

Executive Summary



*Ulmara wharf at dusk*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

Clouston Associates with SGL Consulting Group were commissioned by Clarence Valley Council to develop a Masterplan for the Clarence River Way (CRW).

The Clarence River Way is an integrated market driven, tourism destination development initiative that aims to increase economic outcomes by linking towns and villages in the region and leveraging the Clarence Valley's unique selling points and greatest competitive advantage – the Clarence River and related built, natural and cultural attractions.

### METHODOLOGY

The project has been undertaken in five stages which include:

- Stage 1 Project Initiation (Stage Completed)*
- Stage 2 Project Survey / Data Collection (Stage Completed)*
- Stage 3 Draft Masterplan Preparation (Current Stage)*
- Stage 4 Public Exhibition of draft Masterplan ( October / November 2008)*
- Stage 5 Final Masterplan (December 2008)*

### VISION

The outcome of the consultation and issues analysis is the clear identification that the River represents the core unique asset of the region, with a fundamental need to re-focus upon this great asset and leverage its potential for both locals and visitors alike. The full vision is presented in chapter 2.

### THEMES AND VALUES

The Clarence River Way will provide travellers with holiday fun and memorable experiences. It may also take visitors on differing journeys of wide exploration or deeper local understanding. Along the way and behind the scenes, there will be a framework of management, guidance and interpretation based on the character and history of the region. These story lines or themes listed below are critical not only because they succinctly encapsulate the Valley's past, but may also hint at its future direction. The CRW themes are:

- A Continuous Culture
- A Productive Landscape
- Life from the River
- A Creative Community
- A History of Play

### CORE VALUES

Core values for the CRW have been identified and will underpin the Clarence River Way brand and together with the themes, guide product development, service delivery and communications. The core values are:

- Family, friends, community
- Real experiences
- Value for money
- Quality
- Sustainable

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### TARGET MARKETS

The research, consultation, destination assessment and market research phases of the project indicate the Clarence should focus on attracting two key emerging target markets being Experience Seeker (as defined by Tourism Australia) and particularly nature based tourists; and the local/regional community.

Experience Seekers are being targeted by Tourism Australia as the "ideal tourist for Australia". They share a unique set of values, attributes and motivations that are beyond holiday behaviour, category of travel or a particular age group.

### TOURING REGION

The masterplan reviewed options for a touring route in the Valley and our investigation revealed that within the Clarence region there is a plethora of existing touring routes, almost to the point of route overload. This coupled with the lack of product or things to do and variability of presentation led to an outcome to promote the Clarence as a touring region.

The idea of the touring region is to have a much smaller area for touring that provides a flexible approach for visitors. The proposed touring region is focused on the lower reaches of the Clarence River and its associated attractions at townships from Copmanhurst to Yamba/Iluka, capitalising on the proximity of the Pacific Highway to the river and the scenic qualities of route 22. The intent here is to identify the range of attractions in the region and to provide visitors the opportunities to select, mix and match their own itineraries and routes.

### KEY DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES OF THE MASTERPLAN REVIEW

Throughout the study these issues and opportunities were consistently identified through the various mechanisms of research and consultation.

- The Clarence River is the Icon, but at present a greatly underutilised resource.
- Access to the river is paramount to supporting tourism development in the Clarence. This access was seen in all its forms from physical, connections from and to the river, visual access and access to information and stories about the river.
- There are plenty of things to do in the Clarence, but there is a need for linkages, connections and packaging and simplification of choices.
- The Clarence Valley does not suit the continued development of tourist drives but it should simplify or abandon the current plethora of routes to instead focus upon the idea of marketing the Clarence as a touring region.
- There are gaps in the low and high end accommodation sector of the Clarence.
- Positive visitor perceptions of the Clarence are vital. There is a strong need for improved quality of presentation of towns, businesses and levels of service delivery.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There is an overwhelming lack of information, interpretation and stories about the Clarence that add value to visitor experiences.
- There is a need to build skill capacity within the local tourism industry and encourage new investment.
- To build upon the region's strengths, as a priority, and leverage them to assist development of the Clarence Valley as a destination.
- Leadership is a critical component, with consultation suggesting that if Government shows the way – industry will follow.
- This is a long-term vision including many agencies and spread over several government terms, but there is also a willingness to work together. There is a need to establish a mechanism to lead, direct and guide the delivery of the vision.

### THE MASTERPLAN

The masterplan has been framed around five key components using a visitor based approach that examines the issues facing the Clarence, and proposes objectives, strategies and actions through the following five components:

#### Clarence River identity

- How is the Clarence Valley perceived, how do visitors find out about the Valley and how does it fit within an extremely busy and competitive regional tourism marketplace.

#### Attractions and destination development

- What is there to do in the Clarence Valley that attracts visitors? This includes natural resources such as the river, coast and mountains, cultural assets, events calendar, activities and experiences available.

#### Getting around

- How easy is it to get to the Clarence Valley and once here, how easy is it to find your way around and how accessible are its attractions including the river?

#### The Quality of experience

- What is on offer to the visitor by way of accommodation, infrastructure and support facilities, service delivery, and what do visitors learn or take away from the experience? Will they come back again and tell their friends?

#### Management, administration and regional linkages

- The integration of the river as a tourism resource involves the integration of a number of industries, as well as government agencies and needs to be holistically managed at a catchment level.

The summary outcomes of this masterplan framework and the resultant objectives and strategies are as follows:

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### CLARENCE RIVER IDENTITY

The Clarence River is an immature market. There is a limited awareness of the Clarence as a destination, there are other competing brands, the logos do not reflect the true values of the place and there is too much information in the visitors centres and on the web to make simple choices. Objectives and strategies for improving Clarence River identity include:

**A1 To establish the Clarence River and its catchment as a distinctive place on the northern coast of NSW and Australia.**

A1.1 Promote the identity of the Clarence River as the place for a "Great River Experience".

A1.2 Develop Yamba as the port hub and entry gateway of the Clarence River.

A1.3 To develop the appeal of Grafton as a core tourist destination 'River City'.

A1.4 Encourage tourism operators to package local experiences through, networking and linking, information provision, and incentives.

A1.5 Improve regional co-operation/cross-selling at airports, Visitor Information centres, highway stops and strategic gateways including the Gold Coast and Brisbane.

**A2 Increase market awareness of the Clarence.**

A2.1 Develop and apply a clear and consistent brand for the Clarence, focused on the 'river'

A2.2 Simplify the selection and reduce the volume of material at the VIC.

A2.3 Develop the Clarence River Way as a domestic/international market ready product.

A2.4 Adopt a long term sustainable approach to planning and destination management for the region.

### ATTRACTIONS AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

The region has great natural and cultural assets, tied to a strong history with the River. However, there is almost too much to do in the region, making it difficult for visitors to decide on the the Clarence as a destination. The river has the opportunity to be the key promotional driver to simplify choices and attractions. Objectives and strategies for building the destination attractions include:

**B1 Establish the river as the foundation asset in the Clarence Valley.**

B1.1 Protect the Clarence River resource. Conservation of natural systems/ catchments.

B1.2 Establish feasibility of identified river related product investment opportunities.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- B1.3 Encourage use and appreciation of the river.
- B2 Build upon the whole catchment including mountains, hinterland and coast.**
- B2.1 Work with NPWS to improve access to National Parks and remote areas.
- B2.2 Improve the relationship and understanding of the mountain, hinterland and coast to the River Valley.
- B2.3 Reinforce Yamba as the port entry to the Clarence River.
- B3 Cultural tourism that links to the river and reflects a sense of place.**
- B3.1 Develop an events strategy.
- B3.2 Coordinate heritage and conservation management of heritage assets throughout the Clarence River Valley.
- B4 Indigenous cultural tourism.**
- B4.1 Develop Indigenous cultural tourism as a continuous culture related to the river.
- B4.2 Ensure Indigenous culture is a vehicle for community and economic development.
- B5 Establish Grafton, Maclean, Ulmarra and Yamba/Iluka as river towns as the key tourism and service hubs for the Clarence River Way.**

### GETTING AROUND

Road arrival accounts for a large percentage of arrivals into the Valley, with the majority using the Pacific Highway. There are opportunities to develop other modes of arrival such as the port. One of the most significant elements of getting around was the very limited nature of access to and from the river that is hindering enjoyment and development potential. Objectives and strategies for improving getting around include:

- C1 Improve regional access to the Valley.**
- C1.1 Bring visitors off the main north/south highways into the Valley.
- C1.2 Improve ability for arrivals via air and water. (Regional travel, yachts).
- C1.3 Promote and develop the Yamba port as part of a regional harbour network.
- C2 Improve physical access to the River.**
- C2.1 Upgrade existing waterfront and other road reserves to be more clearly identified as public open space.
- C2.2 Aim to provide continuous pedestrian and cycle waterfront pathways.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- C2.3 Greatly extend the range of river access points along the river.
  - C2.4 Marina development.
  - C2.5 Integrated river hub stops.
  - C2.6 Visual connection to the river; and
  - C 2.7 Information about the river.
- C3 Improve Clarence Valley “movements”.**
- C3.1 Make it easier to navigate and wayfind through improved information, mapping, and signage.
  - C3.2 Improve non car-based trails and access including bikes, foot, bridle trails linkages and movement corridors.
  - C3.3 Embrace and integrate the concept of the Clarence as a touring region in all planning frameworks, structure plans and infrastructure decisions.

### THE QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE

Once in the Clarence the quality of experience is variable. There is a poor sense of arrival into the townships and the degree of presentation of retail and visitor facilities is below market expectation. There is a great lack of interpretation as well as service delivery. Objectives and strategies for improving the quality of experience include:

- D1 Improving the presentation of the destination.**
- D1.1 Improve the sense of arrival into all townships and villages.
  - D1.2 Improve the presentation of retail and commercial areas for tourism and the broader community.
  - D1.3 Improve service delivery and standards through education and training.
- D2 Managing development ‘in keeping’ with current qualities/target market expectations (environmental / natural, relaxed atmosphere, low key).**
- D2.1 Review development control plans to reflect tourism priorities.
- D3 Extend and develop the range of accommodation, food/beverage and entertainment.**
- D3.1 Encourage development of both budget and 4-5 star accommodation.
  - D3.2 Ensure a co-ordinated approach to holiday letting .
  - D3.3 Work with local hospitality industry to improve the local produce content and quality of local restaurants/cafes.
- D4 Integrate interpretation and storytelling into tourism products.**
- D4.1 Develop an integrated approach to interpretation throughout the region through placemaking.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

D4.2 Encourage businesses to have an experience focus in its delivery to visitors.

### MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION AND REGIONAL LINKAGES

The river and its catchment represent a large physical area and there are many government agencies involved in managing the river, catchment and public lands around it. There is a need to ensure a co-ordinated approach to management as well as educating the community and bringing on board entrepreneurial investment to drive the development of the river. Objectives and strategies for addressing management include:

#### E1 Foster community and regional industry engagement, information, understanding and appreciation of the Clarence River values.

E1.1 Provide a supportive and enabling environment for community and regional industry engagement, information understanding and appreciation of Clarence River values.

E1.2 In partnership with key stakeholders, establish land management, finance and planning systems to support the tourism industry in developing infrastructure and product that meet evolving consumer demand.

#### E2 Provide a co-ordinated and integrated approach to planning and management of the river.

E2.1 Establish an integrated and co-ordinated approach to information planning and management across agencies in the catchment.

E2.2 Develop a centralised point of management for river based activities. The suggested approach here is to establish a Clarence River Way interagency chaired by CVC.

#### E3 Foster and encourage private and public sector investment.

E3.1 Engagement of the private and public sector in development of river related tourism.

### IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

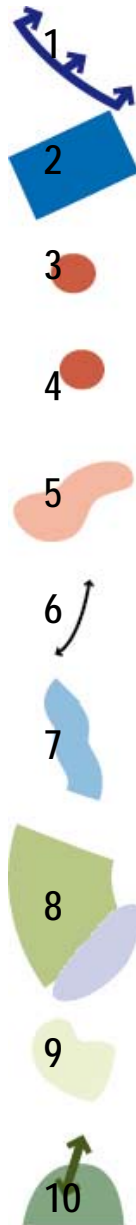
The actions that make up the masterplan have been prioritized into three groups of activity.

- Planning management and co-ordination of the river.
- Implementation and delivery of infrastructure, access and training.
- Marketing and promotion.

### THE MASTERPLAN STRATEGIC INTENT

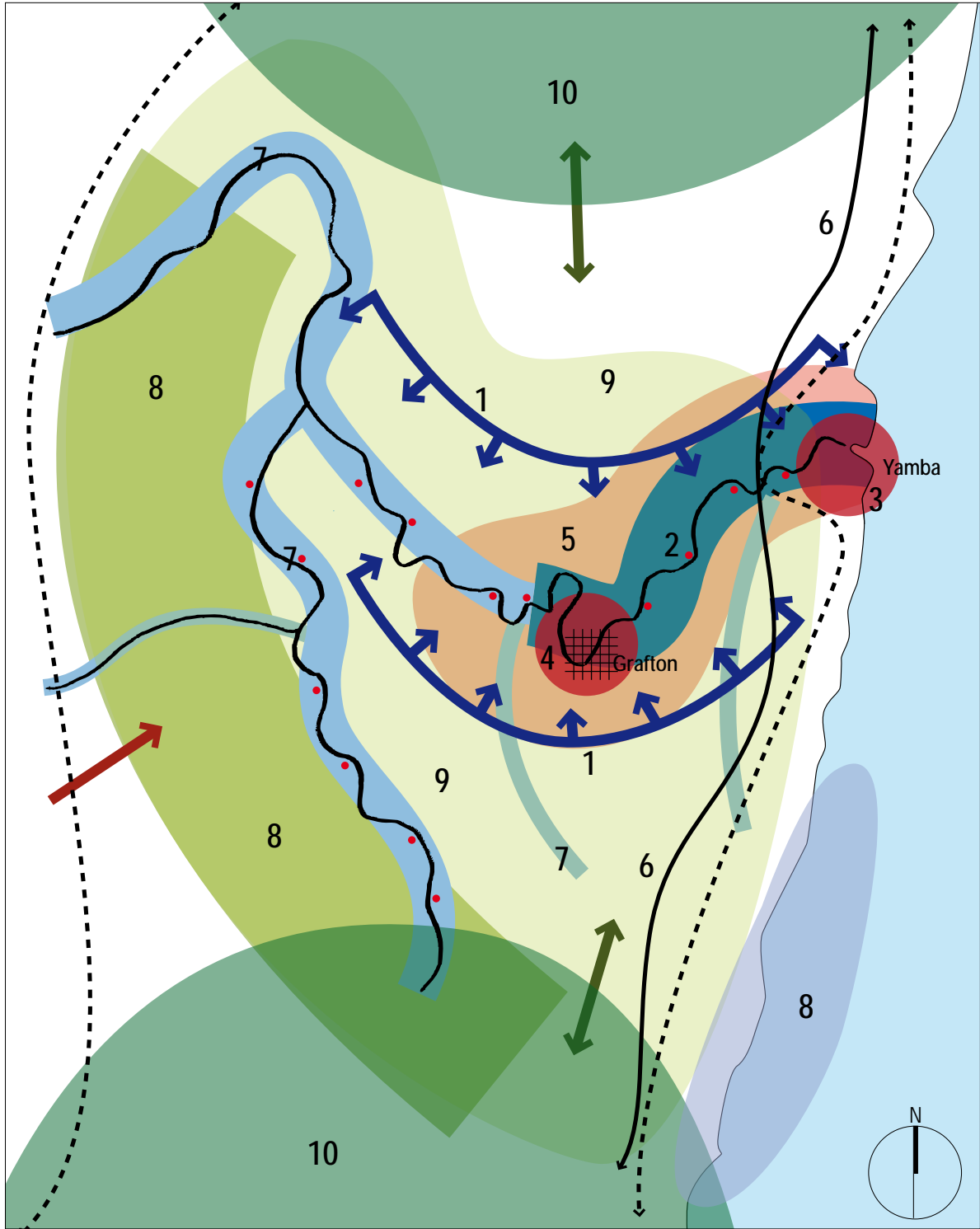
The masterplan is not one single thing but the combination of many interrelated actions spread over a large geographical area. To convey the strategic intent of the Clarence River Way masterplan we have provided a simplified grouping of actions shown in plan overleaf.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - STRATEGIC INTENT



- 1. Refocus upon the Clarence River for destination development.**  
Establish the Clarence River as the primary driver of destination development.
- 2. Develop the township hubs along the lower reaches.**  
Build upon the strong assets between Grafton and Yamba and develop a series of tourist hubs supporting land and river based activity.
- 3. Promote Yamba as the gateway port to the Clarence.**  
Promote Yamba as a port. Capitalise upon existing tourism potential, infrastructure and market awareness.
- 4. Reposition Grafton as a “River City” Tourist destination.**  
Reposition Grafton as a tourist hub around the concept of a ‘River City.’
- 5. Develop a Clarence River Way touring region.**  
Simplify touring routes down to a single “touring region” focused around the core tourism hubs, delivering on CRW themes.
- 6. Capitalise upon visitors using the Pacific Highway Touring Route.**  
Capitalise upon the Pacific Highway Touring Route and develop east west connections and partnerships.
- 7. Develop the upper reaches of the Clarence.**  
Develop the upper reaches through the provision of greater visitor access and infrastructure.
- 8. Develop opportunities in the Wilderness Arc.**  
Develop opportunities in the Wilderness Arc surrounding the Valley that value add to the Clarence River Way.
- 9. Create linkages from the hinterland to the Clarence.**  
Create linkages between the river and core industry sectors, facilitating access and infrastructure investment in key nodes.
- 10. Promotion and regional linkages.**  
Promote the Clarence River Way and build upon regional links with the Green Cauldron, Rainforest Way and Waterfall Way.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - STRATEGIC INTENT



Clarence River Way Masterplan - strategic intent

20Km