



## THE NORTHERN RIVERS REGION – DYNAMIC ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

As one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia, the Northern Rivers region boasts a combination of dynamic manufacturing and horticultural industries, plus a wide range of attractive lifestyle opportunities in rural, urban, forested and coastal areas.

Located in the north-east of New South Wales, the Northern Rivers region is also one of Australia's key lifestyle and learning regions. Major towns and centres include Tweed Heads, Lismore, Ballina, Byron and Grafton.

The region's population of more than 288,000 has grown by 13% in the last 10 years, and continues to increase at a rate of about 1.7 percent – above the state average of 1.38%. Population is forecast to grow by a further 76,600 by 2036, stimulating job creation across the region\*\*.

### Major employment sectors include:

- Tourism – key tourism destination, representing the second highest level of international tourists in New South Wales. Annually, the region receives 227,000 international visitors, 1.6 million domestic overnight visitors, and 3.2 million day trip visitors. Tourism generates approximately \$1.2 billion in revenue for the region†.
- Agribusiness and forestry – this \$350 million-plus sector includes dairy, tropical fruits, cattle, poultry, plantation forests, sugar cane and aquaculture
- Manufacturing – generating an annual turnover in excess of \$800m, the region's manufacturing hub comprises industries as diverse as food, beverages, and timber

- Education – well developed educational facilities with two campuses of Southern Cross University, nine TAFE campuses, and almost 30 other cultural educational institutions with specialist training in the arts, crafts, theatre, and film

### Several additional industries are emerging as areas with strong growth prospects:

- Media and creative industries
- Horticulture
- Residential development
- Meat and dairy
- Aged care

Gas is also a significant emerging industry sector, and positions the Northern Rivers region as a potential powerhouse for the Australian eastern energy markets. As the largest coal seam methane gas reserve in New South Wales, the Clarence-Moreton Basin (situated 70 km south of Coolangatta) is a largely untapped energy resource which has been identified as a key driver of employment across the region.

Major gas extraction companies such as Metgasco have committed to using its resources to supply over 150 petajoules to the South-East Queensland energy market over the next 20 years.

This major project will significantly benefit the Northern Rivers region and its surrounding localities by increasing economic activity for local businesses, boosting population growth and positioning the region as a dynamic economic growth hub of New South Wales.

Source: AECgroup \*Regional Population Growth 1998-08 \*\*NSW Department of Planning; NSW State and Regional Population Projections 2009-2036.  
† Tourism New South Wales September 2009; Northern Rivers Tourism May 2009

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