
- Improving the number of landholders participating in groups enable more effective wild dog control.

## Key achievement

The significant improvement in the number of landholders participating in groups, rather than tackling the wild dog problem individually will result in better control of wild dog populations.

## In collaboration with

- private landholders
- public land managers
- North East Pest Animal Advisory Committee (NEPAAC).



# Building relationships in the North Coast

*Collaborative projects stretch across many areas, including sustainable grazing practices, enhancing vegetative corridors for biodiversity and assisting Indigenous communities.*

## The challenge

Everyone has a role to play in growing and maintaining healthy environments and productive farms. North Coast Local Land Services is building formal relationships with a large range of environmental and agriculturally based organisations to maximise the outcomes we are able to achieve.

## Work undertaken

In 2016 we have continued to build on our strong partnership with North Coast Regional Landcare, undertaking a mid-agreement review. The Agreement which was signed in 2015, is now at the mid-point and the two organisations are continuing to identify ways to further strengthen their partnership. The Partnership is much more than the provision of funding and resources, it is also about harnessing each organisations knowledge and skills.

North Coast Local Land Services continually works to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to support productive and sustainable agriculture. In 2016 a range of partnerships were formalised with agricultural industry partners designed to support the productivity and sustainability of agriculture on the North Coast. Formal partnership arrangements were entered into with Subtropical Dairy and the Australian Macadamia Society and ongoing opportunities for collaboration were identified with Norco Rural and Dairy NSW.

North Coast Local Land Services also formalised the relationship with the Lord Howe Island Board that will support the healthy natural resources and agricultural productivity of Lord Howe Island. The formal partnership is designed to support healthy natural resources and productive agriculture for Lord Howe Island, its adjacent islands and marine environment.

## Benefits

- building strong relationships that have real outcomes for the environment, the economy and our community.
- facilitating information sharing
- enabling better informed decisions while balancing production, profit and sustainability
- facilitating awareness in the community of the importance of biodiversity which leads to stewardship and protection of the environment
- bringing people together to achieve shared goals to protect our natural, living wealth – our biodiversity – for future generations.



## Key achievement

The North Coast Regional Landcare partnership has facilitated additional funding and resources for this important grass roots organisation and has enabled programs in pest management and sustainable agriculture.

The Subtropical Dairy agreement has facilitated additional training for agricultural advisory staff in effluent management for North Coast dairy producers.

The Norco partnership has facilitated the participation of North Coast Local Land Services and Norco agricultural advisory staff in the ProGraze program.

The Australian Macadamia Society partnership has supported 16 macadamia farmers to implement best practice orchard management.

The Lord Howe Island Board partnership will help protect this world heritage listed natural treasure.

## In collaboration with

- North Coast Regional Landcare
- Subtropical Dairy
- Dairy NSW, Norco
- Australian Macadamia Society,
- The Lord Howe Island Board
- the broader agricultural industry.

# Office locations

## Casino

147 Barker Street  
Casino NSW 2470

Ph: 02 6661 2900

## South Grafton

24 - 26 Mulgi Drive  
South Grafton NSW 2460

Ph: 02 6604 1100

## Lismore

79 Conway Street  
Lismore NSW 2480

Ph: 02 6623 3900

## Coffs Harbour

24 Gordon Street, Coffs Harbour  
PO Box 1417  
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450

Ph: 02 6659 9400

## Kempsey

83 Belgrave Street  
Kempsey NSW 2440

Ph: 02 6563 6700

North Coast Local Land Services

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