

# Mid North Coast Regional Development Board

## 2003 – 2004 Annual Report

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## **CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE**

This is the first year of a four-year term for the current Mid North Coast Regional Development Board, with a new Board appointed by the Minister for Regional Development in August 2003. Four new members joined six members from the previous Board who sought reappointment. The continuation of a number of members from the previous Board has ensured a level of continuity in progressing a range of ongoing regional development programs, while the new members have injected diverse ideas and a fresh perspective on the Board's role and activities.

Following the new Board's appointment the members undertook a strategic planning exercise. The objective was to reassess the Board's regional development priorities, and to ensure that the Board meets its contractual performance obligations to the NSW Department of State and Regional Development. The result has been the formulation of a Board Strategic Plan 2004 - 2007, with the adoption of eight key regional development objectives and a series of related strategies.

The Board's overriding goal remains to facilitate growth in employment by supporting private enterprise, with a key strategy being support for the formation and consolidation of collaborative networks committed to developing collective solutions.

The Mid North Coast region continues to experience strong population growth, placing pressure on infrastructure, services and the demand for employment. In order to better understand the economic and social forces driving growth in this region, in early 2004 the Board (in partnership with the Area Consultative Committee and North Coast Institute) commissioned the Hunter Valley Research Foundation to undertake research and produce a green paper on the dynamics and drivers of the Mid North Coast economy.

Titled "Growing jobs on the Mid North Coast", the green paper should assist in identifying opportunities for "strategic" intervention. The green paper will be widely distributed and used to engender discussion on appropriate regional development priorities for the Mid North Coast. In the longer term the Board remains committed to the formulation of a regional strategy that will provide a blueprint for integrated economic development.

In a region dominated by small businesses the retention and expansion of existing enterprises and industries appears to offer the best prospects for growth in private sector employment. During this reporting period the Board has actively engaged with and provided practical support for several hundred businesses in the herbs, organics, private forestry, creative industries and rural tourism sectors. Increasing the Board's capabilities and effectiveness in providing practical solutions to facilitate industry and business growth is likely to remain the primary focus of Board efforts over the next twelve months.

Ron McDermott

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD – ROLE

The Mid North Coast Regional Development Board is an independent not-for-profit organisation funded by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD), one of thirteen throughout NSW. The Board is comprised of ten business and community leaders from across the NSW Mid North Coast, appointed by the NSW Cabinet for a four-year term. Profiles on Board members appear at the end of this report.

Regional Development Boards are broadly tasked to advance and champion the economic development interests of their regions. Board activities are broadly governed by a series of performance obligations under a funding contract with DSRD. These obligations require Boards to:

1. Promote regional economic development initiatives (and hence sustainable jobs) in the Mid North Coast through:
  - Encouraging communities to work together to attain the necessary critical mass to be competitive international investment locations;
  - Marketing local government areas & regions as business locations;
  - Hosting Commonwealth & State initiatives or programs which have as their aim the strengthening of the profile of non-metropolitan regions as business locations or the attraction of skilled labour;
  - Co-hosting initiatives of the NSW Government aimed at attracting investment and developing exports.
2. Provide advice to the NSW Government and the Minister for Regional Development on important regional development issues.
3. Involve local government and key stakeholders in regional economic development through:
  - Project partnerships;
  - Providing advice to Government on local government & key stakeholders economic development initiatives;
  - Encouraging participation of local government & key stakeholders in NSW Government regional economic development forums;
  - Encouraging collaborative marketing of the Mid North Coast.
4. Provide advice to the NSW Government and the Minister for Regional Development on strategies for regions and communities to better plan for drought and natural disasters, including the development of generic business recovery measures.
5. Develop local leadership.
6. Champion major investment projects.
7. Promote key initiatives to improve the region's business climate, including infrastructure.
8. Host other NSW Government business related initiatives.

The Mid North Coast Regional Development Board's responsibilities cover the Local Government Areas of Greater Taree, Hastings, Kempsey, Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour. The region is extended to include the Great Lakes and Gloucester LGAs in joint initiatives with the Board's Federal counterpart, the Area Consultative Committee.

The Board's mission is "to be an effective and influential body that articulates and advances the Mid North Coast's economic development interests, in partnership with the community and the public and private sectors". The Board's motto is "enhancing our region by supporting sustainable enterprise". The Board's activities are primarily directed towards increasing private sector employment by identifying and progressing opportunities to enhance the business and investment environment and support private enterprise.

The Board also manages a number of specific industry development projects (one-off) and programs (ongoing), using funding from relevant State and Federal Government programs where appropriate. The Board does not directly assist individual businesses, but industries and areas.

More detailed information on the Board and its activities are available at [www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au](http://www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au).

## BOARD GOVERNANCE

The Board's primary goal is to increase private sector employment through effective action to enhance business and investment opportunities in the Mid North Coast region. In undertaking its work the Board has adopted a set of principles that guide the conduct of its regional economic development activities. These principles include that the Board and its staff will:

- Operate in an ethical, respectful, transparent, accountable, socially responsible and non-partisan manner
- Determine its priorities in consultation with Local Governments, communities, industries and other economic development stakeholders
- Use partnerships where appropriate
- Undertake initiatives that will be of significant economic benefit and have strategic and environmentally sustainable outcomes, and
- Progress economic development initiatives that are realistic and outcomes focussed.

On taking up their duties all Board members and staff are required to endorse a Code of Conduct and Ethics. In participating in Board activities Members are required to put aside personal, local and business interests, and consider only the broader interests of the region and the community. The Board has adopted protocols for managing potential conflicts of interests that are applied scrupulously, including the requirement for individual declarations of any actual or perceived conflict of interest at every Board meeting.

Regional development is always a team activity, requiring constructive partnerships with both the public and private sectors. As a relatively small volunteer-based organisation with two full-time employees, the capacity of the Board to play an effective role in facilitating regional economic development is largely dependent on its ability to influence and gain the support of others. The Board aims to act as a catalyst to initiate sustainable economic growth.

The Board is fundamentally committed to responding to real industry and community needs with effective and practical strategies, not arbitrarily “picking winners” or trying to impose “top down” solutions. In determining its regional development objectives the Board has made considerable efforts to consult widely with public and private sector stakeholders, and has particularly valued the input and support of constituent LGAs.

The longer-term viability of industry development initiatives is dependent on the formation of resilient and inclusive networks willing to take responsibility for determining the future of their sectors. The Board seeks to engage with industry at an early stage, to encourage the formation of enterprise networks, and to support the formulation of development plans where there is a high level of industry ownership and commitment to implementation.

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The following regional development objectives for the Board have been determined in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders.

- **Diversify & expand the region's agricultural base** - support and facilitate private investment in emerging agricultural industries (specifically the organics, herbs & aquaculture sectors)
- **Expand the region's private forestry industry** - in partnership with growers & the industry, & consistent with triple bottom line principles, facilitate the growth of the private forestry industry & associated value chain
- **Expand the region's manufacturing base** - in partnership with industry facilitate the growth & profitability of existing manufacturers & attract new clean green businesses
- **Encourage the establishment of creative & knowledge-based industries within the region** - in partnership with industry facilitate the growth of existing and attract new creative & knowledge-based businesses to the region
- **Enhance the essential infrastructure required to support industry competitiveness (ICT, transport, roads, energy, education, health, aged care, water)** - identify & address deficiencies in the region's infrastructure; secure universal access to cost-effective broadband
- **Enhance the business & investment environment** - raise the professionalism & competitiveness of businesses in the region, enhance their access to a diverse range of skills and expertise
- **Effectively market the region** - assist existing industries & businesses to access broader markets through collaborative promotion; raise the profile of the Mid North Coast as a business investment destination; communicate the region's economic development needs to Governments
- **Enhance regional planning & coordination** - improve decision-making through the provision of credible economic advice; advance a regional strategy that is widely accepted as a blueprint for integrated regional development

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The Board has identified a range of strategies that provide practical and realistic ways of advancing economic development priorities. These include:

- **Establish collaborative industry networks** - support the formation of mutual interest industry networks (typically as not-for-profit incorporated associations or cooperatives). Industry networks are particularly important in a regional economy dominated by small businesses, where individual businesses lack the resources and “critical mass” to gain adequate access to consumers and markets

Industry network benefits can include initiating cost-effective collaborative marketing; sharing information and expertise, and raising skill levels and awareness of new technologies; realising clustering opportunities; implementing industry development plans; undertaking collective bargaining; leveraging additional resources; and lobbying and gaining Government recognition of the value of the industry sector

- **Sponsor the formulation of industry development plans** – a natural progression from the establishment of industry networks is the formation and implementation of industry development plans. Such plans can identify opportunities for industry growth and provide a framework for ongoing cooperation and coordination and the achievement of mutually beneficial objectives (eg building shared facilities/infrastructure, value adding, meeting minimum volume requirements, penetrating new markets etc)
- **Provide credible information to reduce investor uncertainty** – it is apparent that one of the obstacles to private investment in many industries and areas is uncertainty. The Board is strongly committed to the publication and dissemination of credible information that assists potential investors to evaluate potential risks and returns. This is also the rationale for the Board’s sponsorship of research on the drivers of and trends in the region’s economy
- **Convene and support regional stakeholder networks** – to facilitate information sharing, improve coordination and build support for regional initiatives, the Board and its Federal counterpart, the Area Consultative Committee, have established a regional development network that meets quarterly to progress regional initiatives
- **Sponsor “pilot” projects** – the Board initiates a variety of “pilot” projects to demonstrate how innovative collaborative solutions can increase the commercial viability of specific industry sectors
- **Advocacy** – the Board has a responsibility to advise Government on a range of issues that may be inimicable to the region’s economic development interests

## **BOARD PROGRAMS & PROJECTS 2003-2004**

### **AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION**

Commencing in late 2000 (and in partnership with the Area Consultative Committee) the Board undertook a program directed towards the needs of rural communities adversely impacted by the deregulation of the dairy industry. The program commenced with a survey of all dairy farmers in the region, followed by a series of information expos across the region on rural diversification options in 2001 that attracted over 1200 landholders.

This was followed up in 2002 with a series of five intensive one-day workshops on specific agribusiness diversification options, covering native flower production, aquaculture production, greenhouse production, organic production and macadamia production. Several of the workshops concluded with growers identifying industry development opportunities and/or proposing the formation of grower networks.

The current Emerging Industries Development Program (EIDP) commenced in September 2003 and is focussed on assisting emerging agricultural industries (and specifically the herbs, organics and aquaculture sectors) to establish and gain benefit from the formation of enterprise and agri-industry networks. The eighteen-month program is jointly funded by Federal and State Governments.

Networks are regarded as a key industry and business development tool that can provide considerable benefit to new industries and new industry entrants. Small agribusinesses in particular often find that profitability and investment confidence is impeded by a lack of scale, market knowledge and power and access to industry infrastructure. The establishment of enterprise networks leading to clear industry development objectives and plans, better information sharing, supply chain partnerships and strategies to improve a regional industry's ability to better access domestic and international markets is the key target of the EIDP.

Since the program's commencement it has actively engaged with its three agricultural sectors to identify industry development need and interest in moving forward in a collective manner. This initially included a series of regional meetings, industry surveys and educative events to identify industry need and to introduce potential complementary industry development techniques for industry consideration and discussion. This period of industry development "shopping" to identify techniques of best fit is also instrumental in identifying the industry segments most interested in this industry development approach. Within the three emerging industry sectors there are at least 10-15 different industries, and it is expected that not all will respond with interest. The Program recognises this and responds accordingly.

The level of industry interest and response to this supported industry development opportunity is promising. Participation at program events is strong and continues to grow. The organics industry has responded with particular vigour and as a result of the program has established four active “soft” networks based around commodity lines. These informal industry networks have commenced a program of farm visits and skills development with a view to investigating potential to form a “hard” professional industry marketing entity as industry confidence and relationships develop.

The program continues into the 04/05 year with the objective of further supporting these fledgling networks, identifying additional emerging industry development opportunities in the herbs and aquaculture sectors, and formalising industry intentions through the formation of industry and business development plans. Industry development plans are a valuable conduit for coordinated industry/government partnerships.

## **PRIVATE FORESTRY**

In early 2000 the Board assumed responsibility for managing one of a network of Australia-wide Regional Plantation Committees. The objective of the program is to retain and grow employment and investment in private forestry and the associated value chain in this region. The program was originally funded by the Federal Government, but since 2001 has involved a partnership between Agriculture Fisheries Forestry Australia (AFFA) and the NSW Department of State and Regional Development. DSRD’s particular interest relates to the attraction of private investment in large-scale timber plantations.

With the change in funding arrangements in 2001 the Board’s forestry program was restructured with the establishment of a Forestry Investment Program (FIP), the recruitment of a project officer and the establishment of an industry-based Advisory Committee. The FIP program aims to support and facilitate commercially focussed private forestry through private plantation investment and the development of associated industry value chains. This approach is designed to integrate and enhance the multiple benefits that the industry brings to the region. The Board has secured Federal/State funding to maintain the FIP up until mid-2005.

Private native forestry is a newly emerging component of a traditional forest industry. Major changes to the management and production capacity of the public native forest estate are creating opportunities for private forestry and the plantation sector in general. Governments and industry are increasingly looking towards private plantation investment to meet projected timber supply gaps, and at the same time enhance delivery of a range of environmental land use and production objectives.

The marriage of these commercial and environmental outcomes is particularly complementary, and indicates the great potential of this industry to demonstrate and deliver practical ways to achieve triple-bottom-line sustainability. Farm forestry can be integrated into the agricultural landscape, providing for the productive management of both plantations and native forest in a way that can be profitable and provide ecosystem services.

In response to this region's specific needs, the FIP concentrates on developing the industry's investment pathways. This means imbedding the potential of private forestry in local natural resource and economic development policy structures; supporting the establishment of a resilient, effective and representative industry network committed to advancing the interests of the private forestry sector; encouraging markets and market connections; profitable & transparent economics; and a supportive legislative environment.

Practical manifestations of this role throughout 2003/04 have been:

- Providing information to assist plantation, native forest and manufacturing investment decisions, including providing specific training and showcasing the region's attributes as an ideal private forestry investment location;
- Supporting and leveraging research and investment into regional market development opportunities;
- Assisting access to technical expertise for timber processing eco-efficiency moves;
- Supporting pilot projects to assess the viability of new and innovative ways of value-adding and/or using timber residues;
- Linking growers to existing and emerging market opportunities;
- Encouraging media coverage and communicating the industry's multiple benefits; and
- Building links with growers and community groups to enhance the uptake of private forestry.

During the reporting period the FIP particularly focussed on providing support for the administration of a large timber growers' network that was formed in 2003, including funding the formulation of an industry development plan for the network. The flexibility to extend this level of practical support to the local timber industry was only possible because of a decision in August 2003 not to re-employ a full-time project officer for the FIP.

## **MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY TRAINING NEEDS**

Manufacturers on the Mid North Coast play a vital role in the economy of the region, and provide precious opportunities for stable employment in a range of skilled trades. However, much like the rest of Australia the region has experienced shortages in a number of vocations. With the aim of quantifying the nature and extent of skills gaps on the NSW North Coast (ie Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions) the Board and the North Coast Institute of TAFE initiated a survey of manufacturers across the region in early 2004.

The survey has involved face-to-face interviews with manufacturers across a range of industry sectors, and it is expected the resultant report (due to be completed in late 2004) will assist in identifying areas of critical need and provide an empirical basis for developing a range of strategies to address current and future skills gaps.

## **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

A major challenge for many small to medium enterprises is accessing adequate demand/customers for their goods and services. Many small businesses lack the scale to be able to spend what is required to adequately market their goods and services, and in particular to expand their markets through exposure to potential customers out of their local area.

One economic development strategy that can directly benefit businesses (and thus stimulate employment) is the formation of common-interest networks to undertake collaborative marketing built around a unique product or area identity. Cash flow is the lifeblood of most small businesses, and increased sales can provide consolidation and expansion opportunities.

In 2002 the Board initiated a “pilot” collaborative marketing project for commercial visual artists based in the Hastings LGA. Artists from throughout the area were offered the opportunity to participate in a high quality A5 booklet titled “Hand made in the Hastings”. The booklet was subsequently launched in August 2002, and showcased over thirty local artists and galleries.

The “Hand made” exercise was subsequently replicated in the Kempsey, Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour LGAs, with at least two of the booklets now in their second edition. Feedback from participants has indicated that the booklets have been successful in generating significant business, with a number of large (multi-thousand dollar) sales.

This initiative has been important in highlighting the significant contribution of the creative industries to the region’s economy. It has also demonstrated how an innovative and carefully tailored approach to cost-effective collaborative marketing can directly support the commercial viability of a significant number of small businesses. Unique aspects of the project included the nature of the “product”, the target market (local), the marketing vehicle (a collectible booklet), and focussed distribution.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE (UBIQUITOUS BROADBAND)**

From the outset the Board has identified Information Communications Technology (ICT) as a key facilitator of economic development. ICT is pivotal in providing opportunities for improved efficiencies in existing businesses and for the establishment of location-independent new enterprises.

The Board made representations to the Federal Government’s two inquiries into the adequacy of regional telecommunications services. The main thrust of the Board’s submission to the most recent inquiry was to express concern about the adequacy of community and business access to cost-effective high-speed Internet services in areas outside the major urban centres. Much of the region away from the major urban centres does not have access to adequate broadband services. While there is apparently excess capacity in the main urban centres, the region’s ageing telecommunications infrastructure and topography mean that “the last mile” remains a major obstacle to providing moderately priced high-speed internet access to many rural residents.

A recent national survey by A.C.Nielsen (called the Broadband Barometer) of internet and broadband usage by small and medium enterprises has revealed that around 20% of non-city based SMEs with internet access were using broadband services, compared to around 50% of their city counterparts. The survey revealed that low levels of business awareness of the benefits of broadband were a major contributor to this relatively low level of uptake.

In response to this survey and a clearly identified need to raise business awareness of the benefits of broadband, the Board has commissioned the development of a half-day workshop titled "Broadband Business Benefits". The workshops, now proposed for late 2004, will outline in non-technical terms the cost saving and efficiency opportunities offered by broadband to businesses. The workshop will focus on actual business needs and practical solutions, rather than the current highly complex/supplier/product-driven approach that is so daunting and confusing to many business operators.

### **COMMUNITY SKILLS REGISTER - [www.skillsregister.org.au](http://www.skillsregister.org.au)**

With the constant influx of new people into our region the Board has recognised a need to assist people who are not necessarily seeking conventional employment but would like to continue to make an active contribution to their respective communities. Many members of our communities possess valuable and unique skills that are often unknown and under utilised.

In March 2004 the Board commissioned a Webmaster to develop a public access database that aims to match Mid North Coast residents' skills and experience with community groups and businesses needing these skills. The community skills register provides residents with the opportunity to list their skills on a free public database, and offer their services in either a voluntary or paid capacity. The database is expected to be fully operational in late 2004.

### **REGIONAL MARKETING**

The Board has a number of objectives that require the development of a clear, distinctive and widely accepted and recognised regional "identity" (or brand). One is the marketing of the region as a business investment destination. Another is gaining Government recognition for the unique economic development needs and challenges of the region. A third is as a symbol for a common purpose in partnerships working towards agreed regional goals.

The task of raising the profile of and gaining recognition for the Mid North Coast region has been complicated over recent years by a degree of internal and external confusion over the region's name, location and boundaries. In response to this complex situation the Board has worked to gain support for and consolidate a region name that appears to have "resonance" within the business and broader communities.

The name Mid North Coast appears to be most widely and consistently used in the community and the media to refer to the area that extends north beyond the Hunter to the start of the Northern Rivers. The Board's consultation with a range of public and private sector stakeholders in the region has indicated a high level of support for the name Mid North Coast. The name was unanimously endorsed by representatives from across the region at a meeting of a regional development network in late 2002.

In late 2003 the Board initiated a "pilot" collaborative marketing project that aimed to assist country-based business to access growing markets in the region's major urban centres. The project involved the production of a regional touring guide/map called "Country Treats – things to do and places to stay on the Mid North Coast", and the distribution of this guide to 55,000 households in Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Forster in December 2003 via mail. A survey of the businesses that participated in the guide revealed that more than a third could directly attribute increased sales to the guide.

During this reporting period the Board substantially redesigned and expanded its web site at [www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au](http://www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au).

## **REGIONAL PLANNING & COORDINATION**

The Board remains strongly committed to the development of a comprehensive, contemporary, research-based regional strategy that will provide a sound foundation for consensus on and a coordinated response to regional economic development challenges. An inclusive regional planning process can provide a framework to progress sustainable economic and social development by defining specific roles, delineating relationships and responsibilities and as a basis for implementing agreed strategies. A regional strategy would be complementary to and would support strategic plans developed at the local government level.

In order to better understand the economic and social forces driving growth in this region, in early 2004 the Board (in partnership with the Area Consultative Committee and North Coast Institute) commissioned the Hunter Valley Research Foundation to undertake research and produce a green paper on the dynamics and drivers of the Mid North Coast economy.

Titled "Growing jobs on the Mid North Coast", the green paper should assist in identifying opportunities for strategic intervention. The green paper will be widely distributed in late 2004 and used to engender discussion on appropriate regional development priorities for the Mid North Coast.

## **OTHER REGIONAL INITIATIVES**

In addition to the activities detailed above, the Board continues to make a contribution towards a range of local and regional initiatives through its active participation in consultative meetings, steering committees, regional networks and industry forums. The Board values the opportunities to participate in these activities.

## BOARD ADMINISTRATION

The current Board was appointed by the NSW Minister for Regional Development in August 2003, and first met in November 2003. The Board meets at different venues throughout the region every two months, and at these meetings considers ways in which it can make a significant and effective contribution towards regional economic development. The Board normally meets with local Councils and/or Council-sponsored economic advisory committees at the same time as it conducts its bi-monthly meetings.

During the 2003/2004 financial year the Board met at:

- Taree in July 2002 (former Board);
- Port Macquarie in August 2003 (Annual General Meeting – former Board);
- Macksville in November 2003;
- Kempsey in January 2004;
- Port Macquarie in March 2004; and
- Coffs Harbour in May 2004.

The Board also met on several other occasions to undertake training and a strategic planning exercise.

The Board seeks and welcomes submissions from both the public and private sectors on opportunities to facilitate regional economic development, and can seek funding to undertake specific projects from Federal and State funding bodies. Projects are typically undertaken in partnership with industry and other Federal, State and Local Government bodies.

The Board is supported by a full-time Executive Officer, Bill Calcutt, who can be contacted on 6583 5647, facsimile 6583 5285, email [mncrdb@betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mncrdb@betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au). Further information on the Board's activities is available at [www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au](http://www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au).

## **BOARD FINANCES**

Regional Development Boards are provided with an annual (financial year) grant by the Department of State and Regional Development in order to maintain an administrative/functional capability independent of the Department. This funding enables the employment of a full time Executive Officer, and facilitates the operation of the Board. DSRD also assist by providing (gratis) office facilities at Port Macquarie for Board staff and some administrative support.

The Board currently employs two full-time staff on twelve-month contracts. The contracts are renewable subject to satisfactory annual performance appraisals. Bill Calcutt is the Board's Executive Officer, and Lyndell Stone is the Project Officer for the Emerging Industries Development Program. The Board also employs a casual part-time accounts clerk (half day a fortnight).

The Board can and does seek funding from DSRD and other bodies to undertake or participate in specific regional development projects. During this financial year the Board secured funding of \$68,600 from Agriculture Fisheries Forestry Australia (AFFA) and \$45,700 from DSRD for the continuation of its Forestry Investment Program. The program is part of a national Private Forestry Development Program that aims to foster the development of farm forestry and associated industries in regional Australia.

The Board also secured total funding of \$157,000 from DSRD and the Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services in order to undertake an eighteen-month program to assist several emerging agribusiness sectors. This program commenced in August 2003.

The Board also secured funding of \$22,000 from DSRD as a 50% contribution towards a joint project with the North Coast Institute of TAFE to assess the training and technology needs of manufacturers across the North Coast (Northern Rivers and Mid North Coast regions).

The Board also secured funding of \$7,000 from DSRD as a contribution towards the production and distribution of a regional touring guide called "Country Treats – Things to do and places to stay on the NSW Mid North Coast". A total of 57 country-based businesses participated in this guide that was distributed by post to 55,000 households in the major urban centres throughout the region in December 2003.

A copy of an audit of the Board's finances for the 2003/2004 financial year by Potts Davis Duncombe is available on request.

## BOARD MEMBERS' PROFILES

### CHAIRPERSON

**Mr Ron McDermott** is the General Manager of Taree boat builder Stebercraft Pty Ltd, and has had management experience in the commercial fishing, information technology and health service industries. He is a member of the Manning Valley Economic Development Planning Group, and a member of the Minister for Regional Development's Advisory Council. This is Ron's second term on the Board. Mr McDermott lives in the Greater Taree LGA.

### DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

**Ms Jan Strom** describes herself as a "catalyst", and her consultancy business specialises in Local Government, communications, marketing and community liaison. Jan has played an active role in both local government and the business community over a number of years, and from 2000 to 2004 she served as Deputy Mayor of Coffs Harbour City Council. This is Jan's second term on the Board. Ms Strom lives in the Coffs Harbour LGA.

### MEMBERS

**Mr Graham Emzin** has forty years experience in the tourism and hospitality industry, and most recently owned and operated a tourism accommodation small business for fifteen years in Coffs Harbour. He has a strong interest in social justice issues. This is Graham's second term on the Board. Mr Emzin is of Aboriginal/Islander descent, and lives in the Coffs Harbour LGA.

**Ms Carmel Hong** is Director, Educational Programs, North Coast Institute of TAFE, Coffs Harbour Education Campus. In addition to her varied vocational, educational and training roles, Ms Hong has had extensive strategic planning experience on committees at local, regional and state levels, contributing to the social and economic development of communities across the region. This is Carmel's second term on the Board. Ms Hong lives in the Nambucca LGA.

**Ms Janet Hayes JP** has a substantial record of involvement in community and Local Government, with a particular interest in environmental and educational issues. She has been appointed to the Department of Correctional Services' Community Consultative Committee for the new correctional facility recently built in Kempsey, and chairs the Board of Community Housing Mid North Coast. This is Janet's second term on the Board. Ms Hayes is currently the Mayor of Kempsey Shire Council, and lives in the Kempsey LGA.

**Richard Kelloway** is a principal of a private planning and management consultancy practice, with clients across Australia. The practice specialises in participatory development processes and has consulted firms in manufacturing, agriculture and the services sector. Mr Kelloway has previously worked in a range of senior public sector roles in Australia and overseas, and has extensive experience in integrated social and economic development amongst indigenous peoples in Australia and the Pacific region. He brings wide experience in a range of innovation and knowledge-based development activities to regional development. Mr Kelloway lives in the Coffs Harbour LGA.

**Mr Mark Livermore** has had extensive experience in the dairy industry, and in a variety of roles has had to manage the challenges of organisational change. This is Mark's second term on the Board. Mr Livermore lives in the Hastings LGA.

**Mr Michael Mowle** is a partner in Hopkins Consultants in Port Macquarie. He was raised on the Macleay River, then spent sixteen years as an officer of the Royal Australian Engineers. His work with the Australian Army included involvement in a number of major overseas aid projects. Mr Mowle lives in the Hastings LGA.

**Mr Paul Sekfy** is Executive Officer with the Mid North Coast Regional Council for Social Development. He has been active in regional economic and social development policy, projects, management and training for many years. He has been a member of previous Regional Development Boards, and has been a member of the Mid North Coast Area Health Service Board since 1996. Mr Sekfy lives in the Nambucca LGA.