

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gosford City (part of the Central Coast Region of NSW) has long recognised the imbalance between population and employment growth in the region and the disparity in service and infrastructure provision between metropolitan and non-metropolitan regional areas in NSW. Council is committed to encouraging and facilitating sustainable economic development with a focus on jobs and quality of life for this and future generations.

The **encouragement of job opportunities and local industry and business development** is one of Council's key strategic objectives for now and the foreseeable future, embodied in the adopted City Management Plan.

Council aims:

- to encourage a diverse range of ecologically sustainable industries and services which generate employment in the region;
- to encourage employment and career opportunities which are supported by a diverse education system; and
- to encourage the development of a quality tourism industry incorporating diverse accommodation activities and services compatible with the sensitive local environment.

*(Gosford City Council Corporate Plan 1999-2004)*

Council is reliant on the co-operation between levels of government in the implementation of strategies to generate employment and economic development in the region and the provision of necessary infrastructure. Local and regional economic development, if it is to be sufficiently strong in magnitude and diversified in scope, needs to be supported by an integrated government approach. Attention needs to be directed to foster the potential of the Central Coast regional economy to deliver long term growth rather than focus upon short term and ad hoc initiatives.

This submission commences with a profile of Gosford City to provide some background information. This is followed by a discussion of the factors that impede development and factors that would enhance the development potential of the area.

## **2. PROFILE OF GOSFORD CITY**

### **2.1 Location and Geography**

Gosford City (area 1,028sq.kms) is part of the Central Coast Regional of New South Wales as shown in Figure 1. It is located on the urban-rural fringe beyond metropolitan Sydney with Gosford and Wyong forming the basis of the Central Coast's regional economy. The City is classified as a sub-regional centre by the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning in its publication "Cities for the 21st Century".

## **2.2 Population Growth**

For more than 25 years Gosford has supplied new residential land for the Sydney Region and as a result of this, population growth in the area has been significant with the population more than doubling during this period. The population of Gosford LGA at the 1996 Census was 144,840 persons, representing an increase of 15,854 persons since 1991. The estimated population of the Central Coast is 263,050.

The electrification of the main northern railway line and extension of the F3 Freeway have improved access for commuters to and from Sydney. This improved access, together with the environmental lifestyle in Gosford have contributed to the significant in migration over the past two decades.

The region is experiencing several environmental, social and economic problems that have arisen from this rapid population growth.

One of the main problems associated with the rapid growth has been the fact that the population has consistently outstripped the City's ability to provide adequate social and physical infrastructure to support new communities.

Local employment opportunities are not keeping pace with the increased demands for jobs caused by a combination of natural population growth and in-migration (Central Coast Economic Development Strategy 1997). The region is dependent on other regions for employment, especially Sydney. Continued reliance on external sources of employment and income is not sustainable over time and for this reason the regional economy must become more competitive, diverse and adaptable (Draft Central Coast Regional Planning Strategy, 1998)

Large numbers of the working age population are either subject to long periods of unemployment, discouraged out of the workforce or are forced to commute long distances. Over 35,000 people (representing one third of the workforce) commute daily to work outside of the Central Coast, with the majority travelling two hours each way to Sydney. Long term commuting is disruptive to both the family and social structure of the community and also effects the local economy because of escape expenditure.

The very high proportion of commuters has obvious implications for household incomes net of travel expenditures, personal time lost in travel, government transport subsidies, escape spending and overall resource utilisation. Furthermore both road and rail systems are nearing practical capacities.

A higher than average proportion of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs produces lower average incomes, with economic stress and social problems as an end result.

Extreme financial pressure has been placed on Council as it has attempted to provide basic services to its rapidly growing population and limited funding has been available for economic infrastructure.

## **2.3 Industry Trends**

The Central Coast's industry strengths (as measured by the percentage of persons employed) are wholesale and retail trade and to a lesser extent finance, property and business services, each having grown significantly over the 10 years between 1986 and 1996 censuses. The number of people employed in health, education and community services increased over the period although the proportion of total employment in this sector stayed approximately constant.

Of the five sectors in which the largest number of jobs were created, four were service sectors. There was also a significant increase in employment in manufacturing

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the local economy. In 1996/97 tourism expenditure for the Central Coast was \$384 million, an increase of \$15 million over the previous year.

## 2.4 Employment and Education

Employment statistics suggest that the Central Coast population has a disproportionately high amount of part time employment and of unemployment and a higher than average proportion of the population not in the workforce

Unemployment on the Central Coast continues to remain higher than both State and National figures. As at 30 June 1996 unemployment rates in Gosford-Wyong were significantly higher than Outer Western Sydney and the Sydney Region as a whole, as shown in *Table 2.1*.

**Table 2.1 Unemployment**

Area	Aged 15-24	Aged 15 years and over
<b>Gosford</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>8.8</b>
<b>Wyong</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>12.5</b>
Outer Western Sydney	13.0	6.9
Hunter	20.7	11.3
Sydney	11.9	7.4

Source: 1996 Census

A higher proportion of Central Coast residents aged over 15 years are not in the labour force. Labour force participation rates on the Central Coast are 56.9 per cent compared to 61.7 per cent for NSW.

Central Coast education levels are below the State average with over 60 per cent of residents having left school at 16 years or under compared to State average of 50 per cent. Only 4.3 per cent of the population has attended University, TAFE or another tertiary institution compared to 6.2 per cent for NSW.

Despite some improvements, students living on the Central Coast have significantly lower school retention rates than students in NSW generally, as shown below in *Tables 2.2 and 2.3*.

**Table 2.2 School Retention Rates Year 7 to 10, 1990-1995**

Area	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95
Central Coast	64.1%	75.0%	80.9%	78.4%	81.6%
NSW	97.2%	98.9%	100.2%	98.9%	96.9%

Source: Department of School Education, 1995

**Table 2.3 School Retention Rates Year 10-12, 1994-1997**

Area	1994	1995	1996	1997
Central Coast	61.6%	62.2%	61.8%	64.0%
NSW	68.8%	67.3%	66.2%	67.0%

Source: Department of Education and Training, 1998

There is a lower than State average participation rates on the Central Coast in TAFE measured across all age groups suggesting a potential for expansion of Vocational Education Training. Approximately one third of students leave the region to attend TAFE courses. Similarly the Central Coast has a lower than State average participation in University (99/1000 compared with 138/1000) suggesting a potential for increasing places.

Statistics show a significant level of unmet demand for local post secondary education places. In 1997 over 2,500 people moved out of the region to study. Participation rates would be expected to increase by providing more local study opportunities.

Central Coast Campus is the major tertiary institution on the Central Coast and is a joint venture between The University of Newcastle, Hunter Institute of Technology, the Musical Conservatorium Centre and the Central Coast Community College. Development of the Central Coast Campus is a major priority. It is essential that a greater number of residents have access to tertiary education on the Central Coast.

The lower than average educational attainment of the existing population and the apparent low priority placed on educational achievement by the current 15-24 age group has serious negative implications for attracting future industries and limits employment growth.

## 2.5 Infrastructure

The following infrastructure is available within Gosford City:

- Industrial Land

Quality industrial land at Somersby Industrial Park (300 hectares) with a range of lot sizes from 0.4 to 10 hectares.

Smaller industrial estates at West Gosford and Lisarow.

Other industrial areas in Wyong Shire.

- Communications

Telecommunications infrastructure is based on co-axial and optic fibre cabling and microwave systems. Digital and analogue cellular phone systems cover the entire region. Telstra's ISDN network provides circuit switched data services, virtual private network services and integrated access to other Telstra facilities.

- Ports

Under normal traffic conditions, heavy vehicle access is between 60 and 90 minutes to Mascot Airport, Botany Container Terminal and Port of Newcastle.

- Road transport

The Sydney-Newcastle Freeway services the region, with most major industrial areas within 2 kilometres of it. There is a comprehensive network of arterial and secondary roads throughout the region.

- Rail transport

The Main Northern Railway Line links the central Coast with Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and Brisbane. The link between Sydney and Newcastle is electrified providing a fast, regular passenger service. Rail freight services are operated by State Rail and all major freight companies.

- Electricity

Access to power is readily available.

- Gas

Main natural gas pipeline supplies industrial, commercial and residential users.

- Water supply

The 190,000 Mangrove Creek Dam is expected to meet all demands well into the next century.

- Sewage and Waste Management

A reticulated sewerage system services all non-rural residential, industrial and commercial areas.

### **3. POTENTIAL FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Research has identified a range of strengths and weaknesses that impact on the region and have implications for its economic development (Central Coast Economic Development Strategy, 1997; Draft Central Coast Regional Development Strategy, 1998)

#### **3.1 Regional Advantages**

The Central Coast has a number of highly distinctive characteristics:

- strategically located between Sydney and Newcastle;
- ready access to major domestic and export markets;
- a temperate and reliable climate;
- long established and well recognised tourist industry;
- immediate access to major infrastructure F3 and Great Northern Rail Line;
- manufacturing and a wide range of service industries;
- availability of relatively affordable residential land with access to Sydney;
- provision of modern services - electricity, telecommunications, water supply, sewage and waste management infrastructure, transport (except air);
- large pool of available labour; and
- scenic beauty, beaches, waterways, national parks and mountains.

Results of a recent industry survey show that the key competitive strengths of the Central Coast for relocation or establishment of new companies appear to fall into two groups (Gibbs and Partners, 1998):

- Saleable benefits which can be demonstrated before the decision is made and which meets the basic need of the investor. These include:
  - room for current and future expansion;
  - cheap land that provides opportunity for capital gain and reduced occupancy costs;
  - choice of sites; and
  - availability of labour for the new workforce.
- Benefits that accrue after the move. These include:
  - stability and loyalty of workforce;
  - ease of training a workforce which is predominantly English speaking;
  - ease of commuting, leading to retention; and
  - desirable lifestyle.



### 3.2 Regional Challenges

The Central Coast is faced with a number of challenges. These include:

- continuing demand for residential land as an alternative to Sydney with resultant pressure on infrastructure, the environment and quality of life;
- population increase, lagging job creation and high unemployment;
- high proportion of commuter jobs outside of the region;
- a large unskilled workforce with significant training needs;
- lack of organisations with structural complexity to provide career opportunities;
- employment opportunities with a variety of qualifications and skills;
- low average income;
- economic stress;
- ecological stress;
- social stress; and
- inadequate public transport.

## **4. IMPEDIMENTS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.1 Overview**

The previous sections have already highlighted some of the factors impeding economic growth in the region.

Findings of a recent industry survey conducted with new or relocated businesses to the Central Coast, identified three key areas as being impediments to economic development (Gibbs and Partners, 1998):

- **Employment Profile and Physical Properties:**
  - lack of a highly skilled workforce
  - lack of demonstrable training facilities
  - lack of established business parks with available buildings
  - lack of well established cluster development
  - increased transport costs, not “Sydney rates”
  - increased distance to new location and market in Sydney
- **Perceived barriers to development:**
  - lack of understanding of ease of commuting from northern Sydney
  - lack of knowledge of industrial base and opportunities
  - perceived removal from market contacts
  - distance from wharves for imports and exports
- **Development Policy:**
  - growing unemployment in the Hunter Region and continued State and Federal Government efforts to direct enquiries for major new development to that region; and
  - the Central Coast not being able to establish a priority position at a political/bureaucratic level with funding directed towards Greater Western Sydney.

Some of the impediments identified above and other factors which currently impede development on the Central Coast are discussed below.

### **4.2 Imbalance Between Population Growth and Employment Growth**

The rapid population growth which the City has experienced in recent decades has led to a backlog of infrastructure works that will need to be addressed over time given the financial constraints placed upon Council.

The government undertakes, through the Urban Development Program, an active policy of shifting population to the Central Coast without a countervailing policy for directly and indirectly augmenting the Central Coast’s employment base. The continuation of such policies acts to destabilise, not foster, balanced regional business development on the Central Coast.

The following table shows the annual number of new jobs required to keep pace with predicted

population growth and reduce the unemployment rate in the region to the NSW average.

**Table 4.1 Demand for New Jobs**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Predicted Population</b>	<b>Total Number employed required to keep pace</b>	<b>Annual increase in jobs required for each period</b>
1995/6	263,000	113,900	
2001	276,000	119,530	1,126
2006	288,500	124,943	1,082
2011	299,600	129,750	961
2016	309,300	133,950	840
2021	317,900	137,674	744

Source: Central Coast Economic Development Strategy, 1997

**Table 4.2**

<b>Figures for Sept 1996</b>	<b>At the actual rate of employment of 8.7%</b>	<b>At the desired (NSW) unemployment rate of 8.1%</b>	<b>Change needed</b>
Total employment pool	124,754	124,754	
Total employed	113,900	114,647	+749
Total unemployed	10,854	10,105	-749

Source: Central Coast Economic Development Strategy, 1997

Data from the above tables suggest that there is a need to create annually:

1,126 jobs to keep pace with population growth and 150 jobs to reduce the unemployment rate to the State average.

### **4.3 Level of Government Funding and Services**

Job opportunities in regions like the Central Coast have been significantly impacted in recent times by changes in levels of government funding and services in employment generation and related programmes. These include:

- Skillshare Programme

The Skillshare programme, which traditionally focused on placing disadvantaged people in jobs (the long term unemployed) had its funding cut in 1997. The implications were twofold: direct employment by the service was reduced and the chances of people on this programme obtaining employment have been significantly diminished.

- Commonwealth Employment Service

The corporatisation of the Commonwealth Employment Service which took effect on May 1 1998, has led to 16 employment agencies being set up on the Central Coast. Concerned have been raised that employers are abandoning the new system because of its high costs and the number of placements are fewer than under the CES which offered universal and free job vacancy network. Fees charged by agencies in the job network range from \$250 to \$850 for a basic placement.

- TAFE Courses

TAFE formerly provided a variety of labour market programmes targeted at long term unemployed and young people with literacy and numeracy needs. These programmes, which have now become scarce, were effective for personal development and vocational skills acquired.

- AusIndustry Development Programme

Funding for the AusIndustry Development Programme which has been very successful in creating job opportunities in regional areas, was ceased by the Federal Government in 1998.

- Small Business Mentor Programme

The Central Coast Small Business Mentor Programme, one of only two operations in Australia, has been particularly successful in creating job opportunities and preserving existing jobs. To date the program has assisted 271 firms, which realised 94 new jobs and attended to firms in crisis on 50 occasions, which resulted in the protection of 41 jobs. The net gain to the Central Coast has been estimated at \$8.375 million.

The potential of the programme is graphically illustrated when considered against studies of small businesses which have found that up to 30 per cent of small businesses fail in their first year and almost 50 per cent have failed after two years of operation. This program requires recurrent funding in order for the programme to continue and expand.

- Planet Earth 2000

The International Garden Festival (Planet Earth 2000) was an excellent opportunity to create job

opportunities in a regional area, not only for the duration of the festival but in the longer term. The lack of Federal government funding commitment has meant this opportunity has been lost to the Central Coast Region.

The \$240 million festival was expected to attract 6 million visitors over six months and an estimated 1 million visitors per annum to residual facilities. The festival would have generated 7000 regional jobs.

- Reduction in Decentralised Services

The rationalisation and closure of government and private services eg. Medicare Offices and bank branches has had a disproportionate impact on regional areas. Impact has resulted in a lack of access to basic services as well as reductions in direct employment levels.

#### **4.4 Capital for Investment**

Financiers tend to focus lending on proven markets and projects more likely to be found in metropolitan areas. Benefits could be provided to financiers to trial or pilot lending to regional areas to stimulate job creation.

#### **4.5 Infrastructure Provision**

As mentioned above, Gosford City is faced with a backlog in infrastructure provision to meet the needs of and facilitate residential, tourist and industrial growth. Government support and financial assistance is required to overcome these backlogs.

#### **Case Study 1: Somersby Industrial Park**

Somersby Industrial Park is Gosford City Council's flagship with regard to fostering local and regional economic development.

Somersby Industrial Park covers an area of approximately 300 hectares located west of the Kariong escarpment, 6km west of Gosford CBD. The Park's location immediately adjacent the F3 Freeway, offers exceptional road access to local, state, national and international markets. The F3 Freeway links Sydney and Newcastle and is at a point midway between the two cities.

The Park was developed as a joint venture between the State Government, Gosford City Council and local landholders some 18 years ago. As it currently stands, about one third of the Park is developed which generates in excess of 1,300 full-time and 150 part-time/casual positions. The Park has the potential to produce over 6,000 full-time positions when fully developed. The continued growth of the Park is a vital component of Council's strategy to help local economy and at the same time provide increased development opportunities for its rapidly growing population.

The growth of Somersby Industrial Park has been slow and not in the form envisaged at the time of its inception. Only 28 per cent of the land area has been developed for industrial purposes.

The past five years have produced only six additional industrial developments, each of which have been small scale and producing a limited number of new positions. The major issues confronting the Park include its lack of formal identity; limited support infrastructure; poor development incentives and fragmentation of land. It is believed that these factors hinder the Park's development. This opinion has been verified from discussions with local and Sydney based real estate agents, potential relocatees and senior representatives of the Department of State and Regional Development. A reliable, comprehensive and formal fast track system for processing development applications also needs to be set up.

The lack of a formal entrance to the Somersby Industrial Park detracts from its identity and importance to the region's economy. By contrast successful industrial estates in Sydney (eg. Norwest Business Park) boast distinctive and well signposted entry points with an attractive landscape theme. To date there have been insufficient funds available to establish a formal entrance to the Park.

**There are insufficient funds generated from developer contributions to implement all originally identified elements of road, stormwater drainage, sewer and water infrastructure. All parties involved in the Park share the concern that there is a significant loss of appeal arising from this unfinished state which will adversely impact upon new industry establishment.**

A number of other environmental and Aboriginal heritage issues have emerged in recent years which have also contributed to widespread negative perceptions of the Park by real estate agents and developers which has hindered development of the Park.

The introduction of the Threatened Species Conservation Act in January 1996 placed the future development of Somersby Industrial Park in jeopardy, despite the vast majority of the land having been utilised for other purposes (logging, grazing and agriculture) prior to the land being zoned for industrial development. Nine sites are significantly affected by the occurrence of the Somersby Mintbush with another 35 property owners having potential habitat where these species may occur. Consequently the development potential of the Park reaching its full potential is at risk.

It is Council's contention that land which had been zoned for industrial purposes prior to the introduction of the Act and is in a disturbed state should be exempt from the provisions of the Threatened Species Conservation Act. The situation facing property owners within the Park is one of uncertainty with the potential for some individuals to incur heavy financial losses by the virtual sterilisation of land bought in good faith for industrial development.

Similarly, the presence of known Aboriginal sites within the Park should not restrict further development provided that adequate measures are taken to ensure that these sites are protected by appropriate buffers and curtilage as per NPWS requirements.

Representations have been made through the local, State and Federal members to the Premier of NSW and Prime Minister for the establishment of a Taskforce consisting of representatives of Gosford City Council, the Somersby Landholders Association and relevant State and Federal Government Departments to review the development of the Somersby Industrial Park and identify solutions to ensure the most appropriate development of the site. An integrated public

and private sector approach is required to support and “kickstart” further development of the Park.

**The NSW State Government and Federal Government have been requested to support the continuing development of the Somersby Industrial Park through the provision of funds that would allow the early completion of the necessary infrastructure including roads, drainage, water supply and sewerage.**

Funding and support is also required from relevant State Government agencies to undertake baseline environment and Aboriginal heritage studies for the Park as a whole rather than these issues being considered on an adhoc basis with each development application that is submitted. Funding is also required to prepare comprehensive development control plan for the Park which clearly outlines development conditions and standards.

Upon resolution of current issues, assistance will be required from the State government to develop a fast tracking of all development applications in Somersby Industrial Park in order to realise its potential and provide significant employment opportunities for the City. This would maximise the Park’s position in attracting industry. The fast tack process would include an agreed development framework enabling suitable pre-approved developments to proceed within a 28 day period, similar to the Steel River site in Newcastle.

Development of Somersby Industrial Park would largely assist the relatively high local unemployment rate and build a solid foundation for attracting new industries to Gosford.

### **Case Study 2: Terrigal Waterfront and Town Centre Development**

Terrigal was identified in Central Coast Regional Tourism Strategy (1993) as on of the two prime tourism development areas on the Central Coast (the other being The Entrance).

The present condition of Terrigal is an obstacle to it reaching its potential as a tourist destination. Capital works are urgently needed to enhance the appeal of Terrigal as a tourist destination, similar to the successful upgrade of The Entrance in neighbouring Wyong Shire.

Council has been criticised for not proceeding with the Terrigal Foreshore Implementation Program by residents, visitors and business community. Council has put the project on hold for

several years pending a State Government commitment of \$1.3 million towards a sea-wall. This commitment has now been honoured by the re-elected Labor Government and tenders will shortly be called for the works.

There are a number of other large scale infrastructure projects at Terrigal which would create substantial economic benefits based on improved tourist and investment. These include:

- Implementation of Terrigal Foreshore Masterplan which provides boardwalks, foreshore protection, public amenities, streetscaping for the town centre, traffic and pedestrian facilities. Estimated cost: \$5M
- Multi-Story Car Park. The tourist potential of Terrigal is currently limited by the ability of visitors and residents to park off-street. Estimated cost: \$2.5M
- CBD Drainage Upgrade and the provision of new drainage systems to current design standards to alleviate existing drainage and flooding problems in the residential and commercial areas of the CBD. Estimated cost: \$2.4M

Funding is sought for these major infrastructure projects.



## **5. STRATEGIES**

Regional development strategies and initiatives need to be devised to enhance the competitive advantage of each regional economy consistent with existing local industry structure and growth.

A competitive and adaptable economy will be characterised by:

- diverse, well developed and efficient infrastructure;
- improved transport links and new information technologies (broadband network) to expand employment opportunities;
- the resources necessary to maintain both existing infrastructure assets and to finance new infrastructure; and
- a well trained workforce with a wide range of skills and commitment to leading technology.

*(Draft Central Coast Regional Planning Strategy, 1998)*

### **5.1 General Initiatives**

#### **5.1.1 Co-ordinated Urban Development and Economic Development**

Government strategies underpinning urban development should be co-ordinated with regional business development strategies so that job generation closely follows population growth.

#### **5.1.2 Facilitating Economic Development**

Most developers/industry would prefer that government agencies focus upon eliminating legislative and regulatory obstacles to development. While realising that government will always have a role to play in regulatory matters government impositions on the business sector are seen as a deterrent to economic development and job creation.

Councils should be seen as a “facilitator” of rational economic development, rather than being seen solely as regulators.

Gosford Council has sought to streamline the pre-lodgement and development application process by providing a customised approach to developers and establishment of a Pre-Lodgement Panel for major economic developments comprising key senior staff.

Problems can be overcome through early consultation with local and state government authorities to gain an appreciation of all requirements including a comprehensive description, initial development concept and Development Application documentation.

#### **5.1.3 Incentives to Encourage Economic Development**

Incentives are required for both small and large sized businesses. Government should be proactive in its assistance encompassing measures such as tax incentives (federal), payroll tax exemptions (state) and schemes involving the development of state or federal land with deferred payment schemes or lease arrangements for small business.

Direct assistance should be targeted to certain industries and geographic locations. For example, the Central Coast Region which is recognised as a region of high population growth and high unemployment.

#### **5.1.4 Investment**

The successful attraction and facilitation of the provision of investment capital and loan funding is vital for the economic development of the region. Types of investment required are:

- funding of infrastructure oriented projects (public and private sector) such as Somersby Industrial Estate, Gosford Marina and Boatharbour and Fast Ferry Services, Terrigal Foreshore Improvements, Warnervale Airport;
- investment in new or relocating industries and businesses such as Ettalong Beach Resort; and
- finance for business establishment, diversification and expansion across industry sectors, especially for small businesses.

#### **5.1.5 Provision of Infrastructure**

One of the major ways in which government can generate employment is the provision of appropriate infrastructure to encourage industry establishment in the region. Business considers the state of local infrastructure a critical factor regarding future investment within or relocation to the regional economy.

The Government's core role is to ensure good quality basic infrastructure services. Physical, economic and social infrastructure is a necessary foundation for long term regional private sector development as it enables firms to attain and retain competitive advantage in the marketplace.

The availability of infrastructure ensures that conditions are created for the private sector to invest in employment generation.

If standards of infrastructure in non-metropolitan regional economics is allowed to fall below metropolitan areas, regional growth prospects are further undermined.

#### **5.1.6 Education and Labour Market Programs**

While the primary focus for regional economic development is the creation and development of business and industry, government support and assistance for selected labour market programmes and initiatives is important.

### **5.2 Gosford City/Central Coast Specific Infrastructure Initiatives:**

In order to encourage, nurture and grow successful businesses on the Central Coast it is imperative that the region fosters entrepreneurial skills and employee vocational training that is supplemented by government support (physical infrastructure, educational programs) and appropriately serviced and located employment lands.

The strong population growth rate experienced by the region has placed additional pressure on the need for local job creation. The challenge is more than creating employment opportunities, it is about ensuring that the region has a mixture (types and wage structures) of jobs and that these jobs are located in respect to transport, existing urban districts, key infrastructure and the natural environment.

The desire to encourage more local employment opportunities is seen as a means by which significant out-commuting may be reduced. Enhancing self containment will contribute to quality of life and address high levels of escape expenditure.

### **5.2.1 Provision of Infrastructure**

#### **Industrial Estates**

Government financial support is necessary for the provision of infrastructure in the City's industrial estates - namely, Somersby Industrial Park (refer to Section 4.5). Funding, in advance of developer contributions is required to provide the necessary infrastructure to encourage and attract development. The state of local infrastructure is a key element which is considered in any investment or relocation decision.

Up front funds for the provision of infrastructure would be recouped by developer contributions and land sales.

#### **F3 Freeway**

It is estimated that over 35,000 people commute from the Central Coast to Sydney each day. Passenger services and the F3 Freeway are close to full capacity. There has been a significant increase in vehicle movements per day on the F3.

While there is a strong commitment to creation of local jobs on the Central Coast it is anticipated that growth in regional employment will not keep up with ongoing population growth, hence transport links to Sydney will need to be upgraded. Good transport links are essential to encourage industry relocation and establishment, so as to provide good access to major markets and freight movement in and out of Sydney. They are also important to support the Coast's expanding tourism industry.

### **Capital Works and Improvements**

The following large scale regional infrastructure project proposals have been identified to assist foster economic development within Gosford City:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Potential Economic Benefit</b>	<b>Cost</b>
<b>Somersby Industrial Park</b>	<b>Highly significant to build a solid foundation for attracting new industries and assisting reduce high unemployment levels.</b>	\$8-10M
Terrigal Foreshore and Town Centre Redevelopment	Significant based on improved tourist and investment in Terrigal.	\$5M
Terrigal Multi-Storey Car Park	Significant benefit to tourism development of Terrigal. Currently limited by the inability of visitors and residents to park off-street.	\$2.5M
Gosford Town Centre Redevelopment	Positive benefit to commercial sector through improved business, greater employment and investment.	Stage 2 & 3 funding required
Gosford Parkway Stage 2	Greater rail patronage with fewer car commuters to Sydney and Newcastle.	\$3M
Racecourse Road/Showground Road	Graded separate interchange of key intersection of main north-south and east-west routes at Gosford. Reduced travel times and improved safety.	\$8M
North East Arterial Road linking North Gosford/Wyoming with Erina	Reduced travel times. Relieve of congestion in Gosford and East Gosford CBDs.	\$12M
F3 Freeway Car/Bus Interchange	Substantial reduction in road user costs and traffic congestion.	\$10M
Woy Woy Town Centre Redevelopment	Positive benefit to commercial sector through improved business, greater employment and investment.	\$1.5M
Woy Woy Parkway Stage 3	Greater rail patronage with fewer car commuters to Sydney and Newcastle.	\$3M
Construction and Extension of Branch Libraries	Satisfy increased demand and provide improved access to library services for the community.	\$2.2M
New Regional Library	Increased services. Provision of educational and new information technologies supporting desired economic development. Location within CBD supports Gosford CBD revitalisation.	\$5.1M

## 5.2.2 Education and Employment Programs

Improving education and industry training facilities in the region would raise the skill level of the existing workforce and levels of post school qualifications, education and skill level of the future workforce. Higher levels of skill would improve the ability to attract investors in higher growth industries.

The State Government needs to support the development of additional tertiary education infrastructure at Central Coast Campus Ourimbah as well as TAFE facilities. Ourimbah University needs to be promoted for the development of research and encouragement of links with technology industries.

Resources are also required to support students to remain at school and programs to assist in the transition between school and work, for example, closer links with business and industry, subjects which skill students for work and mentor systems.

Small Business is a mainstay of the regional economy. One-to-one and small group advice and assistance to small business owners and managers is a proven method of increasing small business capacity and capabilities, leading directly to more employment. An effective form of delivery is through a dedicated organisation such as the Central Coast Small Business Mentor Services and Enterprise Centre. This community based service is supported by both Gosford and Wyong Councils and ongoing financial support is required for the continuation and expansion of this valuable service. Potential also exists to establish similar services in other regional areas.

### **5.2.3 Decentralisation of Government Services**

The opportunity exists to expand the existing government service centres located on the Central Coast by broadening the administrative functions of these centres so that they cover areas wider than the Central Coast.

The expanding population and growing workforce, and improved transport facilities provide an excellent base for the decentralisation of further government services to the Central Coast.

Moves will reduce demand pressure on the Region's rail and road links to Sydney, as many long distance commuters living on the Central Coast travel to government jobs in Sydney CBD.

The Region represents a convenient midpoint between Sydney and Newcastle and provides cheaper commercial land prices. There are opportunities for the Government to substantially reduce establishment costs associated with government offices.

Government services would also encourage private sector industries to establish in the region.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

For the development of regional areas in Australia, such as the Central Coast of NSW, to be successful there is a need to create an environment in which industry can be competitive. It is the role of government to ensure that necessary infrastructure and appropriate support mechanisms are available and that government processes are unobtrusive and efficient. This will require an integrated whole of government approach to regional economic development.

The provision of economic, social and physical infrastructure is of critical importance to stimulate economic growth and employment in regional areas.

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