

Mid North Coast Regional Development Board

2006 – 2007 Annual Report

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NOVEMBER 2007

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CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

During the 2006/2007 reporting period the MNCRDB has continued to progress an ambitious workload encompassing both industry development and regional economic strategy. Two new and important industry development projects were initiated during the 2006/2007 reporting period, while a Board-managed private forestry program has come to an end. Work is well underway on a contemporary regional economic profile that is expected to identify future industry growth opportunities in this region and prove a strong foundation for the MNCRDB's priorities over the next five years.

Amongst a range of responsibilities Regional Development Boards (RDB) are expected to provide advice to the NSW Minister for Regional Development on important regional development issues. This task is primarily achieved by the participation of RDB Chairs in a quarterly Regional Development Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is proving increasingly valuable in informing the Minister on strategies to advance and enhance the economic development capabilities of respective regions under the auspices of the State Plan. The MNCRDB looks forward to the ongoing provision (pursuant to the State Plan) of valuable economic data that will assist in setting industry growth targets for this region, and helping to identify those high wage, high skilled sectors with the greatest potential to thrive in the Mid North Coast.

The MNCRDB is heavily reliant on the collaboration of a range of stakeholders in achieving its goal of advancing the region's economic development interests. In addition to its Federal counterpart I would particularly like to thank the respective Local Governments and the various industry representatives who have been willing to include support for regional initiatives in an already heavy workload.

My colleagues on the Board comprise a diverse group of industry and community representatives who share a common vision for the region and a commitment to strategic action. Board members have fully embraced a governance model for the Board's operation, meaning that individual Board members are able to maximise their contribution to the region without becoming unnecessarily absorbed in detailed administrative or project issues.

Each of the Board members brings unique skills and perspectives to consideration of Board matters, and it is a great privilege to work with such an altruistic and professional group of people. Board meetings are a pleasure in terms of the level of constructive discussion, mutual respect, and unqualified commitment to finding innovative solutions and maximising outcomes.

Finally, the term of a number of Board members concludes in August 2007, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all retiring Board members for their invaluable and selfless contribution to advancing the economic development interests of the NSW Mid North Coast.

Mark Livermore

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD – ROLE

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

Regional Development Boards are tasked to advance and champion the economic development interests of their respective 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 and regions as business locations
 - hosting Commonwealth and State initiatives or programs which have as their aim the strengthening of the profile of non-metropolitan regions as business locations and to attract 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 other key stakeholders in regional economic development through:
 - project partnerships
 - providing advice to Government on Local Government and key stakeholders economic development initiatives
 - encouraging participation of Local Government and 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, including infrastructure, to improve the region's business climate.
8. Host other NSW Government business related initiatives.

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

The MNCRDB'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 MNCRDB's motto is "enhancing our region by supporting sustainable enterprise". The MNCRDB's activities are primarily directed towards increasing private sector employment by identifying and progressing opportunities to enhance the business and investment environment and supporting private enterprise.

The MNCRDB 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. Projects are typically undertaken in partnership with industry and other Federal, State and Local Government bodies. The MNCRDB does not directly assist individual businesses, but supports networks and industry groups. More detailed information on the Board's activities is available at www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au.

The MNCRDB seeks and welcomes inquiries and submissions from the community, businesses and industry on opportunities to facilitate regional economic development. Inquiries should be directed to:

Mid North Coast Regional Development Board
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MNCRDB GOVERNANCE

The MNCRDB's primary goal is to increase private sector employment through effective action to enhance business and investment opportunities in the Mid North Coast region. The MNCRDB has adopted a set of principles that guide the conduct of its regional economic development activities. These principles include that the Board and 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 appointment to the Board members are required to complete a statutory declaration confirming the absence of a criminal record and the accuracy of information provided in their applications. Board members are also required to endorse a Code of Conduct and Ethics that sets out personal standards of behaviour. Members are expected 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 that are applied scrupulously to manage potential conflicts of interests, 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 few paid staff 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 MNCRDB 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 MNCRDB 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 MNCRDB have been determined in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and are encapsulated in the Board's 2004-2007 Strategic Plan. These objectives will be reviewed following the appointment of a new Board in late 2007.

- **Diversify and expand the region's agricultural base** - support and facilitate private investment in emerging agricultural industries
- **Expand the region's private forestry industry** - in partnership with growers and the industry, and consistent with triple bottom line principles, support the growth of the private forestry industry and associated value chain
- **Expand the region's manufacturing base** - in partnership with industry facilitate the growth and profitability of existing manufacturers and attract new clean green businesses
- **Encourage the establishment of creative and knowledge-based industries within the region** - in partnership with industry facilitate the growth of existing and attract new creative and 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 and address deficiencies in the region's infrastructure, including universal access to cost-effective broadband
- **Enhance the business and investment environment** - raise the professionalism and competitiveness of businesses in the region, enhance their access to a diverse range of skills and expertise
- **Effectively market the region** - assist industries and 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 development needs to Governments
- **Enhance regional planning and coordination** - improve decision-making through the provision of reliable economic data; advance a regional strategy that is widely accepted as a blueprint for integrated sustainable regional economic development.

In addition, as a result of changing circumstances the MNCRDB has added two additional regional development objectives during this report period:

- **Respond proactively to the economic, social & environmental implications of climate change** – raise community awareness of possible economic challenges & opportunities posed by climate change
- **Expand the region's aged services sector** - increase the capability & expertise of the aged services sector; raise the skills & capabilities of the existing aged services workforce; increase employment in the aged services sector; attract new investment in the aged services sector.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The MNCRDB has adopted 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, 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 MNCRDB is strongly committed to the publication and dissemination of credible information that assists potential investors to evaluate potential risks and returns. The production of a Regional Economic Profile on the Mid North Coast is expected to provide valuable information for investors on economic condition and industry growth prospects in the region.
- **Convene and support regional stakeholder networks** – to facilitate information sharing, improve coordination and build support for regional initiatives, the MNCRDB and its Federal counterpart, the MNC Area Consultative Committee, have established a regional development network that meets quarterly to progress regional initiatives
- **Sponsor pilot projects** – the MNCRDB initiates a variety of pilot projects to demonstrate how local innovative and collaborative solutions can increase the commercial viability of specific industry sectors
- **Advocacy** – the MNCRDB has a responsibility to advise Government on a range of issues that may impact on the region's economic development opportunities and prospects.

MNCRDB PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS 2006-2007

OVERVIEW

As a program of the NSW Department of State and Regional Development, Regional Development Boards clearly share the same goal of achieving jobs and investment outcomes. However, because Boards rarely work at the “sharp end” with individual businesses it may be difficult to attribute immediate jobs and investment outcomes to Board projects, particularly where the efforts are directed towards the “softer” but equally important objective of “creating a climate conducive to business investment”.

With limited resources the MNCRDB strives to achieve a balance between managing specific industry development projects and advancing a broader regional economic development agenda. While the MNCRDB’s project activity is important in supporting sustainable industries to grow and is more likely to result in measurable outcomes, some of the most meaningful and long term strategic/policy/economic/regional outcomes are achieved indirectly through “influence” and collaboration.

The MNCRDB’s economic input to a Mid North Coast Regional Strategy being developed by the Department of Planning pursuant to the State Plan is an example of the close alignment of the MNCRDB’s activities with DSRD’s mission “to advance the economic development of NSW and bring new business to the State by ... supporting the interests of business and the community”.

Given the MNCRDB’s predominantly facilitation role, effective partnerships with diverse stakeholders in the public and private sectors are at the heart of collaborative regional development outcomes. The MNCRDB has a particularly productive relationship with its Federal counterpart, the Mid North Coast Area Consultative Committee (MNCACC). Both bodies share a common vision for the region, and a strong commitment to building a regional economic development capability able to address the serious social and economic challenges confronting the Mid North Coast.

In its 2007 Annual Report the MNCACC reported that it had delayed the finalisation of its own Strategic Regional Plan pending the production by the MNCRDB of a Regional Economic Profile and Regional Industry and Economic Plan. The MNCACC 2007 Annual Report indicated that the profile and plan will provide “essential inputs” to the MNCACC Strategic Regional Plan, reflecting an exceptional level of coordination, collaboration and goodwill between the two regional organisations.

Objective 1 - Diversify and expand the region's agricultural base

Key performance indicators - Increase in numbers employed in emerging agricultural sectors; increase in investment in emerging agricultural enterprises; increase in value of emerging sectors' output as measured by its contribution to Gross Regional Product; establishment and consolidation of grower networks; increase in return to growers through value adding; access to new markets

In response to the deregulation of the dairy industry in 2000 and its prospective impact on the Mid North Coast the MNCRDB initiated a program to support agricultural diversification. This evolved into a project called the Emerging Industries Development Program (EIDP) in 2004 and 2005 that provided specific support for a number of emerging agricultural industries including herbs, aquaculture and organics. Of these industries the most responsive and successful was the organics sector, covering a diverse range of agricultural products. Activities undertaken during the project included the production of a DVD on organic production; a survey of growers to determine their industry development needs; and the publication of case studies on establishing organic enterprises.

The most important outcome from the project was the establishment of a growers' network called Mid North Coast Organics Inc that has since developed as a representative industry body. Planning is well underway for the formation of a commercial marketing entity (to be called the Organic Marketing Company) to further expand the group's collaborative marketing capabilities and the return to individual producers. The network has expressed its appreciation for the support provided by the MNCRDB, and the Board continues to pass on information on linkages and potential opportunities whenever possible.

Objective 2 - Expand the region's private forestry industry

Key performance indicators – value of existing and new investment in commercial timber plantations in the region; quantification of the volume and potential value of the private native forest (PNF) resource in the region; enhancement of the sustainable management of PNF, including an expansion in the commercial uses of native species; increase in the financial return to PNF growers, and the contribution of this sector to Gross Regional Product; enhancement of the timber supply chain, and increase in the level of value-adding; consolidation of a resilient and effective growers' network; progress in the implementation of an industry development plan; enhancement in growers skills and the adoption of sustainable silviculture practices

Since 2000 the MNCRDB has managed one of a national network of Federal/State funded Private Forestry Development Committees (PFDC). The PFDC in this region is called the Forestry Investment Program (FIP) Advisory Committee. The FIP Advisory Committee comprises representatives from a range of public and private sector organisations. In recent years the MNCRDB has employed a part-time project officer to support the program.

Acknowledging the limited opportunities in this region for large scale private plantations and the significance of the timber resource available in private native forest, the focus of the program's activities over recent years has been support for a local farm forestry network. The FIP had identified the local network as the most direct conduit to timber growing landholders whose support is vital to industry expansion. A primary aim has been to strengthen the value chain (and benefits to local economies) by increasing the commercial return to timber growers. In late 2004 the FIP funded a strategic review of the local timber industry, leading to the publication of a strategic action plan.

In mid 2005 the State partner in the PFDC program transferred from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development to the NSW Department of Primary Industry. Funding for the MNCRDB's FIP project ceased in mid 2006, and all activities initiated under the program will be concluded by the end of 2007. Activities underway during the 2006/2007 reporting period included training in portable milling; marketing of regionally-grown timber to niche markets; the development of the curriculum of a private native forest course; facilitating the Forest Stewardship Council certification of a group of timber growers and the production of a forestry and timber inventory for the region. These are all practical initiatives intended to support local timber growers.

Objective 3 - Expand the region's manufacturing base

Key performance indicators – growth in the contribution of manufacturing to Gross Regional Product; maintenance of the level of employment in the manufacturing sector; increased investment in new products and an expansion in the boutique/specialist manufacturing sector; increase in the profitability of manufacturers; expansion in the external markets of manufacturers; resolution of the impediments to the growth in manufacturing enterprises, including action to address skills gaps and shortages; establishment of industry networks able to pursue clustering, resource-sharing and value-adding opportunities

MNCRDB activities to support the region's manufacturing sector during the 2006/2007 reporting period were limited to:

- the continued distribution (including overseas) of a high quality regional marketing and investment attraction booklet titled "World Class Business on the NSW Mid North Coast" that features a number of the region's key manufacturers. Earlier in the year the participants in the World Class booklet were surveyed to determine the level of response to the booklet, with few survey respondents reporting direct sales but many expressing an interest in participating in further collaborative marketing initiatives
- participation in a multi-region project to broaden career pathways into manufacturing by involving senior high school student in a computer aided design competition.

Objective 4 - Encourage the establishment and expansion of creative and knowledge-based industries

Key performance indicators – increase in the value of the creative industries to the region in terms of Gross Regional Product; increase in numbers employed in the various sectors; increase in the financial viability of creative enterprises; value of screen productions attracted to the region; an increase in the external profile of the region as a production destination; an increase in the capacity of the local screen industry

A program to attract film productions into the area was originally initiated by Port Macquarie-Hastings Council in 2001. The program subsequently evolved into a regional film program involving a partnership between a number of Local, State and Federal agencies. In mid-2004 the MNCRDB assumed responsibility for managing the program following the Minister for Regional Development's announcement of a further three years funding support for regional film programs across NSW.

Film Mid North Coast Armidale commenced in March 2005 with twelve months funding support from six Local Government Areas and DSRD. Ms Christina Hyde, a highly experienced film professional, was appointed as the film officer, and the objectives of the original program were extended beyond production attraction to include a greater emphasis on local industry support and development.

In the first twelve months the program secured \$120,000 in expenditure on production-related activities in the region; facilitated and supported a number of significant productions in the region; conducted industry networking functions in each of the LGAs; produced and widely distributed a CD Rom containing over 850 potential filming locations across the region; established an on-line resource directory of local screen industry skills and services; and circulated a regular industry e-newsletter.

In mid 2006 the Board successfully negotiated a further twelve months corporate sponsorship for the program, ensuring a continuation of the investment, production attraction and industry development activities commenced under Film Mid North Coast Armidale. As part of this new funding arrangement responsibility for management of the program and employment of Ms Hyde was transferred to the Enterprise and Training Company (ETC) in July 2006, and the program was renamed ScreenLinks.

Finally, in relation to the broader creative industries sector the MNCRDB is a participant in a working group established by TAFE NSW North Coast Institute that aims to progress research on the nature, extent and value of the creative industries sector on the Mid North Coast, replicating similar work undertaken in the Northern Rivers.

Objective 5 - Enhance the essential infrastructure required to support industry competitiveness

Key performance indicators – progress on the recommendations of the NSW Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Works November 2005 report titled “Inquiry into infrastructure provision in coastal growth areas”, and specifically a State-wide infrastructure audit and the identification of priority infrastructure projects for the Mid North Coast

Infrastructure is universally recognised as an essential facilitator that underpins virtually all economic development. Essential infrastructure includes communications, high speed broadband, transport, roads, airports, ports, energy, water, health, education and aged services. The issue of investment in infrastructure has been the subject of considerable public discussion over recent years, as well as the focus of a number of wide reaching public inquiries and reports.

In order to gain a better understanding of the complex issues and to facilitate a constructive discussion amongst key stakeholders in the region, the MNCRDB commissioned Ms Karen McFadyen from Southern Cross University to undertake a review of a number of recent major reports on the infrastructure issue to determine their relevance for the Mid North Coast.

Ms McFadyen’s review was completed in August 2006, and the resultant report titled “Mid North Coast NSW – Review of Infrastructure Reports” has been widely circulated. The report examined the various types of infrastructure and found a disappointing lack of information on the specific infrastructure needs and priorities of the Mid North Coast, but noted this information deficiency seemed to be State-wide. The report emphasises the vital importance of forward planning given the region’s changing demographics and the likely demands of a growing ageing population (the proportion of the population aged over 65 is predicted to exceed 33% by 2021). A copy of Ms McFadyen’s report is available on the MNCRDB’s web site www.betterbusiness.nsw.gov.au under Reports and Publications.

Objective 6 - Enhance the business and investment environment

Key performance indicators – Establishment and growth of industry and business networks; adoption locally of national benchmarks and best practice; emergence of industry “champions”; external recognition of successful local enterprises; enhanced business access to training and skilled employees; adoption of contemporary governance standards; identify and address impediments to business growth

With the constant influx of new settlers 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 local communities. Many members of our communities possess valuable and unique skills that are often unknown and under utilised.

The MNCRDB has established and administers 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 at www.skillsregister.org.au provides residents with the opportunity to list their skills on a free public database, and to offer their services in either a voluntary or paid capacity. During the reporting period registrations increased to over 350, and week inquiries to the site continue to exceed 20.

As an important component of the MNC Regional Economic Profile a detailed survey of businesses across the region was undertaken in June 2007. The survey attracted just over 240 participants, and once collated is expected to assist in identifying some of the major obstacles to business growth in the region. The survey covered all business sectors and is likely to be of interest to both service providers, prospective investors and Governments.

Objective 7 - Effectively market the region

Key performance indicators - Widespread support for and use of a single regional brand; level of external (positive) awareness of the region; gross annual increase in business investment in the region; prospective investor satisfaction with available economic data; level of visitation to the region

The Board has a number of objectives that require the development and projection of a clear, distinctive and widely accepted and recognised regional identity (brand). These include:

- raising the profile of the Mid North Coast as a dynamic and viable business investment destination
- assisting existing industries and businesses to access broader markets through collaborative marketing
- effectively communicating the region's unique economic development needs to Governments.

The name Mid North Coast appears to be most widely and consistently used in the community and the media to refer to the region that extends north beyond the Hunter to the start of the Northern Rivers, and the Board has actively encouraged use of this name and a standard regional logo. This name is now used by all regional organisations, and both the MNCRDB and its Federal counterpart, the Mid North Coast Area Consultative Committee, use the same regional logo.

In respect to promoting the region as an attractive business investment destination, research has shown that prospective investors require reliable and current information on business conditions and growth opportunities if they are to make informed decisions about business expansion or the establishment of new enterprises. In the first quarter of 2007 the MNCRDB commissioned the AEC Group from Queensland to produce a MNC Regional Economic Profile, and this report is likely to be of considerable value to prospective investors as it will identify industry and employment growth opportunities in the region over the next five years.

Copies of the World Class booklet that showcases some of the most successful, progressive and innovative businesses in the region continue to be disseminated in appropriate business forums throughout Australia.

Finally, in terms of the MNCRDB's obligation to provide informed advice to the Minister and Government on important economic development issues, the Chair participates in a Ministerial committee called the Regional Development Advisory Council that meets quarterly, and the MNCRDB continues to make submissions to and actively participate in a range of industry and Government forums. Once completed in late 2007 the MNC Regional Economic Profile will be widely disseminated to the community, industry and Governments.

Objective 8 - Enhance regional planning and coordination

Key performance indicators – finalisation and implementation of a regional industry and economic plan that provides a catalyst and blueprint for collaborative action to advance industry and employment growth in the region over the next five years; provision of contemporary data on the region's economy to the community, industry, prospective investors and Governments (and as valuable input to the State Plan); progress on the formulation and implementation of specific industry development plans; level of collaboration and coordination between diverse economic development stakeholders

In mid 2004 (in partnership with the MNCACC and TAFE NSW North Coast Institute) the MNCRDB commissioned the Hunter Valley Research Foundation to produce a green paper on the dynamics and drivers of and influences on the Mid North Coast economy, titled "Growing jobs on the Mid North Coast". Partly as a consequence of this work in early 2007 the MNCRDB secured funding from the NSW Department of Planning and the NSW Department of State and Regional Development to produce a Regional Economic Profile and Regional Industry and Economic Plan. The profile and plan are expected to provide a blueprint for industry and employment growth over the next few years, as well as constitute a valuable economic input to a MNC Regional Strategy being developed by the Department of Planning pursuant to the State Plan. The Regional Economic Profile is expected to be finalised in late 2007, with the Regional Industry and Economic Plan expected to be available in early 2008.

In partnership with its Federal counterpart (the MNCACC) the MNCRDB convenes a quarterly Regional Development Network meeting that provides a forum for the free exchange of information and ideas amongst a diverse range of economic development stakeholders. The MNCRDB is also an active participant in the Economic and Environmental Subcommittee of the Premier's Department's Regional Coordination Management Group.

Objective 9 - Respond proactively to the economic, social & environmental implications of climate change

Key performance indicators – level of business awareness of and action taken to respond to changes, challenges and opportunities likely to result from climate change; level of business and community awareness of the full range of implications from climate change; proactive initiatives that address the implications for agriculturally productive land use in the region

In the first quarter of 2007 the MNCRDB lodged an application with the NSW Environment Trust for a multi-agency project to address business conservation including recycling and energy and resource use.

Objective 10 - Expand the region's aged services sector

Key performance indicators – increase in the capability and expertise of the aged services sector; increase in the skills and expertise of the existing aged services workforce; increase in employment in the aged services sector; level of new investment in aged care facilities and services; identify and address systemic impediments to the growth of the aged services sector in this region

In late 2006 Regional Development Boards across NSW were invited to apply for funding for inter-regional projects under a program called "targeting skills needs in regions", initiated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The MNCRDB and its northern counterpart, the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board, subsequently developed and submitted an application for funding for a major, multi-stakeholder, industry-supported, three-year aged services industry development program on the NSW North Coast (covering both the Northern Rivers and Mid North Coast regions). One of the requirements of the funding approval was that the project be managed by an industry organisation, and the Aged and Community Services Association of NSW and ACT subsequently agreed to auspice the project.

One of the first commitments in the project plan accompanying the funding application was the conduct of a series of aged services industry forums at the outset of the project in order to secure widespread industry input and engagement. A discussion paper on challenges confronting the sector was drafted and widely circulated, and in May and June 2007 forums were held in Tweed Heads, Ballina, Forster, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Grafton. The forums attracted over 155 industry representatives, and the input from participants provided an extensive range of issues and challenges requiring action.

MNCRDB ADMINISTRATION

The current Board was appointed by the NSW Minister for Regional Development in September 2005. 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 also met on other occasions to undertake training and strategic planning, and Board Subcommittees met when required.

The Board usually meets with local Councils, Council-sponsored economic advisory committees and local business representatives at the same time as it conducts its bi-monthly meetings.

During the 2006/2007 financial year the Board met at:

- Taree in July 2006
- Coffs Harbour in September 2006 (informal meeting)
- Nambucca Heads in November 2006 (including the Annual General Meeting)
- Bellingen in February 2007
- Port Macquarie in March 2007
- Coffs Harbour in May 2007.

Bill Calcutt (PSM) is the Board's Executive Officer, and has been in this role since 2000. After a distinguished career in the Federal public service in research, planning, policy and human resource management roles in Sydney and Melbourne, Bill moved into the private sector (and into the Mid North Coast) as a small business operator in 1997. Bill is married with a son and lives in the Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA.

David Ledgerwood is the Board's part-time Administrative Assistant and Project Officer. After a career in journalism and public relations he established several retail businesses in Queensland before returning to NSW to assist in the transition of several business arms of the Department of Land and Water Conservation to customer ownership. David has been involved in enterprise and regional development for many years. He is also a part time business facilitator for the Mid North Coast Business Advisory Service.

MNCRDB FINANCES

Regional Development Boards are provided with an annual (financial year) grant of \$135,000 by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development in order to maintain an administrative/functional capability independent of the Department. This funding enables the employment of staff and the operation of the Board. DSRD also assist by providing (gratis) office facilities at Port Macquarie for Board staff and some administrative support.

During the 2006/2007 financial year the Board employed one full-time and one part-time staff on fixed-term contracts. In addition, in April 2007 following a public tender process the Board entered into a contract with the AEG Group from Brisbane to produce a Mid North Coast Regional Economic Profile. The total value of the consultancy is \$57,783 (GST incl).

The Board seeks funding from DSRD and other bodies to undertake or participate in specific regional development projects. During this financial year the Board received funding of \$31,250 from the Department of Primary Industry for the finalisation of the Forestry Investment Program.

Pursuant to entering into a Memorandum of Understanding, the Board received funding of \$50,000 from the NSW Department of Planning in order to produce a Regional Economic Profile and a Regional Industry and Economic Plan. The Board also received \$20,000 from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development for the same purpose.

A copy of an audit of the Board's finances for the 2006/2007 financial year by Potts Davis Duncombe is available on request.

BOARD MEMBERS' PROFILES

Mr Mark Livermore (Chair) has worked at senior levels in both the public and private sectors, contributing to the development and implementation of national policies and guidelines for a major agricultural industry, as well as leading the expansion of a major regional manufacturing operation into national and international markets. Mark is the director of a consultancy working in the fields of strategic planning, change management, mentoring, business development, community liaison, food safety auditing and the development of quality systems. Mark has an extensive background building networks and relationships that benefit all parties and sustain their future.

As Chair Mark is committed to the economic, social and environmental growth of the region through the development of a clear strategic approach to the challenges and opportunities facing regional Australia. Mark lives in the Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA.

Ms Carmel Hong (Deputy Chair) was formerly Director, Educational Programs, TAFE NSW North Coast Institute, 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. Ms Hong is currently a member of the Nambucca Shire Council's Structure Plan Shirewide Reference Group, a member of the Coffs Coast Business Womens Network and a member of the Australian Institute of Management. Ms Hong has a Masters Degree in Educational Studies and is a Bachelor of Commerce. This is Carmel's second term on the Board. Ms Hong lives in the Nambucca LGA.

Mr Peter Clark has a Masters degree in Science and a Post Graduate Certificate in Marketing. He has been employed in the pharmaceutical industry for 17 years during which time he gained experience in a variety of sales and marketing roles, including Director of Marketing for Australia and New Zealand for a company with sales of \$250M. He also spent 3 years in the United States completing roles in Global Marketing and Corporate Strategy and Business Development. He has lived on the Mid North Coast for three years where he is employed as a Business Development and Professional Services Manager. He is married and has 3 children. This is Peter's first term on the Board, and he lives in the Port Macquarie-Hastings 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. Janet has been a Councillor with Kempsey Shire Council for eight years, four of which as Mayor. Her participation in Local Government has seen her elected to the Executive of the Shires Association of NSW, and she sits on their Planning and Environment and Finance and Economic Development Committees. Janet is one of two Councillors who represent NSW on the Executive of the National Seachange Taskforce. She has been appointed to the Department of Correctional Services' Serious Offenders Review Council and was previously Official Visitor at the Mid North Coast

Correctional Centre. Janet chairs the Board of Community Housing Mid North Coast and was recently elected chair of Macleay Options Inc, a disability support organisation. This is Janet's second term on the Board.

Mr Richard Kelloway OBE has Masters Degrees in Business Administration and International Politics, is a Certified Management Consultant, and a Member of the Society of Organisational Learning. He is the principal of a private consultancy practice that specialises in integrated social and economic development with a focus on Australia's Indigenous communities, and has participatory development experience in the Pacific region. His practice has also over a decade's experience consulting firms in the manufacturing, agriculture and services sectors. Mr Kelloway previously worked in a range of senior Defence and public sector roles in Australia and overseas. He brings wide experience in a range of knowledge and innovation-based development activities to regional development. He lives in the Coffs Harbour LGA.

Ms Kay Morrison has been involved in business, primarily in the services industries, over a number of years. She has had considerable experience on natural resource management Boards. Kay has a particular interest in women's issues, and is currently the National President of Business and Professional Women Australia. This is Kay's first term on the Board, and she lives in the Coffs Harbour 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 Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA. Michael resigned from the Board due to work commitments in April 2007.

Mr Paul Sekfy operates his own consulting business in the security industry. He has been active in regional economic and social development policy, projects, management, research and training for over twenty years. He has worked for or been an active member of several regional organisations and Boards including health, social development and Local Government covering the Mid North Coast. This is Paul's fifth term on the Board. Mr Sekfy lives in the Nambucca LGA.

Ms Jan Strom currently works for the Office of Regional Engagement at Southern Cross University, and describes herself as a "speaker, facilitator and catalyst". She has a Master of Professional Management and is undertaking a PhD in regional community engagement at Southern Cross University.

Jan regularly presents at various forums, seminars and events as well as at regional and national conferences. She is an active contributor to regional development, was Deputy Mayor of Coffs Harbour City Council (2000-04), and was Chair of the Enterprise & Training Company Ltd in Coffs Harbour. Jan previously operated her own fitness businesses, and since 1995 has been the principal of a consultancy business specialising in communications (personal and business), events management, marketing and local government. This is Jan's second term on the Board and she lives in the Coffs Harbour LGA.