

GOAL 4: Explore opportunities to optimise the use of rural lands

Historically rural industries like dairy, beef, poultry and timber production have been the backbone of the Manning Valley. We need to consider the needs of these industries when exploring opportunities for our rural lands while also catering for a growing rural lifestyle trend which has begun to fragment the landscape and replace these industries in more recent times. As a consequence, planning for rural lands needs to consider the potential conflict between farming and lifestyle use, as well as maintaining flexibility so that diversity in rural land uses is able to be encouraged. The two directions are:

1. Identify significant agricultural land

The extensive fragmentation of rural lands across the Manning Valley has been as a result of ill-informed planning controls over the last 30 years. Consequently, some of the best agricultural lands have been subdivided to such a degree that they may no longer be used for agriculture. Understanding how rural lands are used and what their value is to the rural economy is a key piece of work that is required to be undertaken to inform future planning decisions. It is important to understand the complex system of social, economic and environmental drivers which influence the production capacity and the level of profitability of agricultural enterprises on rural lands.



2. *Provide opportunities to maximise the use of rural land*

Primary production is extremely sensitive to a range of external factors including climate, regional, state and federal economies, as well as local and global commodity market conditions. Given these financial sensitivities and the resultant impacts on the wider regional economy, flexibility is needed to permit diversity and allow landowners to both retain farms, but also invest in other activities that are compatible with the rural landscape.

The minimum subdivision size within an LEP has a substantial impact on rural asset value. If the land can be subdivided, and the resultant lot has a dwelling entitlement, the land value is significantly higher - sometimes double. The zoning of the land and its proximity to village/urban areas also affects the value of the land and therefore, the ability to borrow against it.

The success of intergenerational change within the farming industry is clearly dependant on flexibility in LEP provisions. This flexibility is required not only in terms of subdivision and minimum lot size but also in the types of uses which are permitted in the rural zones. Providing more flexibility and options increases rural social diversity within the Manning Valley.