TOP 10 SOLUTIONS
to unlock more homes in the Northern Rivers for 2040

DRAFT FOR FEEDBACK

1. Unlock flood-safe land across all LGA's

Accelerate the NSW Reconstruction Authority's *Resilient Lands Program* and similar initiatives across **Lismore, Tweed, Ballina, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Byron and Kyogle**.

Bring projects to market with clear timeframes, trunk infrastructure funding and streamlined approvals on flood-safe land for mixed-tenure housing (eg. SCU site at Lismore as a model) and review existing R1, R2 and underutilised industrial zoned land to improve residential land-use efficiency.

2. Support flood-resilient housing transitions

Expand the *Resilient Homes Program* to integrate buyback, house-raise and retrofit options with new land releases so displaced residents can relocate locally.

Link these initiatives to nearby new estates, so residents can relocate within their communities. Deliver diverse options – from relocatable homes to modular infill to maintain workforce stability.

3. Enable 'gentle density' in existing serviced areas
Adopt the NSW *Low & Mid-Rise Housing Reforms* to encourage dual occupancies, terraces, townhouses and small apartment formats within existing zoned and serviced areas of major towns like **Tweed Heads, Byron Bay, Ballina, Lismore, Casino and Grafton**.

Apply locally developed *design guides* to preserve character while improving affordability and supply. Advocate for practical code and building classification reform to re-enable affordable, low-rise three story 'walk ups' a provide medium density form lost under the current NCC Class 2 compliance requirements.

4. Introduce regional pattern-book and code-assessment pathway

Create a Northern Rivers Pattern Book of pre-approved designs – a 'type plans' catalogue of townhouses, duplexes, terraces, small multi-unit) that are pre-certified for compliance with Housing SEPP.

Councils can fast-track these designs through code assessment, reducing approval times and costs. This will help building deliver more homes faster and maintain quality standards region-wide. Leverage upcoming EP&A Act and SEPP reforms to ensure these code-assessed pathways translate to genuine time savings in regional areas.

5. Focus new housing around CBD and service Hubs

Use **CBD-anchored, mixed-use centres** as the equivalent of "Transport Oriented Development" zones.

Encourage modest height, density increases and FSR uplifts near **retail, education and health precincts** (e.g. Tweed Heads, Ballina, Lismore, Grafton) to support walkable, vibrant town centres. We need to frame this growth around access to jobs, services and active-transport links, adapting the TOD concept to our regional setting.

6. Embed affordable and key worker housing targets

Adopt consistent definitions and targets for affordable housing across all councils.

Use planning agreements and bonus incentives along with public-private partnerships to secure a share of dwellings as affordable or key-worker housing in perpetuity to ensure that nurses, teachers, hospitality and trades workers can live close to where they work. Seek a coordinated regional policy position across all LGA's to provide certainty for investors and consistency for developers.

7. Activate public, crown and community owned land

Audit and activate under-utilised **Health, TAFE, school, and council sites** for mixed-tenure housing outcomes - especially near hospitals, industrial estates and education hubs. Undertake a coordinated regional audit to identify at least ten priority activation sites across all LGA's.

Enable partnerships with community housing providers and ethical developers for build-to-rent and modular delivery to keep benefits in the region.

8. Invest in enabling infrastructure and local capacity

Coordinate state and local contributions for **water, sewer, drainage and roads** through clear sequencing plans. Fund the 'big pipes, drains and roads' needed to make housing land developable and affordable.

Deliver "ready-to-build" status for priority sites to reduce developer uncertainty and help councils manage growth sustainably. Forward-fund enabling infrastructure identified in LGA urban growth plans, with costs recovered through later developer contributions.

9. Regional Innovation Priority 1 – Smarter Business as Usual

Focus on improving productivity across local SME builders. Partner with MBA, TAFE and Industry to:
- Reduce time and waste on site
- Cut the number of trades per job through better sequencing
- Embrace innovation and modern methods of construction (MMC)
- Even small (1%) improvements in these areas can deliver up to 30% greater profitability and longer-term building resilience.

10. Regional Innovation Priority 2 – to be determined by participants

What new action, incentive or reform could most strengthen liveability and affordability while accelerating housing delivery across the Northern Rivers?

There is a call to create a fair, transparent and fast-track pathway for regionally significant housing projects. This concept could evolve through a Regional Housing Coordination Taskforce, ensuring accountability in accelerated assessment for project meeting clear regional criteria (flood-safe, affordable or strategic). What are your thoughts?

Whilst some of the above solutions have started, progressing or been identified there are still gaps

THE BIG GAPS

1. Expand coverage and accelerate delivery to ensure all LGA's are included with clear timelines

2. Speed up delivery and integrate more tightly with new land releases and relocation pathways

3. Policy needs to broaden geo scope – we need local adaption for the Northern Rivers context and ensure the policy can be applied and supported by local councils

4. Local councils could commission a set of standardised dwellings that meet code-assessment reducing approval time

5. Adapt the TOD concept to non-rail town centres and ensure planning frameworks support modest uplifts appropriately

6. Whilst initiatives are underway, we must have a consistent regional policy for inclusionary housing or key worker housing across all LGA's, linked to incentive frameworks in the region

7. We need a full audit and pipeline of public/Crown/TAFE sites across all LGA's and an activation strategy. Many sites likely exist but are not yet formally packaged

8. THE BIGGEST GAP – ensuring upfront trunk infrastructure funding and alignment of services is critical and is currently under-developed regionally.