the living classroom

Bingara | Australia

Business Development Plan 2013 ~ 2017

Illustration 1: Aerial View of Precinct, February 2012

November 2012

the living classroom Is a community initiative of GWYDIR SHIRE COUNCIL in partnership with

NSW GOVERNMENT Trade & Investment | Gwydir Learning Region | WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL | Bingara and District VISION 20 20

with the Business Development Plan prepared by

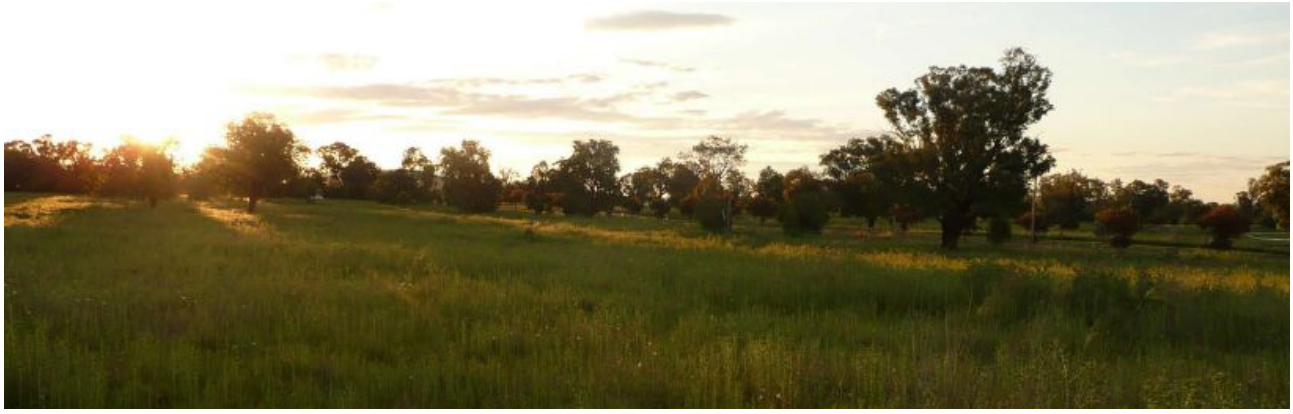
Starfish enterprises network

1 Executive Summary

> *My grandfather used to say that once in your life you need a doctor, a policeman and a lawyer but every day, three times a day, you need a farmer.*
>
> – Brenda Schoepp

The Living Classroom aims to inspire and enable the next generation of farmers, the adoption of regenerative farming practices and contribute to the regeneration of rural communities. It will be a visually beautiful, working regenerative farm, interpretation and function centre ~ all woven into the township of Bingara and surrounding natural environment. The initiative combines four strategies of education, agri–tourism, regenerative farming and conferencing. These strategies align with community and region–wide priorities identified as most key to the further regeneration of Bingara and surrounding district. The fortunes of Bingara, as is the case for most farming–based communities, are intrinsically linked with both the strength and the characteristics of its farming sector and food system.

By focussing on regenerative agriculture, The Living Classroom is addressing one of Australia's most pressing priorities, and most exciting opportunities ~ meeting the continuing rapid growth of global food demand in a manner which is profoundly more environmental benign and significantly more socially beneficial. In its simplest form, regenerative agriculture is the overall term given to farming methods which restore and do not deplete natural systems or ecology.



Regenerative Agriculture is an emerging hybrid model which uses a range of methods from past and current farming practices ~ including traditional, mainstream, alternative and digital–technology oriented systems.

Underpinned by Gwydir Shire Council's robust governance and asset management abilities, The Living Classroom uses a community enterprise business model. This particularly means using a wide range of income–generating activities to achieve a financially self–sustaining program of farming and community education, development and capacity building.

New governance and financial models such as this, are emerging at the very same time as advances in the sustainable use of ecosystem services. Workforce training, recruitment and succession planning are all widely identified as critical priorities for the farming sector, and are likely to grow in line with the increasing need for food production, environmental restoration and innovation.

A range of applied research and real-world educational courses, workshops and forums are to be provided to markets that spans both professional arenas through to local communities. Specialist contractors are to be engaged for program delivery, creating off-farm income opportunities for participating farmers and new opportunities for training organisations. This strategy also reduces the overheads and knowledge risks for the enterprise given the wide range of expertise required.

The Living Classroom will also create much needed direct employment ~ including traineeships, apprenticeships and structured volunteer programs ~ and substantial economic activity through visitor and student expenditure as well as direct program income, product sales, grants and sponsorship.

A total income of $4.2m is projected for the first five years of operation, with an estimated economic boost of $21.5m spending in Bingara and its immediate district (based on current visitor spending averages). Greater multipliers from re-circulation of funds through the local economy are additional to this.

Seventy-two thousand participants are expected during the 5 year period, built on a combined program which grows from 15 activities in 2013 to 128 activities in 2017.

> *Only he can understand what a farm is, what a country is, who shall have sacrificed part of himself to his farm or country, fought to save it, struggled to make it beautiful. Only then will the love of farm or country fill his heart.*
>
> – Antoine de Saint-Exupery

The uniqueness of The Living Classroom is twofold.

First, it is an award-winning example of a thoroughly integrated community-based development. It forms an integral part of the Bingara Town Master Plan. Community members, government authorities, industry and other stakeholders having been involved from the initial visioning through to this current planning phase of work.

Second, it will be Australia's only facility that demonstrates, interprets and teaches regenerative agriculture that is open to the public and farming sector on a regular and ongoing basis. By way of contrast, most research facilities and field trials focus on one or a few farming methods rather than a whole-of-farm system. They are also only open to farmers and the public at specific times, with many being part of an otherwise commercial farm businesses which are highly restricted in terms of public access.

The affordable and ready availability of the important knowledge generated by this initiative will be pivotal to the future of food.

Considerable work has already been completed, including the consolidation of the Bingara Town Commons site, construction of the Primary Industry Trade Training Centre and a Bunkhouse accommodation facility as well as the major hydrology system of swales, lakes and dams.

> *The most striking thing about the Bingara community and about Gwydir Shire has been their willingness to look to the future, to step outside the "box", and to engage residents and those who visit with a sense of the opportunities which will come from that very different future, rather than to be threatened by change. The lessons learned by this community can be extended throughout rural Australia.*
>
> – Senator John Williams

The greatest value of a business plan such as this is not in having the finished product in hand; rather it lies in the process of researching and detailing the business in a systematic way. This is especially important for a highly collaborative endeavour such as The Living Classroom. Its fruition and success will very much reflect the collective impact of many hands, heads and hearts.

1.a Purpose of this Plan

The purpose of this Business Plan it to present a comprehensive rationale and case for The Living Classroom, including the benefits, most compelling initiatives, prevailing evidence and priorities for implementation.

Securing sufficient resources to establish and operate an innovative community–based, non–profit enterprise such as this is challenging, particularly for the capital infrastructure. While there is a growing interest in regenerative agriculture, this is set against a backdrop of diminishing investment in agriculture and an increasingly competitive funding environment more generally.

It is essential to recognise and respond to this situation in two ways.

First, the various initiatives detailed will need to be developed and implemented as resources become available. The Living Classroom will grow in a responsive and strategically opportunistic manner to reduce the need to secure full funding up–front.

Second, the overwhelming majority of initiatives are structured to be self–funding as well as having a variable project–based cost structure to minimise financial risks and dependency.

In these ways, the implementation of this Plan is somewhat different to a for–profit business where the intention is to secure the majority of necessary resources up front on the basis that a return will be provided to investors or financiers.

By contrast, this Plan represents a grand vision of what is possible for The Living Classroom. The implementation of the Plan will be guided by the opportunities created (such as self–funded initiatives) and shaped by others which arise along the way (such as grants and partnerships). It is key that all of these opportunities are strategically aligned and fit with the Plan to ensure the overall integrity and quality of the result.

For these reasons, the most likely use of this Plan will be to expand on the relevant sections, evidence and rationale for each particular opportunity (grant application, partnership negotiation or similar), while providing the Plan in its entirety to show how that opportunity fits with the bigger vision and overall operation.

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2 The Living Classroom

2.a Vision & Purpose

There is no love sincerer than the love of food. – George Bernard Shaw

The Living Classroom will create a visually beautiful and natural wonderland which showcases and demonstrates the future and wonder of food ~ from the soil up to paddock, to our plates and then back again. It aims to provide inspiration and know–how for the next generation of farmers and the regeneration of rural communities.

Australia's rural communities play a critical role in feeding our nation and the world. Profound changes are required if our food system is to be able to meet current and future needs and contemporary tastes.

Innovations that are guided by smallholder farmers, adapted to local circumstances, and sustainable for the economy and environment will be necessary to ensure food security in the future. – Bill Gates

The Living Classroom is taking a positive journey through these changes by focussing on the opportunities for rural communities in Australia and abroad.

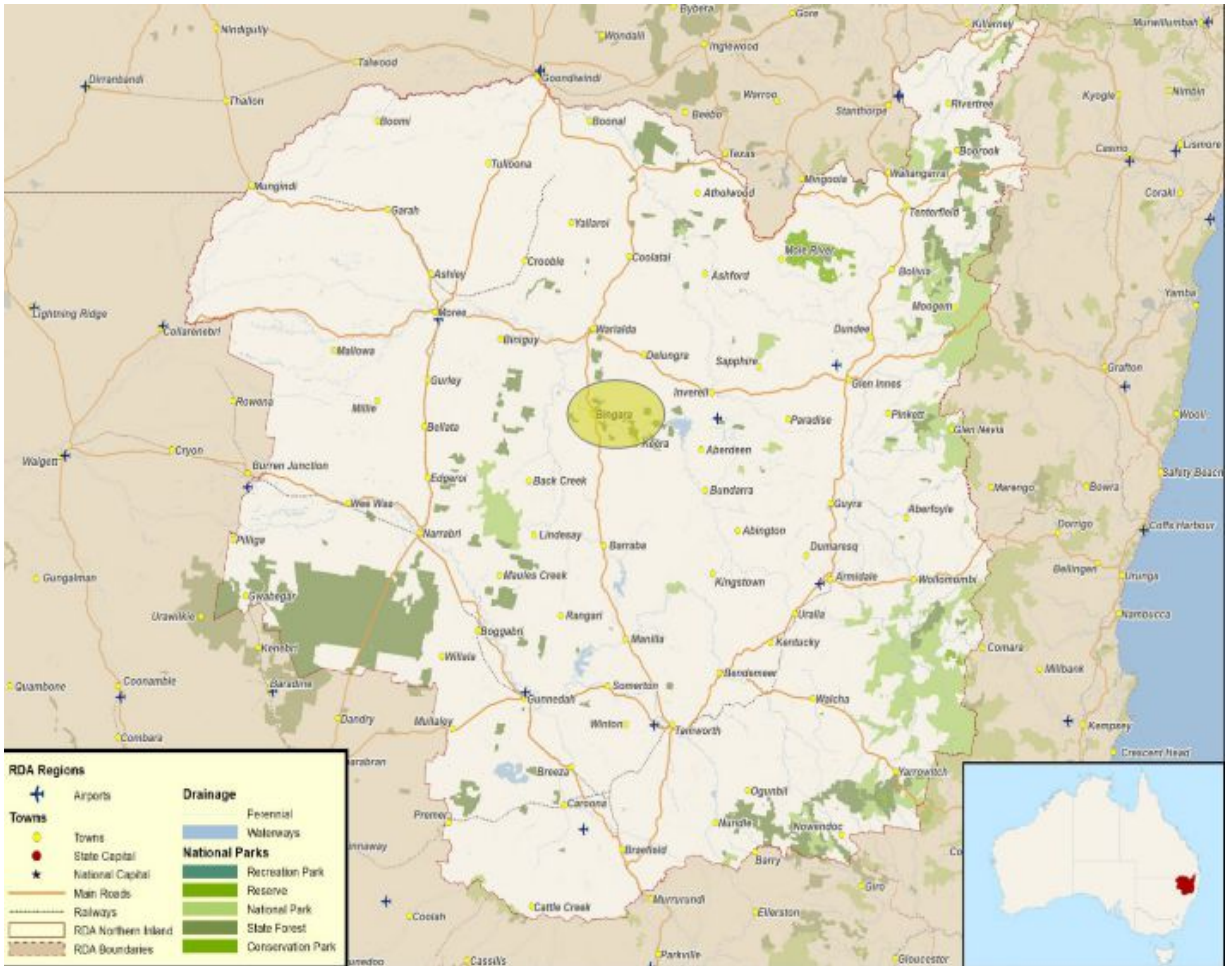
To fulfil this purpose 150 hectares of degraded town Common are to be fully regenerated into a highly productive forest of food by combining a wide range of complementary agricultural activities with horticulture, aquaculture and forestry. The synergy between these activities is key to nutrition, productivity, profitability, health and the natural environment. This work is an exercise in broad collaboration and integration, being designed and created by the collective efforts of the many participants of the modern food system as well as harnessing the best knowledge from traditional through to scientific and other contemporary farming methods.

The Living Classroom is pivotal to Bingara's own regeneration. While being situated at the heart of one of Australia's most productive agricultural and educational regions, Bingara exists on a knife–edge like so many other rural towns. The Living Classroom is key to the four pillars of Bingara's future economic prosperity ~ agribusiness, education, tourism and conferencing.

2.b Central Location

Bingara is located centrally within the Northern Inland Region of NSW (Illustration 2 below), one of Australia's most productive agricultural districts with major towns being Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell, Moree and Narrabri. The region is situated inland and mid–way between the major cities of Sydney and Brisbane and has a current population of 185,000 people.

The Living Classroom comprises 150 hectares of land which is situated a short walking distance from the centre of Bingara in the Gwydir Shire. The site incorporates the Bingara Common, comprising of land held under licence by Gwydir Shire Council and land owned by Gwydir Shire Council (refer 8.e Property & Premises). Considerable work has been completed to consolidate the legal status of the site to be fit–for–purpose.


RDA Regions
Airports
Towns
Towns
State Capital
National Capital
Main Roads
Railways
RDA Northern Inland
RDA Boundaries
Drainage
Perennial
Waterways
National Parks
Recreation Park
Reserve
National Park
State Forest
Conservation Park
Bingara
Inverell
Moree
Narrabri
Tamworth
Armidale
Glen Innes
Gunnedah
Walcha
Uralla
Kingstown
Dumaresq
Bundarra
Warialda
Mungindi
Lightning Ridge
Collarenebri
Walgett
Cryon
Burren Junction
Gwabegar
Coonamble
Dandry
Mullaley
Winton
Somerton
Manilla
Barraba
Lindesay
Back Creek
Edgeroi
Bellata
Gurley
Mallowa
Millie
Rowena
Pilliga
Gungalman
Guambone
Combara
Kenebri
Boggabri
Rangari
Maules Creek
Abington
Aberfoyle
Guyra
Paradise
Aberdeen
Kootabi
Sapphire
Dundee
Moagem
Bolivia
Ashford
Coolatai
Crooble
Ashley
Yallaroi
Atholwood
Texas
Boonal
Boomi
Tulloona
Garah
Thalon
Dirranbandi
Talwood
Goondiwindi
Wondali
Inglewood
Warroo
Bevelo
Stanthorpe
Riverview
Kyogle
Nimbin
Casino
Lismore
Coraki
Tenterfield
Mole River
Boorook
Wallangarra
Mingoola
Yamba
Grafton
Woolgoolga
Safety Beach
Coffs Harbour
Bowra
Marengo
Dorrigo
Bellingen
Urunga
Nambucca
Comara
Milbank
Kempsey
Crescent Head
Kentucky
Walcha
Tenterfield
Yarrowitch
Ogunbil
Nundle
Nowendoc
Barry
Gloucester
Ellerston
Gloucester
Parkville
Cassilis
Coolah
Cattle Creek
Murrurundi
Breeza
Premer
Carroll
Breeza
Gurulmundi
Warialda
Mungindi
Gwabegar
Urawilkie
Kenebri
Walgett
Burren Junction
Narrabri
Moree
Inverell

Bingara sits at the transition point between the plains to the west and the tablelands to the north–east. As a consequence it has a wider range of geology and biodiversity than most parts of Australia. Its climate allows a broad range of agriculture and this provides the basis for demonstrating agricultural and ecological lessons that are relevant for the whole of the Northern Inland region, Australia and beyond.

Four regional airports are within two hours' drive of Bingara. These are linked by major, secondary and minor road networks in each direction, which are marketed as the Fossickers' Way. This provides reasonable accessibility and a modest profile, and so underscoring the importance of strategies to draw usage and visitation to the site and district.

Bingara's central location is also relevant to government administration (Illustration 3). The town is increasingly being used for conferencing and meetings because of the equal travel time for staff coming from across the larger Northern Inland and Northern NSW regions.

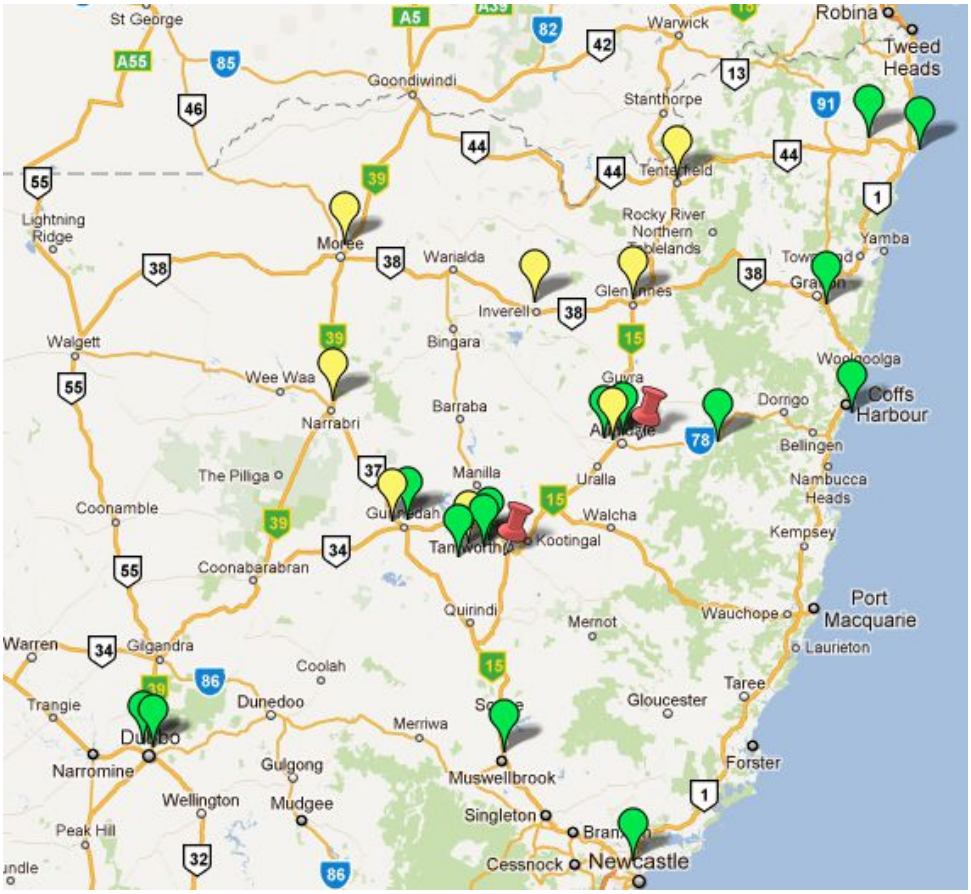


Illustration 3: Bingara's central location for NSW Government Agency Meetings (Green ~ Regional Directors, Yellow ~ Place Teams, Red ~ Premier & Cabinet)

A range of complementary farming operations and facilities are located either locally or within easy reach of the town including:

- Agribusiness ~ Cooperator Farms (refer Section 3.e Commercial Deployment) which demonstrate regenerative agriculture on a commercial–scale and includes The Hatchery
- Educational ~ the internationally unique Myall Creek Memorial and a wide range of agribusiness educational providers (refer Section 5.g Complementary Initiatives)
- Tourism ~ many points of interest and facilities such as the Warialda Visitor Information Centre, Mt Kaputar National Park, Ceramic Break Sculpture Park, Copeton Waters State Recreation Park, Fossickers Way, North West View, freshwater fishing, nature reserves and events (Orange Festival, North West Film Festival, Easterfish)
- Accommodation ~ in addition to the on–site Bunkhouse there are

a range of accommodation options available. These include quality bed abd breakfast through to farmstays, motels, hotels, caravan and camping parks as well as bush camping areas.

- Conferencing & Meetings ~ Roxy Greek Theatre Complex & Cafe

Illustration 4: Bingara

The Northern Inland region overlays the traditional lands of a number of Indigenous nations, including the Kamilaroi, Ngarabal, Nganyaywana, and Gumbaynggirr.

The town and district provides an attractive setting with the Gwydir River flowing through and around the area as well as the ranges framing this temperate, agricultural wonderland.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that between 2005 and 2010, the population for the Northern Inland region grew at an annual rate of 0.8 per cent with an estimated population of 186,496 in 2010.

2.c History & Achievements

2.c.i Origins

In 2005 Bingara & District Vision 20/20 group was formed and immediately embarked on a program of community consultation to develop a vision for the town's future. This process of engagement took 12 months and culminated in the publication of the "regeneration" vision. This vision encompasses regenerating all of the community's assets ~ the spirit and energy of the place, its people, ecology, economy and infrastructure. It identified the four pillars of agriculture, tourism, education and regional conferencing referred to widely throughout this Plan.

It was during this process that The Living Classroom (then called Bingara Farm Gardens) was first identified. It was seen as the most significant project for its ability to be able to pull together the four pillars for the future and demonstrate the synergies between them.

Following on from this visioning, Gwydir Shire Council commenced work on creating its five year Community Strategic Plan. The Living Classroom is aligned with the Council's priorities (refer Section 2.f.ii Gwydir Shire Council).

John Mongard Landscape Architects was engaged in 2009 to develop the Bingara Town Strategy which included a concept plan for the Living Classroom.

This strategy demonstrates graphically how The Living Classroom integrates with and significantly complements the amenity of the town and community.

The Bingara Town Strategy provides a model for 21st century rural living. By wrapping the Living Classroom around the southern edge of Bingara, and integrating a sustainable living infill housing plan, the Plan melds food, tourism and education into the town's future .

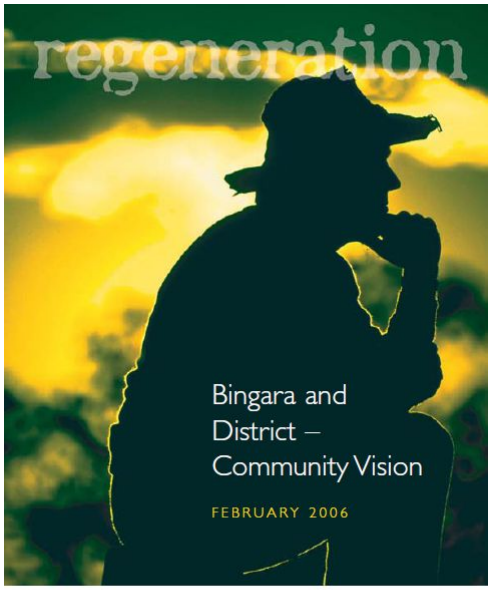


Illustration 5: Cover Page, Regeneration 2020 Vision for Bingara and District

More recently the importance of The Living Classroom has been reiterated in the Bingara And District Community Economic Development Plan (2010 – 2011) prepared for the NSW Department of Trade and Investment and Gwydir Shire Council.

2.c.ii Awards & Recognition

While the Living Classroom is still in its development infancy the project has already been recognised with several awards:

- **AILA National Landscape Architecture Award of Excellence** Award recipient ~ John Mongard Landscape Architects for work on Bingara and The Living Classroom that engaged the local community in developing strategies to future–proof their town in a way that could be built by local people for very little cost. This involved the evolution of ideas over a five–year timeframe and played a strong role in educating the community about the future potential for Bingara. The project was particularly recognised as a noteworthy example of the role that landscape architects will increasingly need to play in helping regional Australian towns survive the multiple threats of seachange, ageing, brain drain and climate change that threaten to make Australian country towns a relic of the past.
- **2011 AILA Queensland Landscape Architecture Award for Excellence** Award recipient ~ John Mongard Landscape Architects for work on Bingara and The Living Classroom as an exceptional example of architectural passion, sensitivity and skills being applied to planning for regional towns and centres. The jury noted the deep understanding of the place developed through this innovative process and applaud the community–driven 'bottom up'

approach to planning for the future of Bingara. The project was particularly recognised for facilitating a community led approach to design and allowing all–important stakeholder and political buy–in to the process of change to empower regional communities to shape their collective future. The key aspects of this project that were worthy of special mention included the depth of engagement made possible by basing the design team on the 'main street' for an extended period and the strong focus on the ongoing role of education in achieving the outcomes of the strategy.

- 2012 Australia Award for Urban Design Policies, Programs & Concepts – Large Scale Award recipient ~ John Mongard Landscape Architects for work on the Bingara Master Plan and The Living Classroom.

2.c.iii Completed Works & Activities

The first five years of work have generated significant achievements with the vast majority of identified goals realised.

The following major physical works have already been completed for The Living Classroom site:

- Consolidation of the site, land titles and zoning
- Integration of The Living Classroom with the Bingara Town Master Plan
- Construction of a twenty–four bed Bunkhouse
- Construction of the Trade Training Centre for Primary Industry
- Creation of the hydrology system of swales, lakes, ponds and waterways for the site

Each of these successes demonstrate the key principles of The Living Classroom through their integration with the wider development and regeneration of Bingara. For example, the Primary Industry Trade Training Centre is one of nine such projects across the region involving 25 schools and forms part of the successful Gwydir Learning Region. Trade training is an important element of the Australian Government's workforce development agenda to address national skills shortages in traditional trades and emerging industries by improving the relevance and responsiveness of trade training programs in secondary schools.

Through the Gwydir Learning Region, The Living Classroom has the ability to utilise two other Trade Training Centres which are relevant to regenerative agriculture: Hospitality (located within the Roxy Cafe, Bingara) and Mechanical (located in the nearby township of Warialda).

The hydrology system now in place creates two key benefits in that it: provides water for The Living Classroom; and, mitigates the frequent impact of stormwater inundation into parts of Bingara and the main connecting road with Narrabri.

Water flow is now diverted along the key swale (Illustration 6 below) and onto The Living Classroom site. There the waters are captured and stored in an enlarged lake for use on–site. The result is that water, rather than being seen as an inconvenience and potential disaster, is slowed, managed and increased in value. The red–dotted white line marks the key swale situated along the contour which allows two water basins to be linked and a flow along a very gradual 1:6000 swale to direct superflows to the main storage lake.

Illustration 6: The Key Swale from All Nation's Hill to The LivingClassroom

Gwydir Shire Council has also achieved other results through initiatives that are complementary and connected to The Living Classroom, particularly:

- Completion of the Roxy Theatre & Cafe Complex
- Construction of the Trade Training Centres for Hospitality and Mechanical Trades

Illustration 7: Hydrology System and Swale, The Living Classroom

Considerable community and stakeholder input into planning The Living Classroom has also been completed. Most notably this includes the following processes:

- Regeneration Vision 2020
- "Our Place" – Country Town Living 2025 Forum
- Bingara Community Economic Development Plan
- Regenerative Energy Forum
- Partner Planning Workshop for Regional Development Australia Fund applications

This Plan is revisiting the planning process in order to establish goals for the next five years to 2017.

2.c.iv Existing Partners, Supporters and Funding

Works completed to date (refer Section 2.c.iii above) have been achieved through in-kind support and funding from the following organisations:

- Australian Government | Building the Education Revolution ~ Primary Industry Trade Training Centre and Bunkhouse
- NSW Government | Trade & Investment ~ Bingara Community Economic Development Plan
- Gwydir Shire Council ~ nearly $¾m investment including legal work and purchases of land to consolidate the site, contributions for the Primary Industry Trade Training Centre and Bunkhouse, earthworks, landscaping, connection of utilities and project management

Illustration 8: Credit: Paul Matthews

Many key partnerships have already been developed as part of the construction and site works detailed above as well as part of the associated negotiation processes for funding. Further partnerships are being developed and are detailed at 6.d Partnerships.

Current partnerships include:

Partner	Role, Contribution
Bingara and District Vision 20/20	Shared leadership with cross-membership of The Living Classroom Board and Vision 20/20 Committee Community education and engagement in planning processes and fora

Partner	Role, Contribution
Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority	Collaboration in applied research and links with on-farm trials and programs Utilisation of The Living Classroom for education and extension programs Facilitating links with Aboriginal stakeholders and community
Community College Northern Inland (CCNI)	CCNI is a Registered Training Organisation and able to collaborate on design and delivery of accredited courses as well as hire and use of the training facilities
Cooperator Farms	Bookabah Pastoral Company and J&J Herring are the first Cooperator Farms which have agreed to work with The Living Classroom to research, demonstrate and deploy regenerative agriculture at full commercial scale
Gwydir & Macintyre Resources Management Committee	Promotion and utilisation of the The Living Classroom for educational activities
Gwydir Learning Region	Development and delivery of nationally registered and accredited training Partnerships with NSW Education and Schools that included shared utilisation of Trade Training Centres (Primary Industry, Hospitality and Mechanical), particularly in the curriculum areas of agriculture, science, geography, nature, and contemporary rural and regional society
John Mongard Landscape Architects	Bingara Town Master Plan including the concept designs for The Living Classroom
Bingara Lions Club	Volunteer services for landscape works, provision of park furniture, ongoing maintenance work, catering and other operational assistance Promotion and marketing to Lions' 1.35m members more widely
Mcgregor Gourlay Agricultural Services	Assistance with ongoing trials and agronomy advice. Approaches to suppliers for assistance with consumables and materials such as seed, stock feed, fencing, etc.
Myall Creek Memorial Committee	Collaboration to develop Bingara and district as a destination of note with two nationally-significant facilities Incorporation of Aboriginal history, culture, land management and reconciliation into Visitor & Learning Programs Cross-marketing and packages with common markets (students, researchers, health and wellbeing, culture and nature based tourism)
NSW Industry & Investment	Technical and funding advice and support
Namoi Catchment Management Authority	In-kind support to develop integrated landscape management, carbon and related markets

Partner	Role, Contribution
Resource Consulting Services	Support in-kind to utilise their reputation, resources, farming and education networks and to provide linkages to other projects and guidance with development of materials and learning resources Utilisation of The Living Classroom to provide a focal point for activities in Northern NSW
TAFE New England Institute (TAFE NEI)	TAFE NEI is a Registered Training Organisation and able to collaborate in the design and delivery of accredited courses as well as hire and use the training facilities
The Brolga Project	Coordinating involvement of metropolitan-based university students
Tocal Agricultural College	Tocal is a Registered Training Organisation and able to collaborate in design and delivery of accredited courses as well as hire and use of the training facilities
University of New England and Penn State University	Research program focussed on Bingara as an 'innovation community', linking with UNE's i2A (Ideas to Action Centre) and Smart Farm program to contribute to measurement, research, evidence and quality management
Upper Gwydir Landcare Association	Development of The Living Classroom site as a natural resource display centre and use of the facility for workshops, displays, etc.
Willoughby City Council	Sister City with Gwydir Shire Council, cross-promotion through networks and with ratepayers and residents Annual Rural Adventure School Program

In recognition of The Living Classroom's considerable alignment with the priorities identified in the Northern Inland Regional Development Plan, Regional Development Australia Northern Inland has recommended the project for the first two Regional Development Australia funding rounds.

Political support has also been received from Senator John Williams (NSW), Mark Coulton MP (Federal Member for Parkes) and Richard Torbay (NSW Member for Northern Tablelands).

2.d Theory of Change

The Living Classroom reflects a theory of change which is based on a practical, hands-on and experience-based approach rather than a particularly theory or philosophy. It embodies a belief that there is a considerable net gain (social, economic and ecological) which can be achieved from changes in food and farming methods by developing the regenerative model, bringing together and applying key principles from the many models of farming ~ past, present and possible ~ which can demonstrate their effectiveness in meeting project global needs for food, human health and local rural farming communities.

Underpinning this focus is a view that the modern agricultural system, including Australia's, is nearing a significant tipping point. This point is characterised by: increasing food demands; decreasing income and financial margins and returns for producers; increasing debt levels; dependence upon finite and scarce inputs; an ageing workforce with significant succession challenges which include labour, skills and knowledge shortages.

In short, there is a critically important need to inspire and enable the next generation of farmers to develop and work with significantly more productive and benign models of farming.

Respectful engagement and trust building is essential to successfully navigating this change. It must be non–confrontational and non–judgemental, building momentum through understanding and consensus achieved through real–world demonstration of regenerative farming methods. A broad range of leaders across a broad range of interests and expertise are needed.

The ability to turn around the fortunes of rural towns and districts is fundamentally intertwined with the characteristics of their farming sectors. Increasing local economic activity, employment, business and investment are essential factors to create places where the next generation want to be.

Town Vision in a Nut Shell

Nestled in its river and valley
Bingara's warm people thrive
Inviting young and old
Local and international
Enticing them to stay
In a country town with everything to offer

They'll be singing and dancing in Bingara
Celebrating their past
And embracing any changes
The world might throw at them

They already worked it out for themselves:
You can't have a vibrant community without culture and diversity
You can't depend on others to do things
Growing your own food
Creating new work for young folk
Being able to fix things locally
These are things country people
Always had to do in the past
And it's come back round again

It's back to the basics
How can families stay together
How can the fundamentals
of water, power and waste
be dealt with in the home
How can we live more sustainably
So we don't suffer when the oil runs out

How can we take care of the older folk
Without marching them off to distant homes
How can we share our local resources
So we're not dependant on others

Bingara has every chance to be a leader
To show the nation
That the country still works
And that living in a small town
Is a life worth living

The Living Classroom believes that regenerative agriculture can provide the basis for food farming and local food systems which enable rural communities to survive and once again thrive. Such a vision is more possible for rural towns such as Bingara given their small size and scale. This provides a relatively easier and more affordable basis to engage with all of those involved in the food system ~ researchers and educators, producers and consumers, distributors and providers.

2.e Principles

Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity.

– Voltaire

The principles by which The Living Classroom will operate, together with the behaviours and actions which will enable them, are detailed the table below.

Principle	Behaviours and Actions
Regeneration	Enable regenerative agriculture by: ➟ Trialling and demonstrating what works for food farming through drawing on the many ancient, traditional, alternative, contemporary and technology-based systems and models, as well as by bringing together the many disciplines, professionals and practitioners to collaborate together ➟ Taking a holistic and integrated approach which considers the interrelationships of food and food production with: • Health and nutrition • Nature, ecology and ecosystem health and functioning • Community capital and economic development • Natural, social and financial balance sheets • Addressing root causes of problems rather than symptoms ➟ Creating a real-world working regenerative farm at The Living Classroom and deploying successful methods on a commercial scale through a network of Cooperator Farms Regenerate Bingara and surrounding district by: ➟ Incorporating and addressing the four key pillars of development identified through a wide range of economic and community development research and planning processes, namely: regenerative farming, education, tourism and conferencing ➟ Blending The Living Classroom within the Bingara Town Master Plan and associated development strategies ➟ Including and collaborating with community members, organisations, farmers and the wider agricultural sector ➟ Becoming a closed-loop community which is self-sufficient for food, water, nutrients and re-use of all waste Enable the regeneration of rural communities generally by: ➟ Encouraging and enabling regenerative agriculture widely and through recognition of the close inter-relationship between farming business models/practices and the strength and health of rural communities ➟ Being a role model through creating a compelling contemporary rural way of life ➟ Sharing Bingara's story on-site, on-line and beyond

Principle	Behaviours and Actions
Practical	Provide practical, real-world learning and skills by: - Taking an applied approach to the development of The Living Classroom and incorporating opportunities for students, farmers and visitors to actually be a part in creating the farm, its facilities and programs - Incorporating interactive exhibits of regenerative agriculture and hands-on learning-by-doing processes both on-site and on-farm - Sharing knowledge in practical ways, such as real world case studies, field trials, field days, farm tours and a network of Cooperator Farms deploying at full commercial scale
Inspiration	Inspire the take up of regenerative agriculture, regeneration of rural communities and the next generation of farmers by: - Pursuing bold, visionary and breakthrough goals which address the root needs and challenges facing agriculture and rural communities - Ensuring The Living Classroom is stunning, beautiful, productive and educational - Building upon a proven track record of turning around Bingara's population decline and creating significant successes such as the Roxy Theatre & Cafe Complex and the Gwydir Learning Region which comprises three new Trade Training Centres
Integration	Encourage thorough integration of processes and practices by: - Trialling, demonstrating and deploying at scale the best ways to farm food from Aboriginal, traditional, scientific, commercial & natural farming systems - Being open to learning and new pathways - Creating an inclusive meeting place for producers, consumers and conservationists - Seeking out synergy and complementarity ranging from food production, such as food forests, through to collaboration with others in the sector and the inter-relationship with the local community, economy and environment - Being interwoven with the Bingara township and district by using the Town Commons for its location, incorporation within the Town Master Plan and being harmoniously connected with its surrounding natural environment
Financial Viability	To ensure the financial viability and self-sustainability by: - Using a for-purpose, non-profit community enterprise business model and generating income from a wide range of initiatives and sources - Matching financial remuneration with risk and responsibility - Ensuring each specific initiative is self-funding and not reliant upon the assurance of being underwritten by Gwydir Shire Council other than in exceptional circumstances

A specific description of the principles of regenerative agriculture is detailed in Section 5.a.

2.f Governance & Management

The Living Classroom is an initiative of Gwydir Shire Council. It is governed by a Board of Directors (see Section 2.f.i) which comprises both staff members from Council and other members to bring relevant expertise and networks. Council's local representation and democratic structure provides a solid community foundation for the initiative.

The governance arrangement is in the process of being formalised as a Section 355 Committee. It will have a written Memorandum of Understanding with the following key governing principles:

- The Committee's central roles and responsibilities are strategic planning, accountability, risk management, performance and improvement, implemented through the Project Director
- Council's roles and responsibilities are employment of the Project Director and other dedicated personnel as well as support services in regards to administration, record keeping, asset and property maintenance and insurances
- Directors will be recruited based on their demonstrated knowledge, experience and ability to pursue the vision, principles and strategies detailed in this Plan. In this way the Directors are a merit and performance-based team rather than a representative body
- The Project Director will be responsible for implementation of the strategic plan and day-to-day operations and the coordination of Council staff involvement and other contributions. The Project Director will be entrepreneurial and able to strategically create and utilise opportunities to progress the implementation of this plan. They will bring vision, passion and energy as well as professional capabilities in agribusiness, education, tourism, conferencing, communications, partnerships and stakeholder relations and community engagement

The governance structure (depicted right) embraces the inter-relationship of the above governance principles. The ultimate accountability for The Living Classroom rests with Councillors who are in turn accountable to all resident citizens of the Shire.

Gwydir Shire Council has a demonstrated track record in working with governance arrangements of this form, including The Roxy Complex, Bingara Pre-School and Childrens' Services and the Bingara Historical Society and Museum. Council recognises the important role that s.355 Committees play in providing and managing community facilities and services and has a comprehensive guide to their establishment and operation[1].

The Board of Directors are investigating the merits of also forming The Living Classroom Foundation as a vehicle to raise funds and support the significant charitable and non-profit aspects of this Plan. Such a charitable foundation will be able to complement the

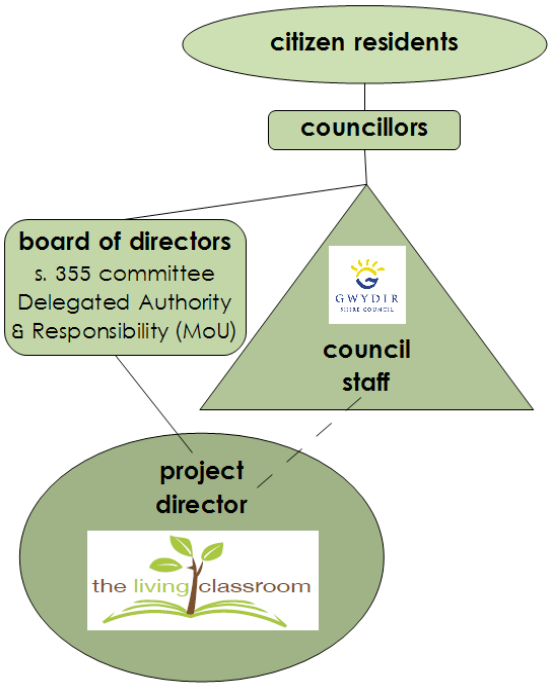


Illustration 9: Governance Structure

1 Guide To Section 355 Committees, Gwydir Shire Council, May 2002

existing governance structure by being able to access tax deductible donations and philanthropic grants which would otherwise be unavailable to Gwydir Shire Council.

Succession planning is a further priority for the Board, ensuring a depth and continuity of leadership beyond the founding and current champions for the project.

2.f.i Board of Directors

Garry McDouall, Chair

Garry McDouall, together with his wife Linda, run a cattle business in the Horton Valley in the greater Bingara District. They were one of the early adopters of time control grazing.

In addition to farming, Garry teaches agricultural courses with Resource Consulting Services, as well as consulting and facilitating for them. Garry's past career includes being a corporate advisor on a broad range of financial matters. He has also been a member of the Northern Slopes Rural Lands Protection Board, Chairman of the North West Total Catchment Management Committee, President of the Double B Beef Marketing Group and a Director of Banksia Beef.

Garry and Linda have just built "The River House" in Bingara to provide short term accommodation in a "food forest" garden" to showcase the production of food at an urban domestic scale.

Max Eastcott

Max Eastcott is General Manager for Gwydir Shire Council and has been since it was formed in 2004 following the amalgamation of Bingara, Yallaroi and parts of Barraba Shires. This Council has a full–time equivalent workforce of 160 employees and an annual budget of in excess of $27m.

Max's responsibilities with Council include: policy development and planning; performance management; human resource management and delegation systems; and executive leadership.

Max was responsible for the restoration of Bingara's Roxy Cinema Complex ~ which came in on time and within budget ~ as well as the formation of the integrated and merged Shire Council.

Rick Hutton

Rick Hutton grew up in Sydney and always had a love for the country. Following a teaching position at Parkes, with a short return to Sydney afterwards, he and his family took their "tree change" and moved to Bingara. At the same time they began an adventure into the retail industry, owning and managing H. Fay & Sons, "The BIG Department Store in the Bush", for twenty–two years to 2009.

Rick has been an active participant in promoting Bingara and District and has a deep concern for the future of country towns and for agriculture. Rick has design and teaching certificates in Permaculture as well as his Bachelor of Arts in Earth Sciences, Diploma in Education, and Certificate IV Training and Assessment.

Rick is currently a consultant in Community Building and President of Bingara & District Vision 2020.

Rod Smith

Rod Smith studied at the University of New England and graduated with a Bachelor of Economics and a Diploma in Education. Rod taught in public schools for 30 years in NSW, ACT and NT with a four year stint working on a large irrigated cotton farm in Narrabri in between the ACT and NSW teaching jobs. Rod retired in 2005 and got a second wind working for Gwydir Shire Council as their Training and Development Officer ~ a job which he absolutely loves.

Glen Periera

Glen Periera is the Building and Environmental Services Director with Gwydir Shire Council, where he has worked for 10 years. Glen brings extensive experience and skills in planning, building, health, environmental and waste programs and services, with post graduate qualifications in Planning and Management and current membership of AIM, AIBS and AIEH. He has trained and mentored students in the course of their career development and is passionate about his work improving the natural and built environments were we live and relax to create a better and sustainable future for our children's children.

Darren Keegan

Darren Keegan is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia and a current doctoral student with UNE. He also has a Masters degree in Economic Studies and Bachelor degree in Commerce.

Darren's experience spans industry, government and community engagement in the fields of regional development and education. His private sector experience relates to the financial and business management of divisions within a listed multinational company in property services, including public private partnerships, fast moving consumer goods, audit and assurance advisory.

2.f.ii Gwydir Shire Council

The Gwydir Shire Council was created in March 2004 through the amalgamation of Yallaroi, Bingara and 40% of the Barraba Shire. The Shire has a population of 5,790 and covers an area of 9,122 sq km with 1,300 kilometres of roads.

The Gwydir Shire includes the two main townships Bingara and Warialda, as well as a number of smaller villages including Cobbadah, Coolatai, Croppa Creek, Gravesend, North Star, Upper Horton and Warialda Rail.

Warialda is the centre for the Council's Technical Services functions, with Bingara being the centre for the Administrative functions. Both centres are linked by sophisticated communications equipment to ensure that the amalgamations primary objective is achieved which is to save the existing employment numbers within each of the main urban centres of Warialda and Bingara.

Council's vision is to be a recognised leader in local government through continuous learning and sustainability. This vision is strongly embodied in The Living Classroom and Council's broader support for the four pillars of development in learning (such as through the Gwydir Learning Region which involve the Primary Industry, Hospitality and Machinery Trade Training Centres) and tourism (The Roxy Theatre & Cafe Complex).

Council's mission is to ensure that its long term role is viable and sustainable by meeting the needs of residents in a responsible caring way, and by encouraging sustainable development while maintaining traditional rural values, character and culture.

The Living Classroom is strongly aligned with Council's Community Strategic Plan (refer Section 5.f Fit & Alignment with Existing Strategies for more detailed analysis).

About the Shire

The Gwydir Shire area was originally populated by the Wirrayaraay tribe and there are several known Aboriginal sites in the region such as carved trees, bora grounds and open camp sites that are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The Gwydir River enters the Shire where it spills from the Copeton Dam and meanders in a westerly direction through the towns of Bingara and Gravesend. The Gwydir valley is well know for irrigated and dry land cropping as well as livestock production. In addition to the traditional crops of wheat, barley, oats and sorghum, there are olive groves, pecan nut plantations and freshwater fish farms in the Gravesend district.

Heading northwest from the timbered surrounds of the town of Warialda and the close-knit community of Coolatai, the countryside opens into an undulating vista of basalt farmland. This part of the Shire ~ which includes the villages of Crooble, Croppa Creek and North Star ~ is known as the 'Golden Triangle'. Farmers using advanced farming techniques, such as minimum tillage and satellite guidance systems, produce a variety of high yielding crops such as wheat, barley sorghum, maize, chick peas, canola and cotton to name just a few. This area also has several cattle feed lots which supply grain fed beef to the Australian domestic market and export markets throughout the world.

3 Initiatives

Illustration 10: Herd of All Nations, comprising every commercial breed of cattle

Regenerative agriculture is of pivotal importance to the future of food and rural communities throughout Australia and the world–at–large. The Living Classroom provides initiatives (programs, products and services) which aim to meet this global need in a way which also addresses the four pillars identified as key to the future prosperity of Bingara itself ~ regenerative farming, education, tourism and conferencing.

The Living Classroom has three broad spheres for delivery ~ on–site, on–line and on–farms ~ and a wide range of available markets (students, farmers, suppliers, tourists, community members, teachers and researchers).

As a 'living' classroom, the most important initial work is to actually regenerate and create the site as an applied learning process in itself. This requires collaboration with teachers, farmers, students, suppliers and so on. Such an approach has been successfully used by other similar enterprises (such as CERES and Kristianstads Ecomuseum). The research, planning and implementation of this process provides the basis for a wide array of applied courses.

The range of offerings will expand with the capacity of both the site (farm features, crops, livestock, infrastructure) and the organisation's capacity (including knowledge, systems and networking).

An outline of the eight initiatives is provided at the end of this section, detailing how they advance each of the "four pillars" of development use the the three delivery spheres. The outline also identifies the target markets for each initiative.

3.a Creating the Regenerative Farm

The Living Classroom is situated on a degraded former Town Common. While some significant work has been completed (refer Section 2.c.iii Completed Works & Activities) the site remains largely a blank canvas. The regeneration of previously degraded land to demonstrate the efficacy of regenerative farming is a common strategy that has been used by other similar enterprises in Australia and around the world.

The regeneration of the site, together with the creation of this working farm and model of regenerative agriculture, provides the basis for a program of applied courses. The actual research and planning of the farm will be linked with hands–on work to create the farm itself ~ forming the basis for a series of applied learning courses (see Sections 3.a Creating the Regenerative Farm Creating the Regenerative Farm and 3.b Build the Interpretive Centre).

For students and other visitors alike, the Regenerative Farm will provide interactive, real–world activities and learning experiences.

Importantly, the farm will be the only facility of its kind in the region, and possibly unique

nationally. Its uniqueness includes the application of regenerative methods for the rejuvenation of a degraded site and creation of a working farm which will be accessible to practitioners and the public throughout the year. By contrast, the various existing demonstration farms and research centres highlight one or a few regenerative methods and are only opened to the public or other practitioners at select times each year.

Illustration 11: CERES was built on a decommissioned rubbish tip that was once a bluestone quarry. Today CERES is an urban farm and Australia's largest deliverer of environmental education.

The major parts of this program of applied courses are:

- Establishing baseline measurements of the site in both ecological and Aboriginal cultural terms
- Launching with a three-day, high profile event which incorporates a one-day forum on regenerative agriculture theory, principles and practice, and a two-day on-site Master Class that combines both planing and practice to create the farm, including the forage garden which is especially important for local community and visitor participation
- Following the launch, the plan will be form the basis for a series of applied courses in regenerative agriculture
- Delivering a series of applied courses which will complete the creation of the farm and later provide the basis for its ongoing operations and maintenance
- Coordinating funding applications and partnerships to secure the required materials, livestock (including the Herd of All Nations), plants, equipment and so forth

The applied courses will address the various regenerative agriculture practices identified in Section 5 Sector & Market Analysis. The farm plan will determine each of these practices, principles (Section 2.e Principles) and space for buildings and infrastructure (Section 3.b Build the Interpretive Centre).

The various farm and site concept plans which have been developed to date are included in the Appendix for reference. Each is designed to accommodate a wide range of regenerative methods and trials, recognising the constraints of its size or scale. Regenerative methods will be prioritised according to their ability to be replicated at full commercial scale, as well as for providing opportunities in niche markets and value-adding to existing local and regional food production.

Ongoing farm operations will draw on a wide range of labour models ~ volunteer, traineeship, apprenticeship and work-for-welfare ~ as detailed in Section 6.e Funding & Resource Strategy. This approach is fit-for-purpose in optimising the number of people involved for learning and training, while at the same time ensuring operational costs are met by farm income.

Each applied course will include the following components:

- On-line preparatory readings, case studies, workbooks and discussion groups
- On-site learning and hands-on farm work
- On-farm study tour to see applications at full production scale
- Social and recreational activities which incorporate time for networking

The timing of the course program will need to take into consideration seasonal agricultural factors as well as optimising the program to complement and collaborate with other relevant local and regional events.

3.b Build the Interpretive Centre

> *One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.*
>
> – Luciano Pavarotti and William Wright, from Pavarotti, My Own Story

The Interpretive Centre is to be the most significant built infrastructure on The Living Classroom site. It is to include a visually stunning and iconic main building which plays an important part in attracting tourists and visitors to the site, town and region.

This building is to be highly functional, flexible and modular. It will be the primary facility for catering, retail, meetings, workshops, forums, functions and events, and is especially important for food preparation, cooking and eating.

The Interpretive Centre will also include an extensive network of paths, signage, rest and viewing platforms that weave their way throughout the whole site together with sensory pathways and gardens. Vehicle parking facilities for coaches and cars are to be included.

All built infrastructure will embody the principles of regeneration in regards to being low impact and low maintenance as well as highly aesthetic by complementing and integrating with the surrounding natural landscape and farm.

The process of designing, planning and constructing The Interpretive Centre provides a key opportunity for applied, hands–on learning (Illustration 12: Gwydir Learning Region integration of trade training and certification with construction projects). This is the same strategy used for the creation of Regenerative Farm detailed above.

The Gwydir Learning Region has successfully incorporated trade training with previous developments providing Certificate II in Construction which in turn has led to Certificate III trade course and employment. Construction of the Hospitality Trade Training Centre at the Roxy Theatre & Cafe and the Warialda Showground Amenities Block, are two such examples.

Illustration 12: Gwydir Learning Region integration of trade training and certification with construction projects

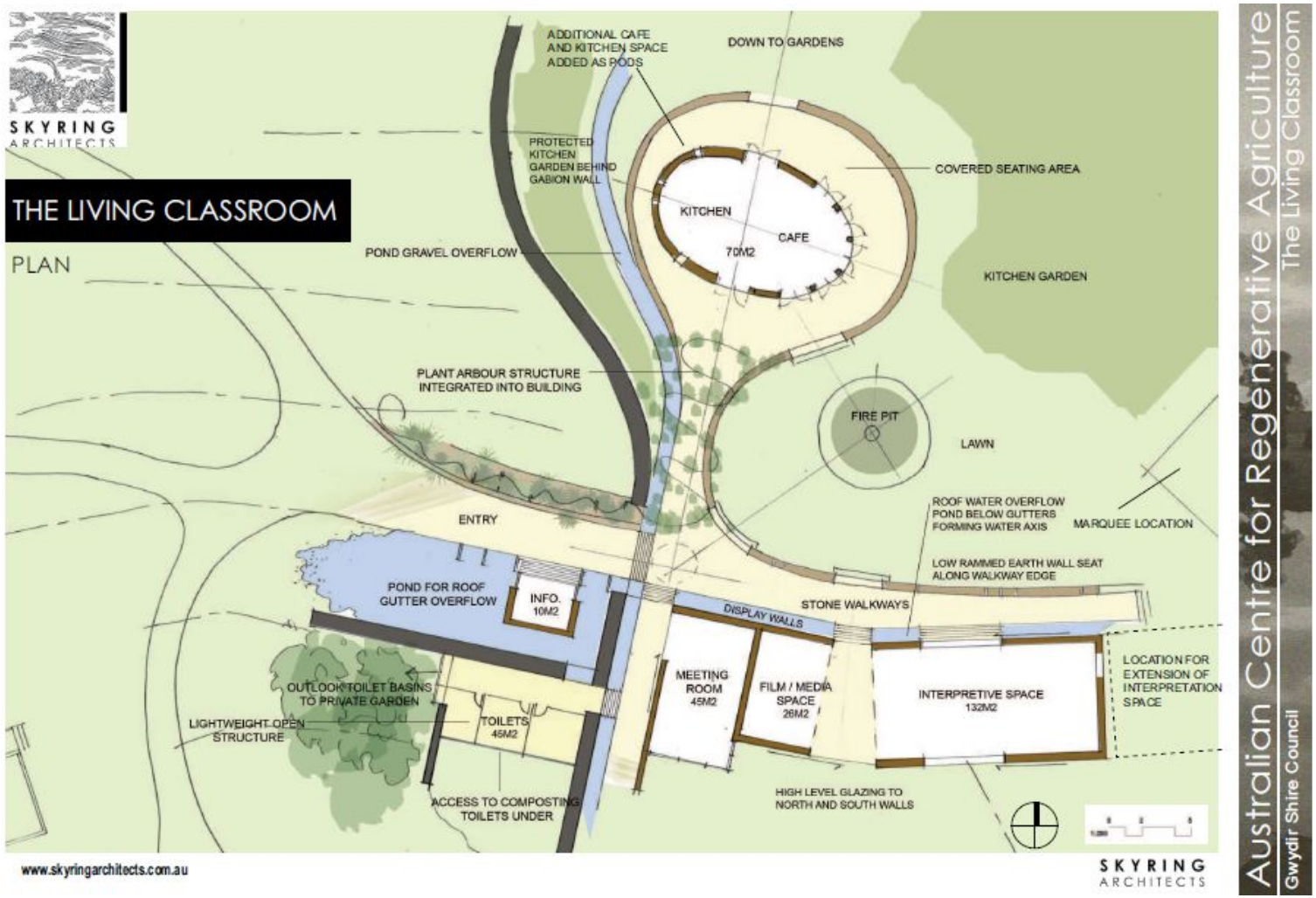


Illustration 13: Indicative Design & Concept Plan for The Interpretive Centre, February 2012

The main components of the Interpretive Centre initiative are:

- Integration of overall requirements for the The Interpretive Centre with the Farm Plan, particularly for the necessary space, services and pathways
- The launching a two–day, high profile event incorporating: a one–day forum on research and theory, principles and practice relevant to the design of the facility and educational features; and a one–day Master Class to workshop requirements for the integration of trade training as well as less formal training (volunteers, students, tourists and community members) into the construction process
- Capital fund raising (refer Section 7.g Capital Investment)
- Construction of The Interpretive Centre
- Design and installation of exhibits and displays. These will be kept dynamic, fresh and contemporary with regular updates, changes and thematic programs

3.c Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture

> *When it is understood that one loses joy and happiness in the attempt to possess them, the essence of natural farming will be realised. The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings.*
>
> – Masanobu Fukuoka, The One–Straw Revolution

While there is a wide range of regenerative agriculture practices through Australia and particularly in the Northern Inland region ~ including notable production processes, education courses, research trials and agri–tourism operations as detailed in section 5.g Complementary Initiatives ~ there is no single place which makes these available all together as is the case with both Regenerative Agriculture UK and Ecomuseum Kristianstads Vattenrike for example.

> *One of the main problems with the adoption of findings and recommendations from research projects is that once the project winds up, the information is not readily available. Most information is published in the scientific literature, which is virtually inaccessible to most people. Other publications may be available, but the most efficient transfer of information and adoption of new practices comes through direct relationships between the audience and trusted sources. This presents a real opportunity for The Living Classroom to act as both a long–term 'clearing house' for information and as a 'trusted broker' for the adoption of regenerative agriculture practices.*
>
> – David Carr, Stringbark Ecological

Illustration 14: Ecomuseum Kristianstads Vattenrike, Sweden plays a pivotal role as a bridging organisation that build relationships, trust, capacity and collaboration for the healthy functioning and resilience of the Kristianstad Water Realm. The Ecomuseum works on many levels, bringing together experts, producers and stakeholder organisations as well as providing tourism and education for students, the public and tourists.

The Living Classroom will initially create a Regenerative Agriculture Precinct in the Northern Inland area. This will provide a gateway to regenerative agricultural offerings in the region, which in turn provides the platform for development of the larger Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture to be established, which will expand with national and international links.

The Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture is the brand and vehicle for courses and activities targeting professionals, farmers, practitioners, researchers, policy makers and so on. It is intended to be the lead brand for the various commercial and professional service initiatives detailed in this Plan. By contrast, The Living Classroom will be the brand and vehicle for courses and activities targeting the community, tourists and the public–at–large. These two spheres have areas of overlap, particularly their shared use of The Living Classroom's Regenerative Farm, Interpretive Centre and other on–site facilities. This dual–brand strategy is similar to that used by the Mulloon Creek Farm (farming operations brand) and The Mulloon Institute (their brand for research and training activities).

The table below outlines the differences and the overlap between the Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture and The Living Classroom.

Brand	**Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture**	**Examples of Overlap**	**The Living Classroom**
Markets	professionals, farmers, policy makers, educators	community educators producer/consumer linkages, such as the Local Food System	community, tourists, public–at–large

Brand	Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture	Examples of Overlap	The Living Classroom
Initiatives & Activities	- commercial and professional services, cooperator farms - courses, forums, etc. for farmers and researchers - more likely to be registered and accredited training	- designing and creating the Regenerative Farm and Interpretive Centre - Local Food System	- community courses, workshops, events, festivals, etc. - more likely to be unaccredited training
Delivery Spheres	On-Site - extension activities, small-scale trials, professional networking, courses On-Line - technical resources, research, professional forums On-Farm - commercial-scale trials, cooperator farms	On-Site - market days and farmer events - Regeneative Farm tours On-Line - Local Food System On-Farm - farm stays, farm open days	On-Site - community courses, events, festivals On-Line - virtual exhibits of regenerative agriculture and tours of the farm On-Farm - live links and broadcasts

As the only centre of its kind that is open to the public, farmers and students alike, The Living Classroom is being set up to interpret and demonstrate working examples of commercial production throughout the region, providing links with, and a meeting place for, regenerative producers and researchers.

The major components of the Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture initiative are:

- Partnerships with natural resource management authorities and organisations including Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare, TOCAL College, Australian Government Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries and the NSW Government Department of Primary Industries
- A program of on-site extension and field days to bring together producers, researchers, educators, students and suppliers to exchange knowledge about new practices, tools and research findings
- Development of registered and accredited training courses in partnership with the Gwydir Learning Region as a Registered Training Organisation
- A series of expert visits, seminars, workshops and lectures which can be coordinated and supported in partnership with other members of the network (such as The Mulloon Institute and TOCAL)

- A formal network of Cooperator Farms working to deploy full scale field trials of regenerative farming processes and to participate in on–farm tours
- A program of on–farm tours which provide opportunities to see regenerative agriculture working at a production scale
- A bi–annual Regenerative Agriculture Conference
- An on–line portal that provides:
  - A directory of regenerative agriculture producers, research trials, educators and courses
  - Knowledge bases of case studies and related literature
  - Discussion and communication forums, lists, blogs and news feeds
  - A series of on–line webinars for producers, researchers, educators, students and suppliers
  - A calender of events (regional at first then growing to national and international)
  - Regular news and updates

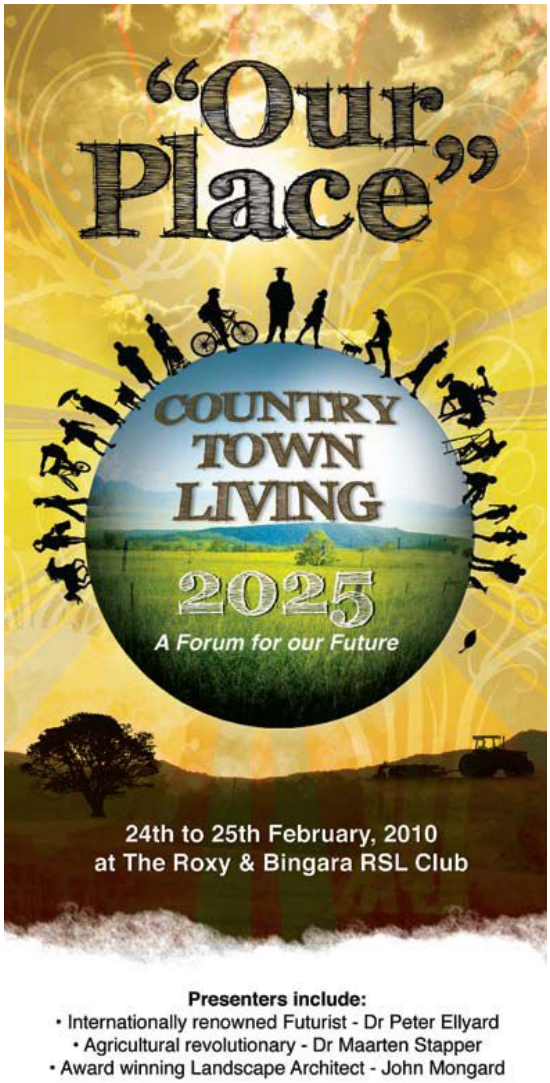


Illustration 15: A demonstrated track record in conferences and forums, "Our Place, Country Town Living 2025"

3.d Learning & Visitor Program

> *It's difficult to think anything but pleasant thoughts while eating a home grown tomato.*
>
> – Lewis Grizzard

The Learning & Visitor Program will expand and develop to fully utilise the capacity (i.e. infrastructure, farm, knowledge, networks) of The Living Classroom as it develops.

As detailed earlier, the initial focus will be on contributing to the three foundational initiatives ~ creating the Farm, constructing the Interpretive Centre and establishing the Centre for Regenerative Agriculture. Each of these provides a unique opportunity for applied learning for farmers, students, researchers, teachers alike and participation by visitors, tourists and the wider community. Already, The Living Classroom has hosted several tours and learning programs, using the strategy of providing opportunity for learning by making a hands–on contribution to the creation of the centre.

The other immediate priority is the continuation and expansion of the School Programs, including Rural Adventure. Preliminary analysis by Rick Hutton (Director, The Living Classroom) identifies alignment of learning outcomes and required curriculum as including:

- Kindergarten to Year 10: history, geography, social science, science and arts

- Years 7–10: food technology, design technology, geography, agriculture, Aboriginal history and culture, science and history

There is potential for The Living Classroom to value-add to its on-site educational programs for schools by offering a full service which will include all requirements for teachers and students from lesson planning, classroom preparation, parent permission, risk management, transport, accommodation and integration of complementary sites and activities as part of the journey from a school to Bingara and back again.

There is an incredible array of possible learning programs, formats and markets, even when restricting these to just those that can be seen and demonstrated at The Living Classroom.

The following considerations will be addressed in each visitor and learning course and activity:

- Audience and market segments, their interests and needs (eg. specified curricula for students, commercial producers, hobby farmers, boutique farmers, tree-changers, kitchen and urban gardeners etc.)
- Varieties of food (eg. crops, fish, meat, poultry, fruit, vegetables, native, etc.)
- Food growing techniques (eg. organic, polyculture, permaculture, etc.)
- Uses of food (eg. preparation, cooking, presentation, health, nutrition, etc.)
- Broader aspects of rural regeneration (eg. community involvement, planning, partnerships, funding, lobbying, etc.)
- Format (eg. event-based, workshops, forums, tours, etc.)

> *A farm includes the passion of the farmer's heart, the interest of the farm's customers, the biological activity in the soil, the pleasantness of the air about the farm -- it's everything touching, emanating from, and supplying that piece of landscape. A farm is virtually a living organism. The tragedy of our time is that cultural philosophies and market realities are squeezing life's vitality out of most farms. And that is why the average farmer is now 60 years old. Serfdom just doesn't attract the best and brightest.*
>
> – Joel Salatin, Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal: War Stories from the Local Food Front

Analysis of the current farming education market highlights the following priorities for the Learning & Visitor Program:

- School and student programs and excursions such as building on the current annual Rural Adventure which is organised in partnership with Willoughby City Council and the recent student tour from the University of Technology
- General Farm Skills for the overseas workers visa scheme (which will provide a labour force to contribute to the creation of the Regenerative Farm)
- Greenhorns/NextGen/ReGen experiential course to inspire the next generation of farmers, including both youth and tree-changers and building upon the demonstrated track record of the Gwydir Learning Region

Illustration 16: Promoting, recruiting and supporting new farmers in America, Greenhorns

- Regenerative Agriculture for Farmers (on–site field days, workshops, seminars, expert speakers and on–farm tours) covering a changing set of topics (eg. soil health, hydration, regenerating degraded land, composting, pest management, grazing, cropping, aquaculture, animal health, ecosystem services, biodiversity and production, etc.)
- Niche courses (eg. small landholder farming, Tree Changer Taste Tester, boutique food production). The tree changer market is a key priority for the NSW Government (refer Section 5.f Fit & Alignment with Existing Strategies for details)
- Festivals, Events and Activities building on current food focussed initiatives (such as the Orange Festival and Easterfish) and new opportunities linked with the key moments on the food and tourist calendar (such as calving, harvest feast with celebrity chefs, school holidays and spring)
- Self–guided as well as volunteer–led, professional–led and event–based interpretive site tours for tourists, delegations and visitors more generally

The community–oriented courses will be focussed on hands–on practical and applied learning rather than receiving formal certification as such. The courses will be of high quality and reflects the current market interest in gaining skills rather than qualifications.

By contrast, the farmer, professional and practitioner oriented courses are more likely to be accredited, or at least provide units that progress accredited learning. These courses will be developed and delivered in partnership with registered training organisations (see Section 2.c.iv Existing Partners, Supporters and Funding).

Each accredited and applied course will include elements from the following components:

- On–line preparatory readings, case studies, workbooks and discussion groups
- Intensive on–site learning and hands–on field work (recognising the need for most participants to travel and their need to keep this requirement to the minimum)
- On–farm study tours to see full production scale
- Social and recreational activities which incorporate time for networking

3.e Commercial Deployment

Illustration 17: Free-range flocks of chickens eradicate pests, fertilise paddocks and produce eggs and meat

Wide dissemination and deployment of regenerative agricultural practices are central to The Living Classroom's purpose and vision as well as long-term food security.

Working with commercial regenerative farmers is key to being able to trial and demonstrate the full range of farming which are potentially deployable at full commercial scale. Recognising this, it overcomes the inherent constraints of the 150ha site in Bingara.

These formal partnerships with commercial farms are named Cooperator Farms. Cooperator Farmers are key advocates for the benefits and up-take of regenerative agriculture. They are also candidates for contract work to deliver The Living Classroom's various courses, workshops and other activities. The contract work provides complementary off-farm income, skills and network development. A similar strategy is being used by Gwydir Shire Council through the Gwydir Learning Region ~ with staff also being trainers in courses relevant to their expertise ~ both meeting a need for regionally-delivered training and complementing Council's revenue.

Likewise, demonstration trials are important in establishing links with markets and demonstrating the financial viability for each farming process and product. Examples include fruit forests and value-added meat products (such as organic) which need to reach sufficient markets to be established on a viable basis.

Links with the food industry and consumers are just as important. Demonstrating and telling the story of regenerative farming and food can provide a much needed source of self-esteem for producers and inspiration for the industry and consumers.

Widespread adoption of regenerative agriculture is strongly tied with the regeneration and health of rural communities. Local ownership, employment, purchasing of supplies and sales of food are all strongly aligned with the economic and social viability of rural communities. By contrast, absentee and large corporate ownership are more akin to the fly-in fly-out mining model, with marginal positive benefits accruing to the district surrounding their operations.

The long-term potential impact of this initiative is highly significant. The most dramatic examples of large-scale deployment of regenerative practices are the Loess Plateau Watershed Rehabilitation Project (China) and the Farmer Managed Regeneration Project (Niger).

The Loess Project covers 15,600 square km of land in nine tributary watersheds of the Yellow River on the Loess Plateau in Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Gansu Provinces, as well as the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia. Results to date include:

- The building of 72,346ha of terraces, resulting in doubling of grain yields and more stable grain production
- The planting of 270,000ha of trees, shrubs and grasses on degraded agricultural lands thereby

enhancing soil and water conservation and producing much-needed fuel, timber and fodder

- Construction of several thousand sediment control dams which have improved soil conservation and created valuable farmland
- Significant training, technology transfer, monitoring and evaluation

The methods developed in the Niger Project are now practised on over 30,000 km^2 of land in the Niger Republic as well as Chad, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mali. Results to date include:

Illustration 18: Farmer Managed Regeneration Project, Niger

- Revegetation of three million hectares of arid land, thereby bringing back biodiversity in flora and fauna, increasing soil humus (and carbon) content and improving water retention and micro-climates
- A well-formed and sustained "learning by doing approach" which has evolved during the course of the Project by developing proof of concept rather than prescriptions
- Support for the Nigerian Champions of Change and dramatically improving the health and viability of local communities through increased rural income, and fodder and fuel wood supplies

The major components of the Commercial Deployment initiative are:

- Formalising agreements with existing Cooperator Farms (Bookabah Pastoral Co and J&J Herring)
- Negotiating with natural resource agencies (such as Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare, NSW Primary Industries, Australian Government Agriculture) to utilise The Living Classroom as a demonstration site and field centre for their extension programs, small-scale field trials, training, education and so on
- Researching and mapping farms in the Northern Inland region (utilising existing listings prepared by Border Rivers-Gwydir and Namoi Catchment Management Authorities as well as Landcare) to identify

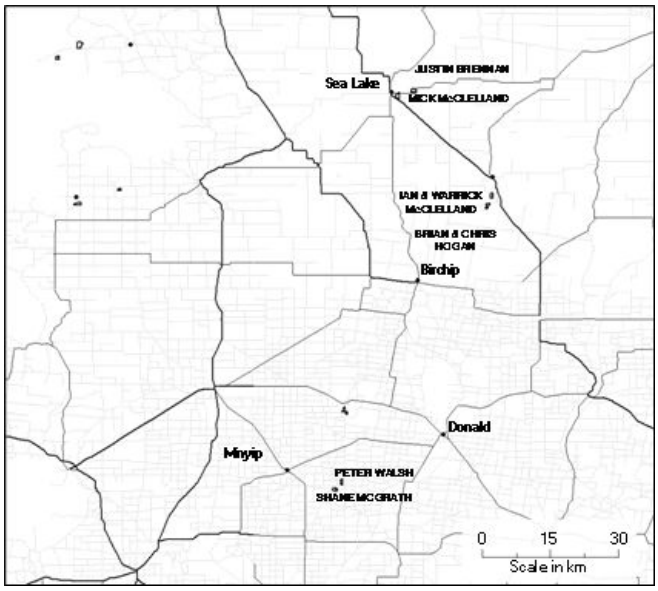


Illustration 19: The Birchip Cropping Group uses Demonstration Sites to establishes multiple sites to demonstrate, compare and evaluate management practices at a local scale

existing and interested regenerative farming operators

- Researching and identifying regenerative practices (such as regeneration of degraded landscapes, hydrology and soil health) and priority markets (such as fruit forests)
- Implementing a prioritised program of new Cooperator Farms trialling regenerative practices as a commercial scale
- Developing inspiring showcases and stories of regenerative food production for marketing through various events, the website and media as well as incorporating them into various training courses and programs
- Training and developing a network of Cooperator Farmers for contracted engagement to deliver both The Living Classroom's various educational courses, workshops, etc. and Professional Services (3.g Professional Services)

3.f Local Food System

Shipping is a terrible thing to do to vegetables.
They probably get jet-lagged, just like people.

– Elizabeth Berry

Illustration 20: Bingara's Annual Orange Festival

A key part of The Living Classroom's vision is for Bingara and the surrounding district to become a 'closed-loop' community in producing its own food and re-using its organic and putrescible waste.

Generically known as "community supported agriculture", this refers to the strategy of linking food producers, wholesalers, retailers and the community to endorse and promote local farms and agribusiness. This platform can be further expanded by supporting community food production at home and in public spaces such as community gardens and more innovative examples like the Bingara orange tree corridors and its annual Orange Festival.

As the local food system network grows, opportunities for value-adding will become more viable. For example, the orange harvest could link with a boutique juicing operation or even becoming an orange liquor specialist ("Cointreau Capital").

Illustration 21: Incredible Edible Todmorden grow food for anyone to pick and use

Incredible Edible Todmorden have taken the concept of a local food system to an extraordinary level, converting public space for food production throughout their town to include public housing estates, aged care facilities, dozens of public spaces for herb and vegetable gardens, greenhouses, several orchards, a network of egg producers and every school. Even the Police and Fire Stations have food gardens. Community members volunteer to maintain the public gardens and produce is free to passers by. Food Inspirers are trained up to promote education in cooking and nutrition, organise regular cooking events and provide local recipes.

The vision for Bingara is a variation on this theme, enabling an YIMBYs (Yes! In My Backyard) movement of local food growing. Surplus and unwanted local food will be pooled through a market place for use and purchase by residents, customers and local hospitality providers. The vision is that every meal consumed includes locally grown and produced food. The ultimate aim is to have all food locally grown and produced.

Illustration 22: Regional Food System, Vermont's Northeast Kingdom

The major components of the Local Food Initiative are:

- Research and establish partnerships with relevant established local food operators (such as Bingara Orange Festival, Incredible Edible Todmorden, CERES, Food Connect)
- Quantify Bingara and district's existing food consumption profile
- Identify and prioritise existing food production available to satisfy local demand
- Recruit and develop a local food network from among producers (including The Living Classroom), wholesales, retailers and consumers
- Build the local food network through training the use of kitchen gardens, urban food growing, market centre and the on–site forage garden at The Living Classroom and converting suitable public spaces to food production and introducing a paddock–to–plate marketing, sales and hospitality system
- Research and implement a waste–to–nutrient composting or recycling system

3.g Professional Services

The regenerative agriculture sector is growing and becoming increasingly important as the global population continues to grow rapidly and ecosystem health continues to deteriorate (refer Section 5.d Trends & Analysis). While there are a range of existing providers of professional services in regenerative agriculture (refer Section 5.g Complementary Initiatives), The Living Classroom is the only community-based operator in Australia.

With each successful stage of development, including those already achieved, The Living Classroom is developing a base of knowledge and intellectual property which will be developed into providing professional services for farmers and other rural communities seeking to embed the principles of regeneration. This particularly includes the Cooperator Farms, who are envisaged to become partners and contracted to assist deliver a suite of professional services.

There, however, is a very broad range of possible professional services which could ultimately be provided through The Living Classroom, as is planned with the Learning & Visitor Program. The focus will be on that which is most viable in the current market and context.

Illustration 23: The Henbery Conservation Project ~ Australia's first bio-diverse carbon farming business (Henbury Station, NT)

For instance, for farmers, Carbon Agronomy is a new niche which integrates necessary work on carbon management and climate change with agricultural productivity and biodiversity health. Carbon sequestration and management has a direct benefit to natural ecosystems, cropping and grazing enterprises, farm and regional income, water quality, atmospheric gas fluxes and climate and weather.

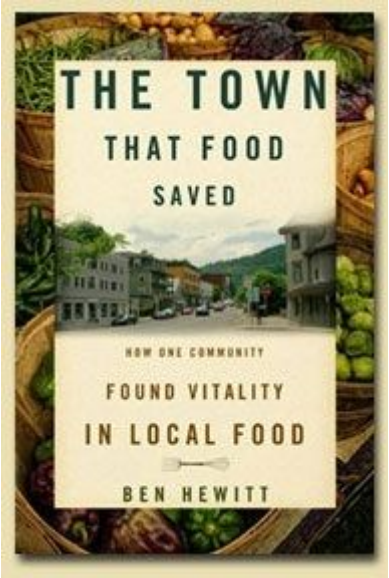
The Living Classroom site itself is most significant for its ability to demonstrate and measure Carbon Agronomy (although given its small size it has limited ability to produce carbon sequestration or income, unlike the opportunity for Cooperator Farms).

The major components of this Professional Services initiative are:

- Meticulous documentation of The Living Classroom (including baseline data, production processes and outcomes, educational methods and outcomes, community and stakeholder engagement, fundraising, planning, volunteer coordination, etc.) to build an evidence and knowledge base
- Research and identify the skills and knowledge required for Carbon Agronomy (such as farm planning, site assessment, revegetation, mapping, fire management, maintenance, carbon yield monitoring, record keeping and accounting, forest inventory, risk management, understanding of the carbon market, etc.)
- Develop a package of Carbon Agronomy services for farmers

- Recruitment, train and quality assure consultants, particularly the Cooperator Farmers, for delivery of the professional services
- Market and provide Carbon Agronomy services for farmers

For communities, there is potential to develop and provide a comprehensive service for rural regeneration and development. This is similar to the work being done by The Centre for an Agricultural Economy in Hardwick, Vermont. Recognising that most disadvantaged communities are unlikely to have the capacity to pay, the challenge with this particular type of professional service is developing an associated revenue stream to fund the work. A watching brief is required to track opportunities which might emerge in this regard, and to assess when, and how, it may become viable.



3.h Other Initiatives

Once The Living Classroom is established ~ in terms of its infrastructure, the regenerative farm, interpretive centre and the various initiatives detailed above ~ a range of other initiatives will become possible.

The following initiatives will complement and increase utilisation of The Living Classroom:

- Venue hire for conferences and corporate retreats
- Venue hire for weddings and functions
- Retail sales of regional regenerative produce, art and craft

3.i Summary of Initiatives

Summary of Initiatives			
Initiative	**Four Pillars**	**Delivery Spheres**	**Markets**
Creating the Regenerative Agriculture Farm	Agriculture - unique demonstration farm and working model Education - applied courses designing and creating the farm Agri–Tourism - visually beautiful setting, interactive, educational and entertaining Regional Conferencing - visually beautiful setting for conferences, meetings and functions	On–Site - courses, tours, conferences, meetings, events On–Line - virtual tours On–Farm - demonstration trials on a commercial scale	Students and Teachers - applied courses Farmers - applied courses, demonstration trials Tourists - interactive tours Community Members - applied courses Researchers - demonstration farm and trials, design, monitoring and evaluation
The Living Classroom Interpretive Centre	Agriculture - exhibits and displays of regenerative agriculture Education - interpretive exhibits and displays Agri–Tourism - state–of–the–art interpretive and educational exhibits, retail sale of regional produce and products Regional Conferencing - visually stunning, iconic and functional venue	On–Site - interpretive exhibits, displays and facilities for functions On–Line - virtual exhibits of regenerative agriculture and tours of the farm On–Farm - live links and broadcasts	Students and Teachers - applied courses Farmers - applied courses, interpretive exhibits of commercial operations Tourists - interactive exhibits and displays, retail sale of regional produce and products Community Members - applied courses Researchers - educational courses, exhibits and displays

Summary of Initiatives			
Initiative	**Four Pillars**	**Delivery Spheres**	**Markets**
The Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture	Agriculture - Regenerative Agriculture Precinct, courses, speaking tours, professional network Education - teach the teacher courses, on-line knowledge base and forums Agri-Tourism - study tours Regional Conferencing - Seminars, workshops, bi-annual Regenerative Agriculture Conference	On-Site - courses, conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures On-Line - virtual delivery, knowledge base, discussion lists and forums On-Farm - study tours	Students and Teachers - applied courses Farmers and Consultants - Regenerative Agriculture Precinct, courses, speaking tours, professional network Researchers & Policy Makers - speaking tours, courses
Learning & Visitor Program	Agriculture - Regenerative Agriculture for Farmers, field days, extension programs Education - courses and workshops Agri-Tourism - festivals, events, activities, self-guided and interpretive tours, niche courses (eg. tree-changers) Regional Conferencing - events	On-Site - courses, workshops, festivals, events, activities On-Line - virtual delivery of courses, workshops On-Farm - demonstration farm	Students and Teachers - courses, workshops Farmers - courses, workshops, field days, extension programs Tourists - self-guided and interpretive tours, festivals, events, activities Community Members - festivals, events, activities, courses, workshops

Summary of Initiatives			
Initiative	**Four Pillars**	**Delivery Spheres**	**Markets**
Commercial Deployment	Agriculture - deployment of regenerative agriculture on commercial properties Education - demonstration site and field centre, field trials Regional Conferencing - networking for Cooperator Farms	On-Site - demonstration site and field centre On-Line - virtual exhibits of regenerative agriculture and farm tours On-Farm - field trials and deployment	Students and Teachers - applied courses Farmers - applied courses, field trials and Cooperator Farm program Researchers - field trials and commercial deployment, design, monitoring and evaluation
Local Food System	Agriculture - value-adding product, retail and hospitality Education - kitchen gardens, urban food growing Agri-Tourism - food festivals, event-based activities Regional Conferencing - networking, showcasing	On-Site - courses, workshops On-Line - virtual delivery of courses, workshops, knowledge base for local food systems On-Farm - kitchen gardens, urban food growing	Students and Teachers - applied courses Farmers - value-adding product, retail and hospitality Tourists - food festivals, event-based activities Community Members - kitchen gardens, urban food growing Researchers - design, monitoring and evaluation
Professional Services	Agriculture - Carbon Agronomy and advisory services Regional Conferencing - seminars, conferences, workshops	On-Site - demonstration farm On-Line - knowledge base, discussion lists, forums On-Farm - advisory services	Farmers - advisory services Researchers - design, monitoring and evaluation

4 Operational Requirements

4.a Property Management

Management of the grounds, improvements and infrastructure (all areas other than the regenerative farm) is provided by Gwydir Shire Council and is identified in Council's organisation structure. All repairs and maintenance are to be conducted in a manner consistent with the principles of regenerative agriculture.

Council is currently responsible for 117 properties with a combined value of nearly $50m and has a team of six full–time building maintenance staff.

4.b Technology & Communication

Digital technology will play an important role of The Living Classroom in a number of respects, for example in:

- monitoring and measuring the farm's productivity, profitability and health
- presentation of educational information, provision of materials and managing course participation
- maintaining assets
- communication and marketing
- managing the enterprise itself

Partnerships are being established (refer Sections 2.c.iv Existing Partners, Supporters and Funding and 6.d Partnerships) to establish baseline data and regular monitoring of the environmental health and performance of the farm and surrounding grounds.

The Living Classroom will utilise Gwydir Shire Council's computerised finance and asset management systems. Web hosting is also to be incorporated into Council's existing systems.

4.c Quality Management System

The approach to quality management is staged so as to prioritise the most valuable and relevant areas for The Living Classroom's current operations, bearing in mind its start–up status, and allowing for growth and development over time. At the same time, existing baseline data is being collected to provide the basis for long–term analysis of the productivity and profitability of the regenerative farm and broader environmental health.

Key principles for quality management include:

- Delegation ~ responsibility being responsibly shared across the various people and partners with clear agreements, such as plans, contracts, delegation matrix, etc
- Integration ~ incorporating quality into all work practices (from recruitment to orientation, training, performance management, reporting and audits)
- Communication ~ through agreements, meetings, reports, committees, etc.

- Evaluation and Learning ~ assessed through monitoring, review, evaluation, reflective and reflexive processes
- Documentation ~ plans, policies, procedures, minutes, annual reports, newsletters, evaluations, reports, surveys and so forth

The major parts of the quality management system are depicted below.

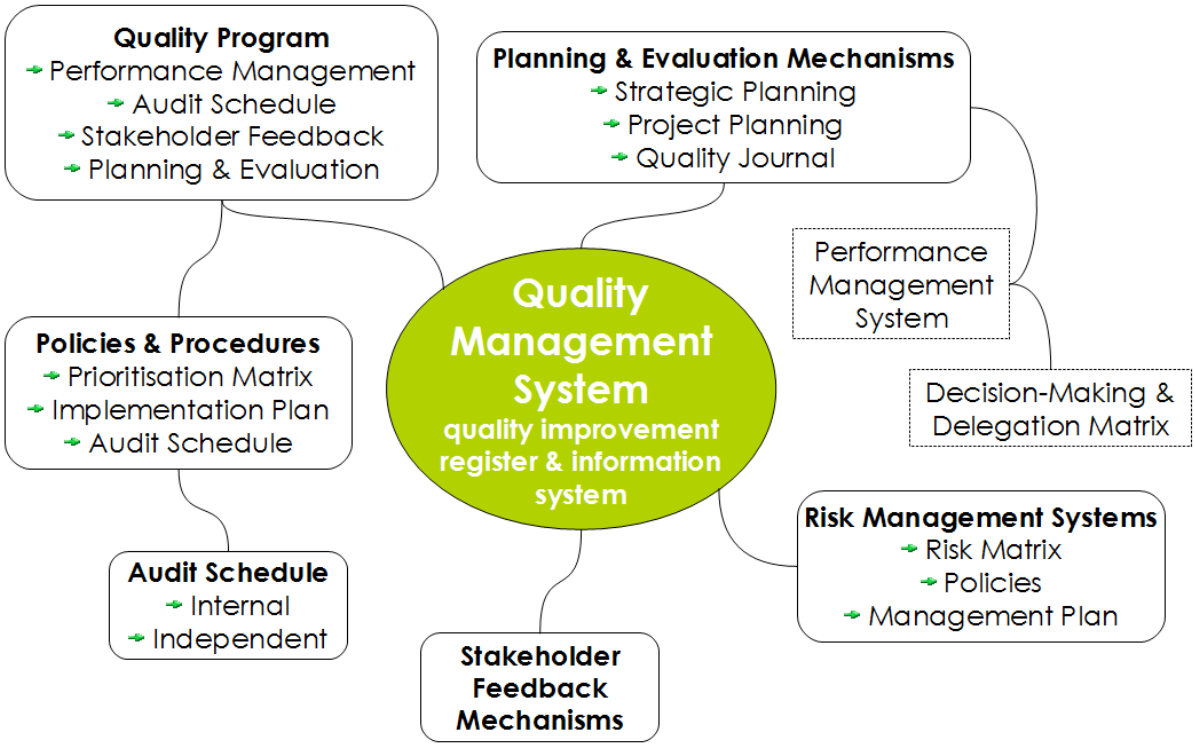


Illustration 24: Quality Management System

A Quality Improvement Register will be established from the outset to log, prioritise, track and manage all quality management issues which arise.

Other components of the quality management system will be developed and implemented to match the scale and complexity of The Living Classroom's operations as it expands.

4.d Challenges & Risks

Challenges & Risks	Likelihood	Impact	Strategies to Address, Mitigate, Avoid
Capacity constraints ~ reliance on volunteers, limited working or start-up capital	High	High	- Contributions and investment by Gwydir Shire Council - Comprehensive partnership program - Strategic and opportunistic approach in staging development to match available capacity - Majority of Initiatives to be self-financing
Limitation on how representative the site is to commercial farming situations	Medium	Medium	- Collaboration with natural resource management agencies - Partnerships with Cooperator Farms to trial and deploy methodologies at a commercial scale
Declining agricultural education, research, investment and work force	High	Medium	- Focus on diversity of target markets (including tourism, conferencing and events) -
Urban centricity and low understanding and support for rural development	High	Medium	- Expand working model with Willoughby City Council (sister city) and Rural Adventure school program - Partnerships with bridge building organisations (such as The Brolga Project)
Exposure to political change and influence given the role and nature of Gwydir Shire Council	Low	High	- Establishment of a s.355 Committee structure to establish clear roles, responsibilities and authority for The Living Classroom Board of Directors - Integration of Gwydir Shire Council contributions for The Living Classroom into Community Strategic Plan and Operational Plans

4.e Legal Considerations

The Living Classroom and Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture have been registered as Business Names. Trademarking of logos is required.

Creative Commons licensing will be utilised for all published materials (website, reports, research, case studies, fact sheets, etc.) to maximise their widespread use while upholding recognition of The Living Classroom's brand and contribution.

Insurance coverage is currently provided within Gwydir Shire Council's policies. These will be regularly reviewed as Initiatives are developed to ensure adequate coverage, particularly with respect to activities beyond Council's current scope such as food sales.

Liability risks, including public and professional liability, are minimised by the strategy of utilising arms'–length and independent contractors for training, professional services, event management and so on. Standard contract terms will ensure contractors hold current licenses and insurances relevant to the nature of the contracted services and activities.

Research will be undertaken into setting up The Living Classroom Foundation to provide a mechanism for charitable and philanthropic investment and funding.

5 Sector & Market Analysis

5.a Description

> *The more we pour the big machines, the fuel, the pesticides, the herbicides, the fertiliser and chemicals into farming, the more we knock out the mechanism that made it all work in the first place.*
>
> – David R. Brower

The Living Classroom is positioned to appeal to recognised markets in regenerative agriculture (such as education, production and consumption) and agri–tourism.

In its simplest form, regenerative agriculture is the overall term given to farming methods which restore and do not deplete natural systems or ecology. Regenerative Agriculture UK describe this further as the focus on:

> *"... building soils, restoring watercourses, and encouraging biodiversity, while reducing dependency on outside inputs, improving livestock health and increasing farm yields and profitability..."*

Regenerative agriculture is a set of principles more than a definitive set of practices. In this way there is considerable common ground with agricultural practices including: polyculture, synergistic cropping and grazing, permaculture, keyline, biodynamics, alley farming, aquaculture, vermiculture, rotational grazing, no–till cropping, cover crops, holistic management, pasture cropping, free–range, organic, pulse grazing, natural sequence farming, mosaic farming, agroecological farming, applied watershed restoration and commercial composting and waste recycling.

The other key defining quality of regenerative agriculture is its focus beyond the farm fence. Here there is regeneration of natural ecosystems, such as restoration of a healthy habitat for birds which contribute to insect and pests control or less pollution in creeks and rivers. There is also the contribution it makes to the community, such as employment and business as well as reuse and recycling of waste.

Agri–tourism and food tourism refer to visitation of farm and food–related enterprises for enjoyment, education or active participation in activities and events and can variously encompass farm stays, farmers' markets, restaurants, producer outlets and natural attractions. In its broadest sense it describes any agriculturally–based activity which creates visitation.

Illustration 25: Regenerative Agriculture (Adapted from Rodale Institute)

Agri–tourism overlaps with similar areas of geo–tourism (tourism which preserves the geographical character of the landscape) , eco–tourism (low impact, socially responsible travel often in fragile or pristine areas), eno–tourism (wine related) and culinary tourism (food related).

In simplest terms, regenerative agriculture embodies the four widely agreed conditions for long–term sustainability, namely that:

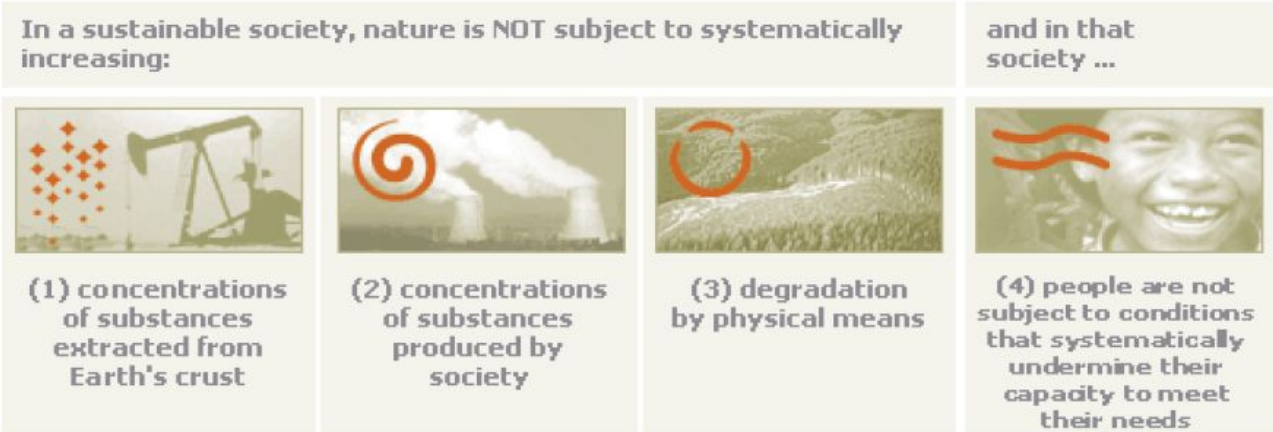


Illustration 26: Four Principles for Long–Term Sustainability, http://www.naturalstep.org/

5.b Strategic Position

The Living Classroom's unique niche and contribution to the regenerative agriculture and tourism sector is twofold: namely that it is a publicly accessible working exemplar, demonstration and interpretive centre and, an award–winning, thoroughly integrated development involving and benefiting the local and surrounding community, economy and natural environment.

While there are existing research facilities which demonstrate aspects of regenerative agriculture, there are none which comprehensively incorporate the many facets of The Living Classroom in such a complementary manner. Further, the various existing research facilities are only accessible to farmers and the public for a few select times each year. Similarly, farms using regenerative agriculture are only open for visitation for special occasions or events and are unable to provide ongoing educational programs due to competing priorities with their commercial operations.

In contrast, The Living Classroom is open to the public and practitioners, and provides a real, practical, working model providing knowledge and know–how on an ongoing basis at all times of the year.

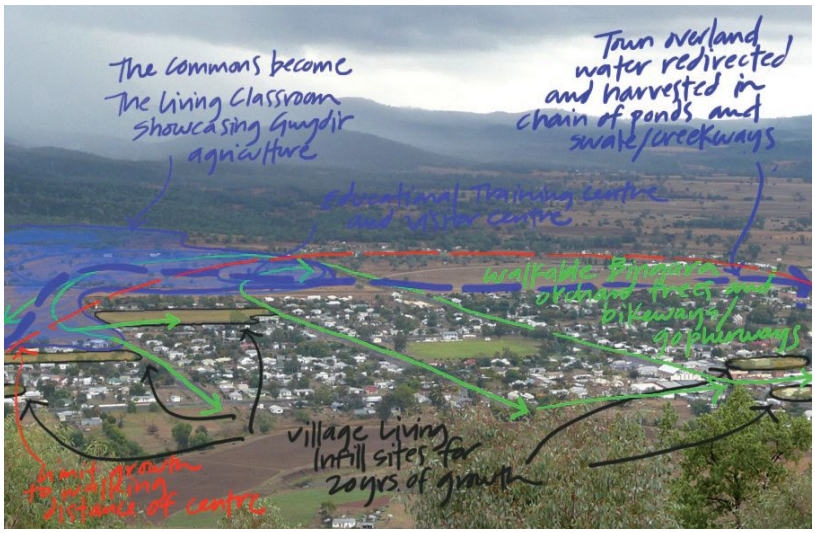


Illustration 27: Integration of The Living Classroom with the Bingara Town Master Plan (John Mongard Landscape Architects)

The Living Classroom's integration with its local and surrounding community is just as unique. This approach ensures that it plays a significant part in creating a much larger and shared vision, enhancing and complementing the work of many others, particularly through:

- Incorporating the four complementary development priorities (agriculture, education, tourism and regional conferencing) for the region which have been identified and validated by a range of community and regional planning processes
- Seamlessly incorporating the development with the award-winning Bingara Town Master Plan, creating a place which as beautiful as it is productive
- Being led by Gwydir Shire Council and by building upon their award-winning Gwydir Learning Region trade training program and the restoration of the Roxy Theatre, Museum and Cafe Complex
- Having been designed and created in collaboration with a wide range of partners, community members and other contributors
- Developing Bingara as a model for rural regeneration, including its own regenerative food system

The Living Classroom's core purpose of enabling regenerative agriculture, which is the future of food and farming, is aligned with the agricultural based economy of the surrounding region. Bingara is centrally located in this region, providing good access to one of Australia's most important agricultural communities.

The Living Classroom's initiatives are to target this unmet need and demand. They are packaged to be relevant across the entire system of farming and food are are designed for producers, retailers, consumers, educators and students. While the range and number of regenerative agriculture services is growing (refer Section 5.g Complementary Initiatives), there still remains a very significant amount yet to be achieved.

Being interwoven with the development of Bingara means that The Living Classroom will leverage significantly greater value through its education, extension and collaboration with Cooperator Farms. In this way it represents a highly affordable, scalable and replicable model for the regeneration of rural and farming communities globally.

5.c Evidence & Research

Visiting farms represents around one-sixth of the nature-based tourism segment. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) identifies successful agri-tourism and food tourism operations as having the following features in common: access to accommodation, appropriate infrastructure, proximity or easy access to nearby urban areas, opportunities to consume produce, aesthetics, rural culture, and farm-based recreational activities.

Their analysis of ten high profile agri-tourism regions[2] from across Australia found that frequently tourism income was higher than income from agriculture and that tourism businesses often

2 The regions studied were Harvest Highway (Western Australia), Eastern Gippsland (Victoria), Tamar Valley (Tasmania), Northern Rivers (New South Wales), Orange (New South Wales), Tropical North (Queensland), Darling Downs (Queensland), Hawkesbury Harvest (New South Wales), Yarra Valley (Victoria) and Kangaroo Island (South Australia).

outnumbered farm-based businesses.

During the year ended March 2012 the Northern Inland Region received 1.4 million domestic visitors, 40,300 international overnight visitors and 1.9 million day trip visitors.

Domestic visitors most frequently came from other regional NSW areas or Sydney (three-quarters were intra-state) with inter-state visitors predominantly coming from Queensland.

Holiday or leisure was the purpose in visiting the region for one-third of domestic travellers. Business was the purpose for one-fifth and visiting friends and relatives accounted for a further third.

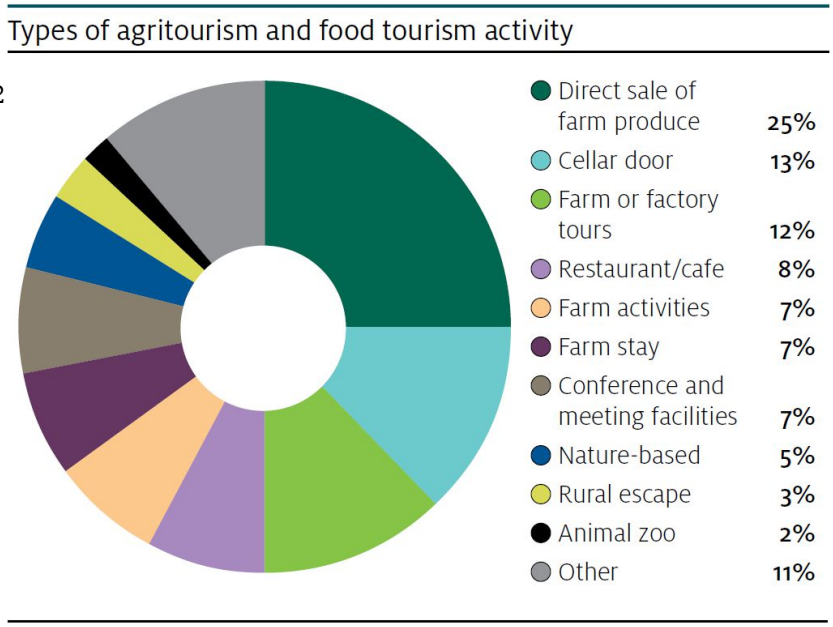


Illustration 28: Types of Agritourism (Source: Australian Government)

Not surprisingly, holiday and pleasure was the predominant purpose for international visitors (two-thirds), followed by visiting friends and relatives (one-fifth) and business' (one-tenth). International travellers most frequently came from other English speaking countries (New Zealand, United Kingdom, USA, Canada and Ireland), followed by Western Europe (Germany, Scandanavia, France and Netherlands) and Asia (China, Singapore, Korea and Taiwan).

Annually, Gwydir Shire receives around 38,000 domestic visitors who contribute $80million to its economy. However, this financial yield from visitors is well below state average, which means there is an opportunity to increase local spending further.[3]

The business models used by the farming and food sector are closely tied with the economic strength and viability of rural and regional communities. For example, studies by Civic Economics (USA) have found that locally owned grocery businesses in West Michigan generate more than 50% local economic benefits in dollar terms alone, as compared with absentee owned grocery businesses (Illustration 29: LOCAL WORKS! Examining the impact of local business on the West Michigan economy).

Regenerative farms are more closely interwoven with their local communities and economies, more likely to have local ownership and governance, employment, expenditure and community involvement. The Living Classroom's focus on regenerative agriculture is similarly aiming to regenerate rural communities in this way, both in Bingara and throughout New England North West of NSW and beyond.

3 Bill Mabey, NSW Industry & Investment, Our Place Our Future Forum

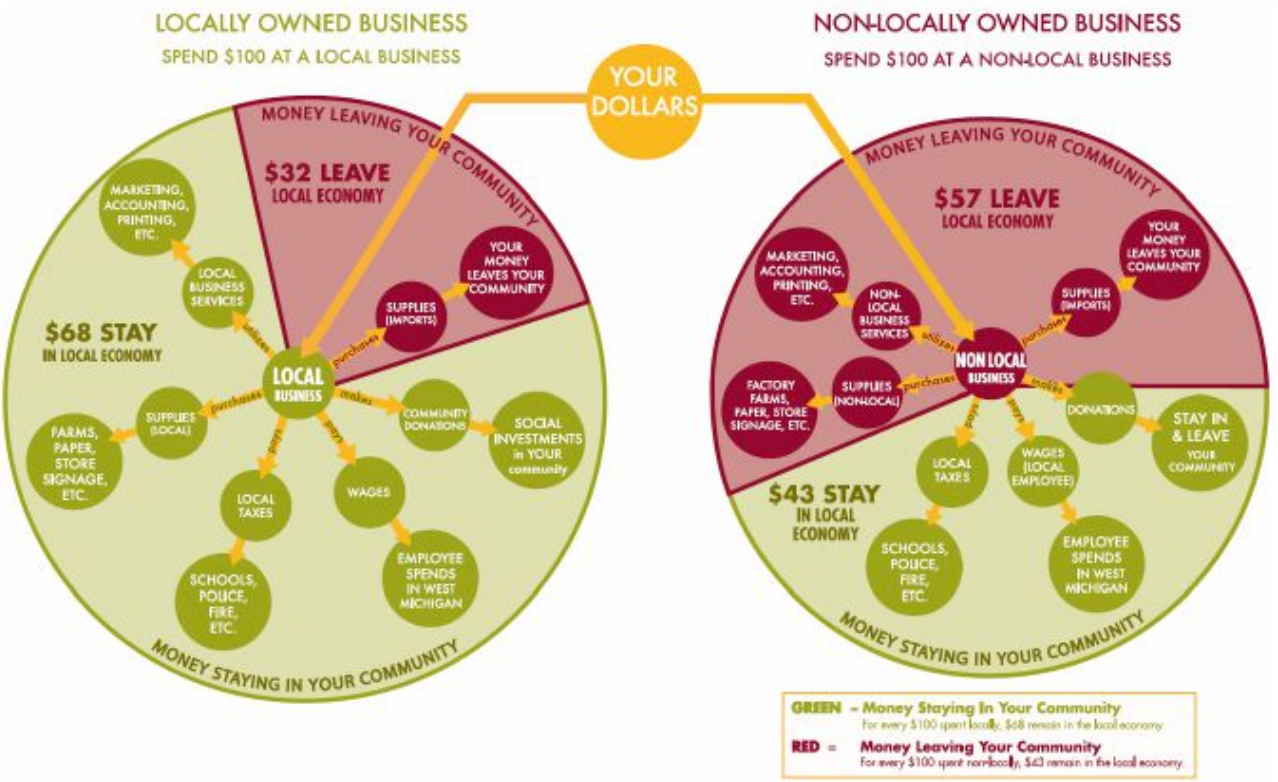


Illustration 29: LOCAL WORKS! Examining the impact of local business on the West Michigan economy

5.d Trends & Analysis

ABARE has found that operators in the agri–tourism sector consistently highlight that urban populations have an increasing desire to connect to the farm. A key factor in this growth is consumer interest in locally produced foods, in farming and in food production generally, as well as in sustainable, ethical and organic production.

Surveys by the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance have similarly found a renaissance in home and community food growing, with about 53% of Australians now growing fruit and vegetables or raising livestock and 59% of them starting a vegetable garden in the last 5 years.

On a commercial scale, agribusiness (agriculture, forestry and fisheries) makes an important contribution to Australia's economic prosperity. For the 2010–11 financial year, the industries recorded a combined gross value of production of $52.1 billion which represented 2.4% of gross domestic product. The sector employed 351,000 people. Agriculture and forestry occupy 63 per cent of Australia's 7.7 million square kilometre landmass highlighting the critical importance of their inter–relationship with the resilience of ecosystems and nature.

93% of Australia's daily food supply is met from local production, with around 60 per cent of production being exported ~ predominantly wheat, beef, wool, dairy products, cotton and wine. Yet this export accounts for only 1% of the global food supply. While Australian farmers are efficient in terms of the food and fibre produced per unit of labour input, most of our farming systems are based on high inputs of expensive fuel, fertiliser, chemicals, and machinery. With increasing input costs, and relatively high labour costs, it is likely it will be progressively more difficult for Australia to hold existing markets.

> *Why do farmers farm, given their economic adversities on top of the many frustrations and difficulties normal to farming? And always the answer is: "Love. They must do it for love." Farmers farm for the love of farming. They love to watch and nurture the growth of plants. They love to live in the presence of animals. They love to work outdoors. They love the weather, maybe even when it is making them miserable. They love to live where they work and to work where they live. If the scale of their farming is small enough, they like to work in the company of their children and with the help of their children. They love the measure of independence that farm life can still provide. I have an idea that a lot of farmers have gone to a lot of trouble merely to be self-employed to live at least a part of their lives without a boss.*
>
> – Wendell Berry, Bringing it to the Table: Writings on Farming and Food

The importance of regenerative agriculture, including recruitment and education, is reflected in the priorities of the National Farmers' Federation. Their priorities include:

- Increasing consumer demand and expectations and expanding niche products and through-chain traceability and quality assurance schemes
- Innovation in the face of productivity growth decline
- Managing natural resource pressures and climate variability and change
- Resolving for many farming families the deeply divisive issue of succession planning and, more broadly, agricultural management in general

These trends are more significant when considering the global food system. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) identifies the following issues in contemporary food production:

- the need for policies which aim at improving productivity in a sustainable manner
- consideration of climate change and consequent increases in the severity and frequency of weather related impacts on food production, especially with more frequent and severe occurrences of emergencies and disasters
- competing demands on agriculture to provide not only food and feed, but also commodities for energy and other purposes
- the inter-relationship of energy and agricultural prices and the potential impact that future increases in crude oil prices could have on agricultural costs and hence the price of food

UNFAO stresses that productivity from existing agricultural resources (land, water and plant and animal genetic resources) will need to rise further through intensification and enhanced resource use efficiency. This will require improved know–how and innovative farming methods to produce more food with limited resources in a more sustainable way, as well as a good knowledge and understanding of the natural resource base itself.

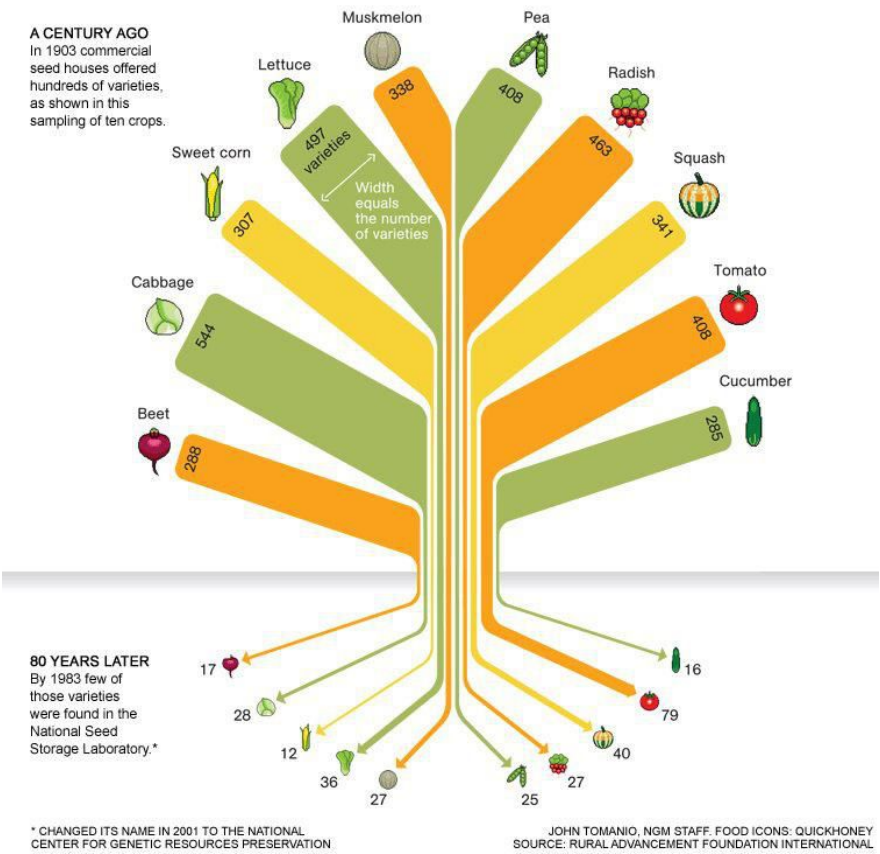


Illustration 30: Decline in commercial production of fruit & vegetable varieties

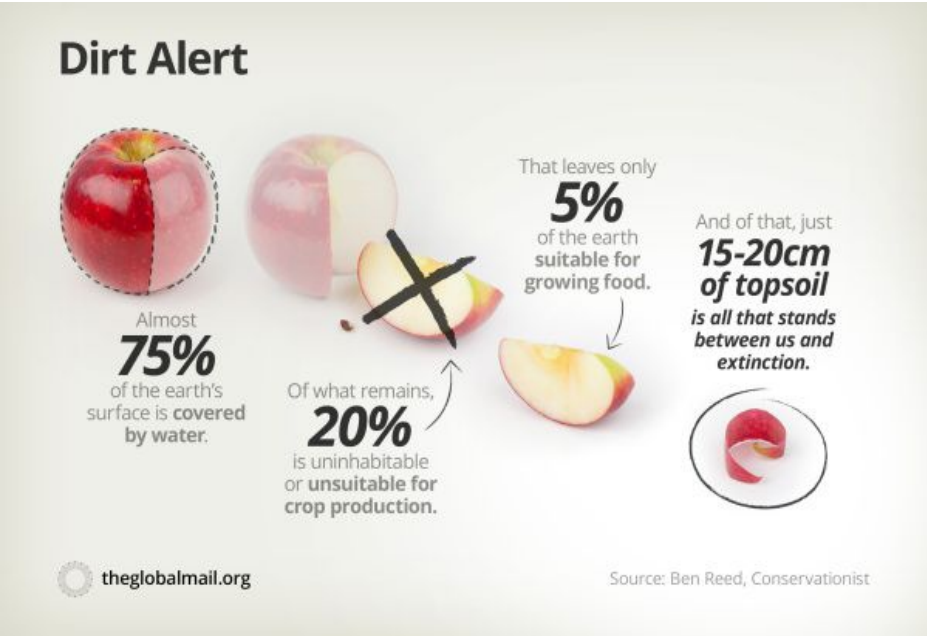
They identify opportunities which underpin the rationale for The Living Classroom:

- a new momentum, after decades of neglect, to re–invest in agriculture
- increased public awareness of the environmental, health and development dimensions of food production, trade and consumption systems, prompting governments, civil society and the private sector to act in making food supply chains more environmentally friendly, supportive of human health, and pro–poor
- integration of scientific and technological developments to address nutrition, health and environment challenges, coupled with the rapid spread of affordable information and communication technologies, supporting global sharing of information and knowledge, and increasing smallholder market access and know–how

Continuing with business as usual means that by 2035, global food production could fall by 12% due to land degradation alone. Land degradation is exceeding regeneration. UNFAO found that 25% of the world's land is highly degraded while only 10% is improving. In Australia, soil fertility is declining in 33% of all cropped land. Globally, 12 million hectares of land is lost through desertification and drought each year ~ an area half the size of the United Kingdom ~ with about 75 billion tonnes of fertile soil is lost each year. Overall, about 1.5 billion people live off degrading land, of whom 74% are the poor.

The health of both the underlying and surrounding ecosystem is critical for food production. Today's food is grown on just 11% of the global land surface and only 3% of the Earth's surface offers inherently fertile soil. Worldwide, 24% of global land area declined in climate–adjusted net primary productivity during the period 1981–2003, with only 16% registering an improvement

(Gardiner & Reid, p.445). By contrast though, global food needs will grow by 50%, water by 30% and energy demand by 45% by 2030. The UNFAO has found that farmers will need to grow as much food in the next 50 years as we have produced in the last 10,000 years.



The alternative is regeneration of land. Globally, more than 2 billion hectares of land can be restored through forest and landscape restoration. Of this, 1.5 billion hectares is suitable for mosaic restoration, including through agro–forestry and small–holder agriculture. This focus could simultaneously alleviate poverty and restore degraded land for millions of families.

The Border Rivers–Gwydir Catchment Management Authority have prepared hundreds of property management plans for farms in the Northern Inland. They have found that the majority of farm profit (as high as 80%) is generated from just 20% of the land under production. This highlights the significant opportunity for more strategic, and regenerative, agriculture.

Of all the variants of regenerative agriculture, organics are one of the most studied and measured. The US Rodale Institute has published a 30 year comparison of organic and conventional agriculture. In the transition from chemical to organic agriculture ~ after an initial decline in yields ~ the organic system soon rebounded to match or surpass the conventional system and further that:

- Organic outperforms conventional agriculture in years of drought
- Organic farming systems build rather than deplete soil organic matter, making it a more sustainable system
- Organic farming uses 45% less energy and is more efficient
- Conventional systems produce 40% more greenhouse gases
- Organic farming systems are more profitable than conventional ones

According to IBISWorld, Australia's organic farming industry has grown by more than 10% per annum over the last 5 years. Revenues for 2012–13 are forecast to be $578.9 million. Growth is being limited due to the lack of an organised supply chain for organic feed, abattoirs and processors.

Soils in the organic and conventional plots are very different in appearance due to the increase in soil organic matter in the organically managed soils. The organically managed soil is darker and aggregates are more visible compared to the conventionally managed soil.

At the same time, agribusiness faces serious labour shortages as existing workers age and others are moving into mining and other services. Forecasts indicate that the sector is likely to lose around one–third of its workforce over the next 10 years due to ageing alone. The Australian Farm Institute estimated in 2008 that the demand for labour in the sector exceeded supply by 116,000 people.

The Productivity Commission estimates the agribusiness sector will generate 32,000 new jobs each year. The industry currently needs 6,000 graduates a year yet is receiving fewer than 800 from domestic sources. As a result agricultural recruitment companies are advertising in colleges around the world.

The Australian Council of Deans for Agriculture Research have identified a continual decline in graduate completions in university agriculture and related degrees for the last two decades. Currently there are fewer than 300 in agriculture and 700 in agriculturally related courses. In contrast, the job market for graduates, as evidenced by job advertisements, indicates that there has been in excess of 4,000 positions per year consistently over the past 4 years.

For the Northern Inland of NSW this is especially significant. Agriculture accounts for one–third of all businesses, 16% of its workforce (12,000 people) and $1.7Bn earned per year in produce (refer to Illustration 31: Northern Inland Businesses by Sector (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006)).

When compared with all of NSW, the Northern Inland has a high proportion of jobs in industry sectors that are declining elsewhere.

	Agriculture, forestry and fishing (no)	Mining (no)	Manufacturing (no)	Electricity, gas and water supply (no)	Construction (no)	Wholesale trade (no)	Retail trade (no)	Accommodation , cafes and restaurants (no)	Transport and storage (no)	Communication services (no)	Finance and insurance (no)	Property and business services (no)	Education (no)	Health and community services (no)	Cultural and recreational services (no)	Personal and other services (no)
LGA																
Armidale Dumaresq (A)	498	9	96	-	264	69	258	63	111	6	108	483	24	147	45	75
Glen Innes Severn (A)	564	6	24	-	99	12	84	54	51	18	27	93	3	30	18	33
Gunnedah (A)	612	6	66	-	99	42	108	21	63	9	36	180	3	48	12	36
Guyra (A)	399	-	3	-	39	21	33	15	24	6	3	54	-	3	3	3
Gwydir (A)	408	3	18	-	36	9	48	21	36	6	6	51	6	9	6	3
Inverell (A)	687	9	57	3	213	45	177	48	81	12	30	201	6	57	24	36
Liverpool Plains (A)	513	-	36	-	78	21	72	27	42	-	30	96	3	21	18	3
Moree Plains (A)	963	-	51	-	180	72	162	51	138	18	63	285	3	30	30	39
Narrabri (A)	924	12	51	6	159	39	138	54	120	12	27	237	6	30	12	30
Tamworth Regional (A)	1452	6	186	3	786	165	567	162	339	30	285	849	36	243	105	132
Tenterfield (A)	441	-	27	3	87	27	120	36	27	15	21	66	3	15	18	12
Uralla (A)	354	-	33	-	90	21	63	12	36	6	3	81	-	30	3	3
Walcha (A)	450	-	3	-	30	18	45	9	12	9	12	57	-	15	6	9

Illustration 31: Northern Inland Businesses by Sector (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006)

5.e Customer Research

5.e.i Demographics

Border Rivers – Gwydir Catchment Management Authority have undertaken two studies (2007 and 2010) into farmer and landholder attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to natural resource management.

The key relevant findings include:

- Use of regenerative practices such as off–stream watering points; cell, strip or rotational grazing; no till or reduced till; farming to soil type; regrowth of native vegetation; maintaining ground–cover
- Only one–third of property owners had a written property management plan (2007 – 24%)
- One–quarter of respondents agree that it is difficult to obtain reliable expert advice or assistance for natural resource management while half were 'unsure'
- Smaller property landholders (less than 100ha) were also more strongly interested in "being part of a close–knit rural community", whereas larger property landholders tend to focus on "maintaining and improving resource conditions on their property"
- The workforce is aging, with an average age of 57 years, thereby reinforcing the need for industry–wide recruitment and succession planning

From the point of view of the agri–tourism sector, Tourism NSW have mapped the mind set (depicted right) of customer expectations for their ideal food and wine holiday.

The Living Classroom, Bingara and wider district have a range of offerings which are well aligned with these preferences, with the exceptions being the higher end 'gourmet offerings' and wineries (both of which are a particularly significant draw card for couples and group travellers).

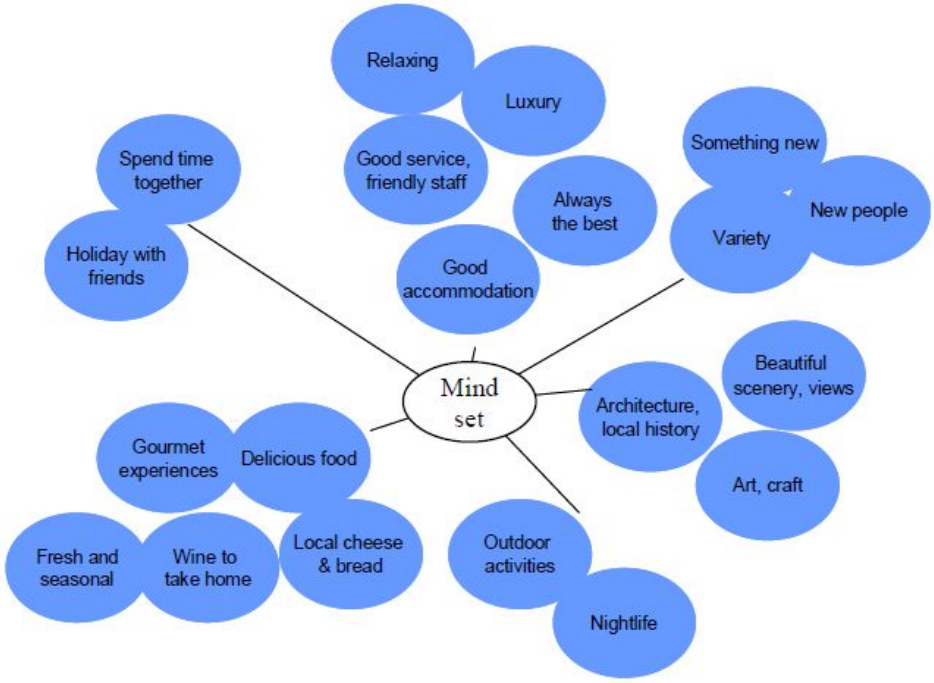


Illustration 32: Customer expectations for ideal food & wine holiday (Tourism NSW)

For families, a key consideration is activities for children. This market is less driven by food and wine.

Response	2007 survey Count	2007 survey Percent	2010 survey A Count	2010 survey A Percent	2010 survey B Count	2010 survey B Percent
Meeting and talking with others who have dealt with similar problems or issues						
High interest (3)	211	17.6	138	30.0	180	25.8
Moderate interest	399	53.9	236	51.3	337	48.4
Low interest (1)	130	28.5	86	18.7	180	25.8
Mean score		*2.11*		*2.11*		*2.00*
Demonstration sites that trial new ideas or practices						
High interest (3)	255	34.6	148	32.2	194	27.9
Moderate interest	371	50.3	220	47.9	306	44.0
Low interest (1)	112	15.2	91	19.8	195	28.1
Mean score		*2.19*		*2.12*		*2.00*
Visiting other properties to see what other landholders in the region are doing						
High interest (3)	239	32.4	139	30.3	175	25.2
Moderate interest	380	51.5	228	49.8	319	45.9
Low interest (1)	119	16.1	91	19.9	201	28.9
Mean score		*2.16*		*2.10*		*1.96*
Attending field days						
High interest (3)	177	23.9	97	21.0	125	18.0
Moderate interest	424	57.1	245	53.1	342	49.1
Low interest (1)	141	19.0	119	25.8	229	32.9
*Mean score***		*2.05*		*1.95*		*1.85*
Experts visiting my property to provide advice and information						
High interest (3)	161	21.9	95	20.8	132	19.0
Moderate interest	312	42.4	186	40.7	259	37.4
Low interest (1)	262	35.6	176	38.5	302	43.6
Mean score		*1.86*		*1.82*		*1.75*
Attending short training courses						
High interest (3)	99	13.4	71	15.6	93	13.5
Moderate interest	332	44.9	210	46.2	286	41.4
Low interest (1)	309	41.8	174	38.2	311	45.1
Mean score		*1.72*		*1.77*		*1.68*
Contacting Government staff for advice and/or information						
High interest (3)	62	8.4	60	13.1	83	12.0
Moderate interest	317	43.0	192	41.9	276	39.8
Low interest (1)	359	48.6	206	45.0	334	48.2
*Mean score***		*1.60*		*1.68*		*1.64*
Involvement in industry research projects						
High interest (3)	84	11.7	47	10.3	58	8.4
Moderate interest	281	39.0	186	40.8	229	33.2
Low interest (1)	356	49.4	223	48.9	403	58.4
Mean score		*1.62*		*1.61*		*1.50*
Tertiary education courses						
High interest (3)	-	-	26	5.8	35	5.1
Moderate interest	-	-	111	24.8	148	21.7
Low interest (1)	-	-	311	69.4	499	73.2

Illustration 33: Level of interest is different ways for developing additional knowledge or skills, BRGCMA

Broadly speaking, people are looking to get away from the routine and sameness of their everyday lives to spend quality time together ~ either alone as a couple or to spend time connecting with family and friends (e.g. a group of girlfriends taking a break away, groups of couples meeting up a few times a year, family getting together with parents and/or siblings). Foe example, NSW's wine regions, dominated by the Hunter, are seen as weekends away or short break holidays for such markets.

Moreover, weekend or long weekend travellers' choice of destination is influenced by drive time, as demonstrated by the high volume tourist areas within easy reach of large population centres.

Food and accommodation preferences are predominantly in the mid–to–low priced categories (refer to Illustration 34), which is again well suited to the current options available in Bingara.

In the Bingara region, friends' or relatives' properties are the most popular accommodation used for nights in the region (44.9%), followed by standard hotel, motor inn below 4 star (20.1%) and caravan parks or commercial camping grounds (14.8%).

Commercial food establishment

Commercial food establishment	International visitors %	Domestic visitors %
Takeaway / fast food / snack bar	65.4%	49.3%
Pub / bar and grill	48.3%	43.5%
Café / coffee shop	66.2%	49.8%
Mid-priced restaurant	70.3%	41.1%
Expensive restaurant	24.2%	11.6%
Other eatery	5.5%	4.2%
Visitors to NSW	97.2%	85.8%

'Mid-priced restaurant' (70.3%) was the most popular commercial food establishment used by **international** food visitors to NSW.

'Cafe / coffee shop' (49.8%) was the most popular commercial food establishment used by **domestic** food visitors to NSW.

Illustration 34: Food choices by tourists and visitors, Tourism NSW 2009

Being dissatisfied with city life I moved to Bingara in April 2009 because it was a stand out country town. Ahead in regard to natural beauty (amazing Gwydir River), ambiance, friendly people, healthy environment, Roxy Theatre (cultural/entertainment experiences), range of outdoor activities and central to amazing places to explore and affordable real estate.

Something else about Bingara was that it was dynamic. So unlike many country towns that were dying and boring. This town was into renewal, reinvigorating itself and developing new social and commercial opportunities.

I left the city life to seek a marked improvement in the quality and meaning of life. Bingara has provided everything I ever wanted. It's a 10 out of 10 town as I call it.

I believe for NSW, Bingara is the country town to become the model for what attractive country town living can be. It is so good here. In choosing Bingara as my home town I inspected approximately 45 country towns in NSW over an 18 month period. Bingara was so far ahead of the others. If you haven't been here you need to come and have a look for yourself to find out the secret for this country town's success.

– Gary Foster, Bingara Tree Changer

5.f Fit & Alignment with Existing Strategies

The following table identifies key and relevant global, national, regional and local plans and describes their purpose, fit and alignment with The Living Classroom.

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
Global	United Nations Food & Agriculture Organisation	FAO's vision is of a world free of hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contributes to improving the living standards of all, especially those of the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner	FAO's relevant strategic objectives include: • Sustainable intensification of crop production • Increased sustainable livestock production • Sustainable management of land, water and genetic resources and improved responses to global environmental challenges affecting food and agriculture • Wider markets that improve livelihoods and rural development from an enhanced environment
National	Australian Government Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries	DAFF's role is to ensure Australia's agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries remain competitive, profitable and sustainable	DAFF's core outcome is to enable more sustainable, productive, internationally competitive and profitable Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries through policies and initiatives that promote better resource management practices, innovation, self-reliance and improved access to international markets

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
National	National Farmers' Federation Strategic Plan 2010 – 2013	Established in 1979, the NFF is Australia's peak body representing farmers and agriculture The NFF, together with the Australian Conservation Foundation, was instrumental in establishing Landcare, a program that promotes the importance of sustainable agricultural systems and sustainable natural resources The NFF Sustainability Committee is focussed on environmental considerations and engagement of the farm sector with Environmental Stewardship, the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and related issues	NFF's vision is for "A strong, progressive and sustainable farming sector in Australia." • Progressive – encompassing modern, innovative and adaptive to change • Sustainable – including economically, environmentally and socially • Farming sector – embracing farming businesses, agribusiness and rural communities NFF identifies relevant priorities for: productivity growth through agricultural research and development; enabling farmers to perform tangible environmental services on behalf of the community; improving standards of animal care and health; upskilling and increasing the available labour market; and raising the positive profile of innovative practices involved in modern, dynamic, competitive and sustainable farming

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment

National	Rural Research & Development Council	The RR&D Council is the Australian Government's key advisory body to provide high-level advice and coordination to target and improve the effectiveness of the government's rural research, development and extension (RD&E) investment	The RR&D Council's National Strategic Rural R&D Investment Plan identifies:
			• Considerable challenges for Australia's rural sector (climate change, ageing labour and increasing skills deficit) and the critical need to concurrently increase productivity and sustainability to respond to rising global demand for food while maintaining the resource base for future generations
			• The opportunity for Australia to play its part in the global effort to double rural sector output over the next 30 years while using proportionally fewer resources
			• The need to sustain further growth in funding for RD&E, with key goals including:
			  • integration of natural resource management with production systems to use natural resources more efficiently
			  • building capability through high quality education and training
			  • developing social research and tools that enable rural communities to embrace change, adopt new technologies and manage the impact of change
			  • providing an initial balance of investment of: 40% transformational investment for long-term outcomes; 30% near-term adjustment for mid-term outcomes; 20% capacity building in people; and 10% international linkages

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
National	University of New England Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015 *Learning Without Limits*	Australia's first regional university with a focus on research that is of particular significance to rural and regional communities. UNE established the first Australian undergraduate degrees in natural resource management and sustainability Primary campus located 2 hours from Bingara Operator of several agricultural research facilities (refer to 5.g Complementary Initiatives)	UNE's core purpose of "significant regional to global impact through the pursuit of excellence in teaching and research" includes relevant areas of animal breeding and production, environmental and agricultural change, rural education, rural health and rural communities, landscapes and practices. UNE aims to be Australia's "university of choice for research into regional issues of global significance" with a preference for research on rural and regional innovation. UNE identifies collaboration as a core value and identifies partnerships with other enterprises as a priority, particularly those which can reach low socio–economic status students. UNE has a demonstrated track record and continuing commitment to on–line learning.

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
State	NSW 2021	NSW 2021 is the NSW Government's 10–year plan to guide policy and budget decision–making.	Importantly, NSW's 2021 goals include: 1. Improve the performance of the NSW economy including increasing the value of primary industries by 30% by 2020, doubling tourism expenditure and increasing the number of women completing apprenticeships in non–traditional trades. 3. Drive economic growth in regional NSW through Regional Action Plans, relocation programs and decentralised government services. 6. Strengthen the NSW skill base by addressing skill shortages, providing targeted training in areas of employment growth for students in regional and rural areas, Aboriginal people and women and increasing in the number of apprenticeships and traineeships. 22. Protect the natural environment by regenerating degraded natural bushland, riverbanks and waterways, and supporting the Green Corridor Program and Aboriginal Green Teams. 23. Increase opportunities for people to look after their own neighbourhoods and environments through Landcare and Catchment Action Plans. 24. Make it easier for people to be involved in their communities by building supportive connections between community members using sport, recreation and cultural activities, events, facilities and venues and by including community facilities in urban design and planning processes, so they are planned from the beginning. 25. Increase opportunities for seniors in NSW to fully participate in community life 26. Fostering opportunity and partnership with Aboriginal people 27. Enhance cultural, creative, sporting and recreation opportunities

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
State	NSW Farmers' Association	The NSW Farmers' Association is a key representative voice for farmers in NSW.	The NSW Farmers' Association presents a wide range of policy statements and positions. However, it does not have a publicly available Strategic Plan.
State	NSW Primary Industries	NSW Primary Industries works to develop and sustain diverse, profitable food and fibre industries, and ensure best practice management of our natural resources.	NSW Primary Industries' targets are aligned with NSW 2021 (detailed above) with relevant areas being: • Percentage increase in gross value and volume of agricultural production by hectare • 15% increase in number of members belonging to Landcare groups by 2015 • Increased consumer understanding and use of food labels
State	NSW Trade & Investment	NSW Trade & Investment drives sustainable economic growth by working with and supporting businesses and industries to advance investment, innovation, activity and improvements.	NSW Trade & Investment's targets are aligned with NSW 2021 (detailed above) with relevant areas being: • Doubling visitor expenditure • Increasing the value of primary industries and mining production by 30% • Growing employment by an average of 1.25% per year and increasing the share of jobs in regional NSW • Increasing regional population by 470,000 from 2010 to 2036 • Increasing participation in recreational, arts and cultural activities by 10% from 2010 to 2016 • Increasing by 15% the number of members belonging to Landcare groups by 2015 • Increasing farm productivity per hectare by 10% by 2015

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
State	Primary Industries Education Foundation (PIEF)	PIEF's purpose is to provide credible, relevant and factual information on all matters relating to agriculture, fisheries and forestry for Australia's teachers, students and the community, with objectives focussed on encouraging primary industries education in schools	PIEF's strategic plan includes the following goals with are aligned with The Living Classroom: • Align primary industries resources to the Australian curriculum • Promote primary industries career opportunities and pathways in schools • Support primary industries education policy development
Regional	Regional Development Australia Northern Inland (RDANI)	RDANI works to improve services and help develop the NSW Northern Inland region both economically and socially in a sustainable environment. RDANI acts as a conduit between Governments and local communities and also as a provider of information.	RDANI's vision includes being recognised for environmental and sustainable resource usage as well as working with at least five new enterprises with tangible employment. Identified as areas of opportunity include community regeneration, value-adding agriculture, niche food, environmental sustainability, education and training. Relevant priorities are: • Regional community regeneration and sustainable population growth ~ promotion of success stories, Come On Inland campaign, grant support • Industry diversification and job creation ~ particularly supporting agribusiness, niche 'clusters' and entrepreneurship • Investment in regional infrastructure and education • Environmental achievement

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
Regional	Northern Inland Regional Skills, Education & Jobs Plan	The RSEJ Plan reflects community priorities and strategies to achieve objectives based on four key themes: early childhood education and care; school education; tertiary education and training; and jobs, skills and workforce development.	The RSEJ Plan goals that are of relevance are: • To identify existing infrastructure and resources currently under–utilised and create opportunities to share them amongst regional partners to undertake education, training, and community development programs. • Improve access and participation for Indigenous Australians across all levels of education, skills development and employment within the region. • To ensure the provision of unique and effective alternatives to mainstream education leading to attainment of recognised qualifications. • To maximise opportunities through emerging industries, whilst supporting those upon which the region has been founded.
Regional	TAFE New England Institute	TAFE NEI's mission is to change lives through learning to enable employment pathways, business productivity and regional prosperity. It is recognised at state and national levels as a successful large training provider and has 11 campuses offering 455 courses.	Creativity is one of the Institute's core values by finding new ways to do things and being innovative. So too is a commitment to environmental sustainability. Relevant strategic priorities include: • Developing and delivering customised and responsive services • Influencing the development of learning communities • Linking and working with industry, business and the community

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
Regional	Border Rivers–Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (BR–G CMA)	BR–G CMA's Catchment Action Plan (2013–2023) (in draft at the time of writing) is a non–statutory, strategic plan to guide the region to take multi–stakeholder collective action in natural resource management and fulfil the purpose of helping people in the region's communities look after their land for future generations. The primary purpose of this Plan is to establish how and where investment will be made to improve the region's natural assets over the next ten years	The BR–G CMA's Draft Catchment Action Plan (CAP) identifies a range of relevant priorities and targets: • Provide opportunities for communities and individuals to engage in natural resource management activities that contribute to well–being, promote self organisation of networks, encourage leadership and build peoples skills and motivation • Shift the role of the CMA to become a regional coordinating body for collaborative catchment management. This is a shift from centralised control to facilitation, coordination and capacity building • The CAP provides the basis for innovative solutions at all levels. For example, through expanded collaboration, large multi–disciplinary projects could involve partners contributing from natural resource management, and from socio–economic, health, and education areas. Every level of collaboration can, and will be explored • Base catchment actions on evidence from both science and experience to reduce risks and create better outcomes for production, conservation and communities • Ensure land–use is appropriate to its land and soil capacity class and is managed for improved soil condition • Improve hydrological function of the landscape to secure water regimes appropriate to maintaining aquatic habitats and important water assets • Improve condition and connection of vegetation within the catchment and contribute to state and national wildlife corridors

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
Regional	Namoi Catchment Management Authority	Namoi CMA is committed to a vision of vibrant communities and landscape for the future.	Namoi CMA's relevant priorities include: • Improve soil health (ground cover), surface water flow quality and restoration of riparian vegetation • Invest in education, extension and community engagement to facilitate improved understanding of the importance of: woody vegetation to biodiversity; vegetation communities to sustainable fauna populations; potential new invasive species; riparian, groundwater and wetland health thresholds and priorities • Invest in understanding and defining social wellbeing for the Namoi Catchment including partnerships that will develop a collective understanding of adaptive capacity in the Catchment and appropriate interventions to assist people to withstand shocks and slow drivers of change
Local	Gywdir Shire Council	To Council's goal is to be the recognised leader in Local Government in respect of continuous learning and sustainability and to ensure its long term role is viable and sustainable by meeting the needs of its residents in a responsible caring way, and by attracting sustainable development while maintaining traditional rural values, character and culture.	Gwydir Shire Council's relevant strategies and priorities include: • Working with Community Committees (such as The Living Classroom Board of Directors), seeking their opinions, offering relevant and timely support, and recognising their valuable contribution • The Living Classroom which addresses four themes: social (health and cohesive community), economic (building the business base), environmental (an environmentally responsible Shire) and regional and local leadership • Proactive leadership for major improvements to the rural road network • Economic growth through increased employment opportunities for residents and industry specific training opportunities, especially for school leavers, such as the three Trade Training Centres (Primary Industry, Hospitality and Machinery) • An increasing focus on tourism promotion

Scale	Organisation	Purpose	Fit & Alignment
Local	Upper Gwydir Landcare Association (UGLA)	UGLA is focused on delivering services to promote an environment that is well managed, healthy and which underwrites the resilience of its constituents.	UGLA is closely following the progress of The Living Classroom. Relevant opportunities and strategies include: • Exploring and formulating partnerships to utilise the Regenerative Farm, Interpretive Centre and provide extension programs and education more generally • Shifting to a focus on opportunities rather than problems and on causes rather than symptoms • Addressing improving ground cover, land management, soil health, riparian zones and reducing weeds, pests and soil erosion
Other	Willoughby City Council	Bingara is one of three "friendly city" relationships which Willoughby City Council has with other local government authorities. The other two are Suginami (Japan) and Jinniu District (China). These relationships are based on community development and cultural exchange.	Representatives from Bingara and Willoughby participate in formal and informal visits throughout the year. Willoughby Council participates in Bingara's Orange Festival annually and Bingara participates in the Willoughby Street Fair. A youth exchange between the two occurs every year and provides a great opportunity for local students to experience country–city life.

The Northern Region Local Aboriginal Land Council Regional Economic Development Strategy and Implementation Plan has also identified as relevant. However no publicly available copy of the document could be sourced.

5.g Complementary Initiatives

The following initiatives have been analysed to identify their complementarity with The Living Classroom. This recognises the collaborative potential of the growing regenerative agricultural sector. Highlighted initiatives are located within the Northern Inland region.

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
AgBiodiversity	2009	Website, Research & Case Studies	Evidence linking healthy natural systems and profitable agriculture	Collaboration of key authorities (three Catchment Management Authorities) with Greening Australia and researchers	Potential Cooperator Farms Integration of websites
Australian Farm Institute	2007	Research & Policy Program, Political Networks, Annual Conference & Publications	Developing and promoting farming policies	Specialist focus on farming policies only	Development of policy package for regenerative agriculture and rural regeneration
Australian Rural Education Centre	1977	Exhibition site Conferencing Pavilion	Small landholders	Annual field day is well attended (25,000 people, 450 exhibitors) with focus on regenerative agriculture, aquaponics, natural fertilisers, beekeeping, school gardens, soil health, using grazing to regenerate soil, pastures	Provision of applied demonstrations & exhibits all year round
Banrock Station		Winery Walking trails, wetlands, bird–watching	Conservation winery	Funds raised from wine sales have contributed to conservation projects in more than 60 countries	

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Belo Horizonte, Brazil (The Productive Garden)	1993		Urban food security system for city's poorest residents	People's Restaurants that serve 12,000+ people daily using mostly locally grown food for the equivalent of less than 50 cents a meal Extensive community & school gardens as well as nutrition classes	Creation of a food system that works for a contemporary, rural and mainstream community
BioAg	1999	Nutrient production Office suites, conference rooms & laboratories	Manufacturing biological soil & plant nutrition products	Providing nutrients that increase microbial mass Analytical services	Potential Cooperator Farms Pindaroi Station, Inverell
Biodynamic Agriculture Australia	1989	Quarterly magazine, research in bushfire recovery, Advisors	Fostering commercial biodynamic farming and an increasing range and quantity of certified biodynamic produce for the domestic and international markets	Advisors Quarterly magazine (Leaf) Biodynamic product directory and educational resources New resources for home gardeners	Transferrable know-how in setting up resource directories (website) and advisors structures Workshops and courses Potential Cooperator Farms
Biological Farmers of Australia	1987			Representative body for 3,000 organic industry farmers, operators, producers, processors and traders	Development of 'regenerative agriculture' standards and certification programs

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Birchip Cropping Group	1992	40 trials & demonstration sites up to 100km from Birchip	Research trials incorporated into existing agricultural enterprises	Farmer-driven research and extension programs Collaboration with working farms and farmers for trial & demonstration sites Member access to research findings, field days & crop walks, events & discussions	Development of Cooperator Farm and Farmer Initiative
Centre for Education & Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES)		4.5ha site, Urban Farm, Organic Market, Café, Permaculture Nursery and Fair Food organics delivery, green technology displays, buildings, education programs, social enterprises, nursery, bike shed	CERES is Australia's largest deliverer of environmental education, a vibrant eco-oasis located on the Merri Creek in East Brunswick, Melbourne	350,000 visitors per year Large-scale community participation as volunteers, centre users, employees, entrepreneurs CERES Global educational travel & tourism On-site, on-line and on-the-road delivery Social enterprise business model (self-financing)	Potential to develop an urban-rural sister-brother relationship given the significant synergy & potential for knowledge transfer
Farrer Memorial High School		191ha at school 340ha "Brewongle" Cattle, sheep, wool, poultry, cropping, dairy, horticulture	To be the the best secondary agricultural training institution in Australia	610 students (7-12) including 360 boarders 3rd largest boarding school in NSW, free tuition & lowest boarding fees in NSW White Suffolk flock & Angus stud businesses Hands-on student involvement and wide range of school & vocational courses Industry scholarships & employment	Extension of existing school programs to incorporate regenerative agriculture through The Living Classroom

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Brisbane Food Connect	2004	Sell and distribute 1,000 food boxes per week, 32 employees, 90 farmers, City Cousin food distributors	Community supported agriculture	Direct to market produce distribution & sales In process of being replicated in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Bellingen, Coffs Coast & Wollongong\ Incorporate stories of food into each purchase	Development of Local Food System (community supported agriculture)
Future Farm Industries CRC	2007	Five research programs: livestock, cropping, woody crops, biodiversity & education	Researching farming systems & technologies to improve the resilience of Australian broadacre agriculture to climate change, salinity & drought	Collaboration of 3 agricultural R&D investors, Landmark, 7 state agencies, CSIRO & 4 universities Extensive network of farm trials	Farm case studies as potential Cooperator Farms
Franciscan Earth Literacy Centre	2004	Chemical free farm in vegetables, fruit, herbs & livestock	Education in sustainable agriculture (food, nature, building, energy)	Apprenticeships Summer camps Community supported agriculture	Creation of holiday camp programs Involvement of community in exchange for produce
Green Grove Organics	1962	1,110ha Farm, restaurant, flour mill & factory	Regarded as one of the premier organic test cases in Australia & the world	Junee Licorice and Chocolate Factory Association with the Australian National University (ANU) for monitored & comparison with conventional farming Hire for functions	Potential monitoring partnership with UNE Beautiful setting & on-site produce attracts events & functions Creating a compelling niche product or service

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Henbury Conservation Project		500,000ha of ecologically significant habitat (part of National Reserve System & Trans Australia Eco-Link Corridor)	Learning by doing to establish a model for bio-diverse carbon farming in an arid environment	Largest property ever purchased for the National Reserve System with Australian Government support	Agricultural productivity linked within biodiversity corridors & connectivity
Holistic Results	1996		Australian arm of Allan Savory's Holistic Management	More than 2,500 program participants through Australia and New Zealand Field days and face-to-face courses	Research and link with graduate practitioners as Cooperator Farms
Incredible Edible Todmorden, UK		Extensive place-based, town-wide food growing system Food Hub, Market Garden & Training Centre, Fish Farm	Providing access to good local food for all, through: working together; learning ~ from field to classroom to kitchen; supporting local business	Free service listing local producers, distributors and retailers of local produce Whole-of-community involvement	Extensive synergy with Local Food System initiative
Klein Karoo Sustainable Drylands Permaculture Project, South Africa	1999	400ha Homesteads Diverse ecology	Creating a sustainable community in a dryland region, using permaculture, as a model to train people from all over the world	Demonstration model Course, volunteers, internships Outreach with partners	Potential to include on-site living in exchange for labour

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Landshare Australia		2,000+ members	Connecting landholders willing to share with those who need land for cultivating food	International linkages (Landshare UK has 57,000 growers, sharers and helpers) and partnership with Northern Rivers Food Links Extensive on-line resources & networking forums	Potential strategy for Local Food System, particularly with peri-urban Cooperator Farms
Douglas McMaster Research Station, UNE	1964	1,012 ha 2 houses Meeting Bunkhouse Woolshed	Develop more profitable & sustainable whole farm systems for the NSW North West region	Formal UNE relationship McMaster Farm Group Grain & graze focus including crop transitions, multi-purpose cropping, legumes for marginal areas of pastoral zone, soil compaction, cover cropping trials and soil losses	Relatively low activity & participation at annual Field Days
Milkwood Farm & Milkwood Permaculture		Student & volunteer accommodation Camping facilities Woolshed	Social enterprise for learning, sharing & teaching skills for regenerative small-farm systems and permaculture futures in both the country and the city	Host and teach courses with world leaders in regenerative agriculture & permaculture Permaculture education, consultancy & design firm Open days Promotion links with AREC	Aligning with the local farming context (broad-acre for The Living Classroom, small-farms for Milkwood) Potential of tree-changer market and fee-for-services Promotional links with regional program

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Mulloon Creek & The Mulloon Institute		Home Farm (1740ha, biodynamic, 730ha dry sclerophyll forest, floodplain pasture & sloping rangelands) Duralla (590ha, organic free-range egg production)	Working model of profitable biodynamic production & landscape restoration, together with outstanding research & education programmes	Research into hydrology, natural sequence farming and soil change from keyline & pasture cropping practices	Potential Cooperator Farm
Newholme Field Laboratory, UNE	1982	High value natural habitat Laboratory, Kitchen, Shearers' quarters & Bunkhouse	Outdoor classroom in theoretical and practical natural resource management and agriculture	Association with UNE Property includes Mt Duval Nature Reserve & 300 ha Mountain Paddock conservation zone	Extension of existing research & education programs to incorporate regenerative agriculture through The Living Classroom
Outcomes Australia		Pro-bono networks of relevant expertise	Collaboration of eminent Australians working to ensure that Australia has optimal solutions to problems that impact on the entire community, either directly or indirectly	Involvement of high profile Australians Soils for Life Program ~ supports innovative farmers & land managers demonstrating high performance in regenerative landscape management	Collaboration on regenerative soils program & potential Cooperator Farms from Case Studies

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Permaculture Research Institute of Australia		27ha Diverse food production, dwellings, water, waste & energy systems	Being a model farm (in development) and training facility	Geoff and Nadia Lawton, world-renowned permaculture educators and consultants Thousands of graduate permaculture designers from around the world Extensive and growing global network of permaculture projects	Alignment of members as potential Cooperator Farms Potential synergy to adapt internship program structure
Polyface Farms	1961	500ac	A "healing land" model to be copied, having restored a worn-out, eroded & abused farm	Joel Salatin, Founder Range of tours (self-guided, students, farmers) Direct markets to 2,000 families, 25 restaurants & 10 retail outlets Totally independently funded (no grants or government funding) Apprenticeships, employment, subcontracting & symbiotic entrepreneurship	Synergy of Cooperator Farms with 'symbiotic entrepreneurship'
Quadrant	1987		Research & delivery of tailored study tours & programs in agribusiness & nature-based sectors		Incorporation of The Living Classroom into agri-study tours Identification of potential Cooperator Farms

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Queensland College of Wine Tourism	2007	Training Centre Banca Ridge Winery Cellar Door, Bistro, Interpretive Centre, Laboratories, Trade Training Kitchen, Conference & Function Centre Capacity for 50 school-based trainees	Only wine tourism training institution in northern Australia & is the key Industry Centre for the Queensland Wine industry for wine identity, promotion, training, research & development	Commercial grape & wine analysis service Joint venture with Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, University of Southern Queensland & 13 Gateway Schools Partners each contribute $250,000/annum Break-even enterprises (cellar door, function & conference centre) Workplace and fee-for-service training	Vocational education & training contextualised in a real industry context
Regenerative Agriculture UK	2011	Website & relationships with experts & Cowdray Estate for courses, tours, etc	Building soils, restoring watercourses & encouraging biodiversity, while reducing outside inputs, improving livestock health, increasing yields & profitability	Alliance of farmers, smallholders and other individuals, sharing ideas and resources to help regenerate the UK's farms, soils, communities and on-farm livelihoods	International Partner in developing the regenerative agriculture sector
ReGen Ag		Website, relationships with experts & existing course program	Alliance of farming families working to regenerate Australia's farms, soils, communities & on-farm livelihoods through skills & education	Existing course program: Holistic Management, local food systems, making fertilisers, pasture cropping, applied watershed restoration Relationship with Milkwood Farm & Permaculture & Joel Salatin of Polyface (both detailed above)	Joint speaking tours, identifying Cooperator Farms, cross-marketing or course programs, websites, etc.

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Rivers Road Organic Farm		140ha 12 farm & 12 residential blocks	Organic agricultural & residential village	Organic community title property model	Cooperator Farms
Rodale Institute, USA	1947	Farming Systems Trial, New Farm magazine, extensive web-based tools & resources	Pioneering organic farming through research & outreach	Longest-running side-by-side U.S. study comparing conventional chemical agriculture with organic methods Research, reports, field days, workshops, online tools	Knowledge exchange regarding member-based strategies for ACRA, international alliance, incorporation of organic methods into the Regenerative Farm
Rothamsted, UK	1843	Classic field (long-term) experiments, significant staffing & operating capacity (£30m pa)	Delivering the knowledge & new practices for environmentally sustainable solutions for food & energy	Longest running agricultural research station in the world	International collaboration, particularly linking with Cooperator Farms through Australian affiliates
Tamworth Agricultural Institute		Two sites 332.6ha & 80.83ha, irrigation licences, 125 staff	Dryland & irrigated cropping research site for Northern Inland NSW	NSW Primary Industries auspice 2012 workshops & field days: (73), journal publications (25) & extension publications: (38) Alliances: universities (6), interstate agencies (13) & international (9)	Collaboration for regenerative cropping trials, engagement with Cooperator Farms for field trials, on-site extension activities & study tours

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Taranaki Farm		Internship program, Production (beef, eggs, chicken, pigs)	Ethical animal husbandry, regenerative landscape stewardship & local community renewal	Inspired & linked with Joel Salatin | Polyface Farm Direct buying club	Adaption of internship program Collaboration with speaking tours
The Centre for an Agricultural Economy, USA	2004	Atkins Field (12.5ha), Food Access Fund, Regional Food System Plan, Small Business Agricultural Advising, Vermont Food Venture Centre	Brings together community resources & programs needed to develop a locally-based, sustainable, healthy and regional food system in Hardwick, Vermont	Atkins Field site for a sustainable agriculture educational & resource centre Vermont Food Venture shared-use kitchen incubator for value-added & specialty food producers Local Food System Monitoring Project	International partner given synergy of Atkins Field Collaboration for work on Local Food System
The Eden Project	2000	100,000 plants from 5,000 species representing many climatic zones	A global garden in a former clay mine on a spectacular scale	International tourism, education, social enterprise and mining rehabilitation Million visitors per year	
The Flannery Centre		State-of-the-art training facilities	Green skills for building, natural landscapes & business	Tim Flannery	
Trelawny Station		12-20 students	Farm-skills training centre specifically for Aboriginal students	Owned by Indigenous Land Corporation Wrap-around personal health, wellbeing & culturally appropriate programs	Linkages with Aboriginal community Potential recruits for internship and apprenticeship

Name	Founded	Capacity	Unique Position	Strengths	Complementarity
Tyrell College	2008	200ha on partner farms	Inspiring & enabling the next generation of farmers & residents for Sea Lake, Victoria	Vocational agriculture based learning program for students, particularly females from non-farming backgrounds	Partner with co-operator farms to demonstrate at-scale production
Wild Farming Alliance, USA		Education, case studies & working with members for research & evidence	Promoting healthy, viable agriculture that helps protect & restore wild nature.	Community-based, ecologically managed farms & ranches seamlessly integrated into landscapes that accommodate the full range of native species & ecological processes	Knowledge transfer for Cooperator Farms & incorporation of 'wild farming' into regenerative farming model
Yarra Valley ECOSS	2007	7.4ha community park concept, inspired by CERES (detailed above)	Creating a vibrant, resilient & sustainable Yarra Valley community	Secured site Educational partnerships for training programs (community, schools, practitioners) Community-based planning processes & Business Plan completed	City-country cousin partnership, with both sites at similar stages of development

5.h SWOT Analysis

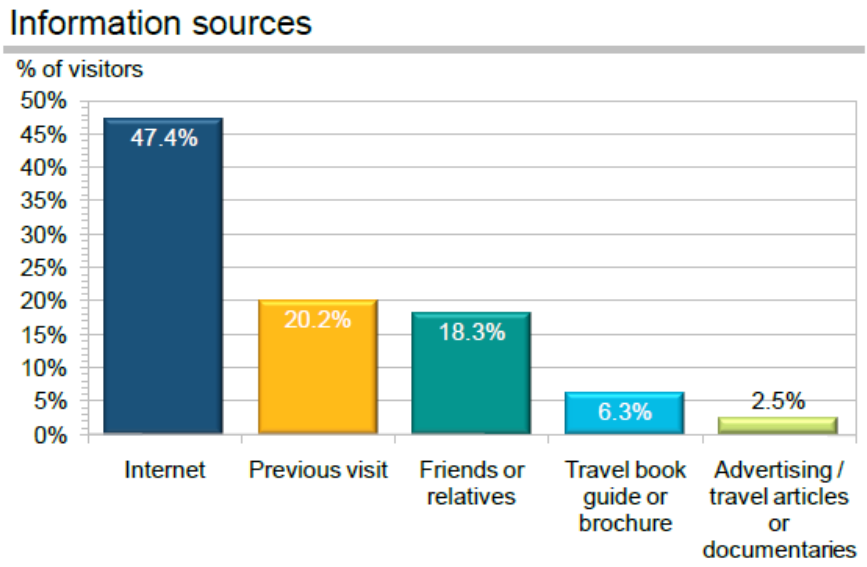
Strengths	Opportunities
Demonstrated relevant track record by Gwydir Shire Council, TLC Steering Committee and Vision 2020 ~ conferences, workshops, forums, integrated town planning, Roxy Greek Theatre & Cafe restoration, Gwydir Learning Region, multi-cultural backpacker tourism	Regeneration ~ degraded site, food self-sufficiency, increasing population and replicability for other similar rural villages and communities
Established partnerships, spirit of support and aligned priorities ~ Gwydir Shire Council, Vision 202, Grey Nomads, Volunteers Australia, Willoughby City Council, Kythera Greek community	Enabling a cluster and precinct with the diverse array of other complementary endeavours from local to global ~ Cooperator Farms, professional services, educational providers, agricultural suppliers
Integrated approach with complementary benefits ~ consolidation of site (town commons), integration with Town Master Plan, addressing town storm water flooding issues	Inspiring and enabling the next generation of farming ~ addressing the skills and labour shortage; use of skilled migrants and temporary visa holders; attracting tree-changers, sustainability shifters, similar minded, niche and hobby farmers
On-site infrastructure ~ including Primary Industries Trade Training Centre, Bunkhouse Accommodation, hydrology system ~ and wider community infrastructure ~ Roxy Theatre & Cafe Complex, health facilities, RV Friendly	Provision of a range of complementary benefits ~ adding an additional attraction for tourism, re-use of town waste (composting), increasing capacity for education, meetings and accommodation, regional food system and self-sufficiency, healthy lifestyles
Location ~ geologically diverse site able to represent a range of soil and farming systems, aesthetically beautiful, centrality within Northern Inland agricultural region; proximity to significant agricultural education capacity; two hours travelling time to four airports	

Weaknesses	Threats
Relatively remote location ~ not on 'major' transport or travel corridors; unsealed road to Armidale, not well known with key markets	Urban centrism and lack of understanding and support for rural development ~ Australia is the most urbanised country in the world
Declining agricultural education, research, students and government support for this in general	Rising transport and fuel costs
The fortunes of Bingara and surrounding district remain at a precarious threshold following years of population and economic decline	Unable to attract sufficient capital funding or generating sufficient ongoing income, particularly the need to develop and prove the viability of products and services for a new and emerging industry (regenerative agriculture)
Limited financial resources to develop and market the facility	Not attracting the required skills for governance, leadership and staffing given the shortage and competition for skilled agribusiness people and the ageing community
Community concerns ~ whether it will work and is worth taking the risk, fear of competition from local retailers and hospitality providers	

5.i Advertising & Promotion

Border Rivers–Gwydir Catchment Management Authority has identified the main sources of information or advice about property management for farmers as being: other farmers; printed material; rural business agents; and field days, workshops and agricultural shows.

Importantly, they found that the internet is being more commonly used. This aligns with NSW Tourism's research on agri–tourism (Illustration 35).



The Living Classroom's on–line presence provides a relatively low cost platform for advertising and promotion. It allows for a large network of direct communication and engagement.

Further to this, the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics (ABARE) identifies priorities for developing the agri–tourism sector as including:

- Clear signage and road access
- More sophisticated regional market research and marketing to promote regional agri–tourism and food tourism experiences
- Fostering long–term coordination in a form that engages farmers and tourism organisations
- Creating training and extension opportunities to increase skills, particularly among farmers, to undertake agri–tourism and food tourism in the areas of marketing, customer relations and product development
- Developing linkages between local produce and consumers through improved distribution systems
- Establishing stronger linkages for agri–tourism with the Australian Government's National Long–Term Tourism Strategy

ABARE further determine the four key drivers for the development of agri–tourism and food tourism as being:

1. Clustering and linkages ~ where tourism businesses work together to support and promote each other, such as food trails.
2. Tourism networks which build upon business clusters. These networks may be horizontal (e.g. between visitor information centres) or vertical (e.g. from operators to visitor information centres)
3. Marketing and market research—includes brochures, websites, festivals, experience packaging, events and a range of innovative advertising and promotional activities. Likewise, farmers markets and other opportunities for consumer–farmer interaction act as an 'incubator' for product development
4. Integration and support ~ coordination that provides ongoing support to agri–tourism and food tourism at regional and local scales. Important support factors include formal regional coordination; leadership and entrepreneurship; organisational support; regional economic and community development; awareness and training; collaboration; and development of effective local food distribution systems to support food tourism

Documenting and communicating the stories of food and farming ~ both of The Living Classroom and the wider network such as the Cooperator Farmers ~ will be a key marketing strategy utilised to spread the concept and possibilities engendered though a living example of regenerative agriculture. Pictures tell a thousand words, and real stories convey models, know–how and learning most effectively.

6 Marketing & Development Strategy

6.a Potential for Growth

Regenerative agriculture addresses many of the most pressing national and global business and sustainability challenges. According to KPMG International, costs of environmental impacts are doubling every 14 years. Food producers have the largest external environmental cost footprint of the 11 sectors assessed (followed by electricity, oil and gas). Further, unless addressed, the external environmental costs of food production could outweigh the sector's entire earnings.

Of the Top 10 challenges identified by KPMG International the following are most relevant to The Living Classroom:

- Food Security: in the next two decades the global food production system will come under increasing pressure from megaforces including Population Growth, Water Scarcity and Deforestation. Global food prices are predicted to rise 70–90 percent by 2030.
- Climate Change: predictions of annual output losses from climate change range between 1 percent per year, if strong and early action is taken, to at least 5 percent a year if there is a failure to undertake collective action.
- Energy and Fuel: fossil fuel markets are likely to become more volatile and unpredictable because of higher global energy demand; changes in the geographical pattern of consumption; supply and production uncertainties; and increasing regulatory interventions related to climate change.
- Ecosystem Decline: historically, the main business risk of declining biodiversity and ecosystem services has been to corporate reputations. However, as global ecosystems show increasing signs of breakdown and stress, more companies are realising how dependent their operations are on the critical services these ecosystems provide. The decline in ecosystems is making natural resources scarcer, more expensive and less diverse; increasing the costs of water and escalating the damage caused by invasive species to sectors including agriculture, fishing, food and beverages, pharmaceuticals and tourism.
- Ecosystem Decline: as global ecosystems show increasing signs of breakdown and stress, the decline in ecosystems is making natural resources scarcer, more expensive and less diverse; increasing the costs of water and escalating the damage caused by invasive species to sectors including agriculture, fishing, food and tourism.
- Material Resource Scarcity: as developing countries industrialise rapidly, global demand for material resources is predicted to increase dramatically. Business is likely to face increasing trade restrictions and intense global competition for a wide range of material resources that become less easily available. This scarcity also creates opportunities to develop substitute materials or to recover materials from waste.
- Water Scarcity: it is predicted that by 2030, the global demand for freshwater will exceed supply by 40 per cent.
- Population Growth: global population is predicted to be 8.4 billion by 2032 in a moderate growth scenario. This growth will place intense pressures on ecosystems and the supply of

natural resources such as food, water, energy and materials.

- Deforestation: forest areas are predicted to decline by 13 percent from 2005 to 2030, mostly in South Asia and Africa. The timber industry and downstream sectors such as pulp and paper are vulnerable to potential regulation to slow or reverse deforestation.

Rural and regional areas have a critical part to play in food production, yet for the first time in human history, by 2009 more people were living in urban than rural and regional areas, particularly mega cities. Australia specifically is cited as the most urbanised country in the world, with nearly 90% of residents living in urban areas of more than 100,000 people and the majority of these are living in one of the eight capital cities.

This circumstance is contributing to a strong metro–centric perspective and culture which in part is a contributing factor to the direct decline in labour for the agricultural sector. The roles of rural communities in energy generation, fibre production and conservation management are just as important.

History has shown that the decline of civilisations has frequently resulted in the dispersal and distribution of their once centralised populace and economies. There is considerable under–utilised infrastructure to accommodate larger populations which is likely to be especially key in Australia with its near neighbours throughout the Pacific and South East Asia forecast to suffer some of the most significant levels of displacement due to climate change.

Recent advances in information and communication technology coupled with modern transportation systems are game changers for rural and regional areas in being able to compete with global markets and provide for contemporary lifestyles and livelihoods.

The Living Classroom is positioned to play a key part in realising the significant scope for rural regeneration and development.

6.b Communication & Promotion

Market research (see Section 5.i Advertising & Promotion) supports the merit of placing a strong emphasis on electronic communication and promotion, particularly the internet. This medium is relatively more affordable and provides simpler opportunities for cross–marketing (refer to the following Section 6.b.i Partner Packages & Cross Marketing).

Word–of–mouth is the next most significant strategy based on market research findings.

Different audiences (farmers, researchers, students, agri–tourists, etc.) will require tailored key messages. However, at the core of communication with all audiences will be the consistent message about the positive results and benefits of regenerative agriculture, the unfolding story of The Living Classroom, and the first–hand accounts and impacts from people's experience being involved and participating.

Key to enabling this communication approach is:

- Marketing the results of The Living Classroom, by meticulously documenting the development of The Living Classroom, capturing feedback from participants and visitors, and measuring the progress and performance of each initiative and activity
- Marketing the results of partners and supporters, through stories, case studies and news from other regenerative agriculture trials, operators, research, etc and allow platforms to enable

them to promote themselves

- Clearly defining and integrating The Living Classroom's unique strategic position (5.b Strategic Position) into all messages and communications
- Providing communication tools, such as social media, to enable the community, supporters and partners to share the news and stories of The Living Classroom and the wider network, including Cooperator Farmers

The most powerful promotional strategies are likely to be experiential, through inspiration word-of-mouth stories. This can be done through event-based marketing links to on-site activities at The Living Classroom with other attractions, such as with the annual Bingara Orange Festival and Easterfish.

The website is central to the project, particularly given that most project communication will be digital (rather than print). More than being just a website, achieving this communication and promotional strategy will require a comprehensive web presence. Utilising a dedicated website which is integrated with a range of web-based tools and links with partners and supporters is essential.

The term 'web presence' reflects the difference of publishing, distributing and placing content into the web to reach audiences where they are, and using freely available tools already in existence, rather than only seeking to bring audiences to The Living Classroom website, or to duplicate functionality. In this way the website will function as a portal and directory-link to complementary initiatives, relevant content, contacts and networks.

Examples of this strategy include video channels (such as YouTube and Vimeo), document libraries (such as scribd and MediaFire), image galleries (such as Picasa and Shutterfly), social media platforms (such as Facebook and LinkedIn), news feeds (such as Twitter), discussion groups and blogs.

6.b.i Partner Packages & Cross Marketing

Partner packages and cross marketing are both key strategies to attracting patronage to The Living Classroom and giving leverage to achieve greater results with a modest marketing budget.

Partner Packages involve linking with other similar or complementary initiatives (refer 5.g Complementary Initiatives) and attractions in order to create 2-3 days of complementary

activities as a way to increase visitation to the Bingara District. This primarily targets students, farmers and agri–tourists from outside the region and abroad, recognising that they are more likely to take the time to get to the district with 2–3 days worth of tour content and activities within easy reach of Bingara.

Cross–marketing requires establishing promotional and communication linkages with other similar and complementary initiatives for mutual benefit. Such collaborative advantage recognises that there is a high level of common interest between the clientele of both.

These strategies are especially key to both the Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture (ACRA) and Learning & Visitor Program initiatives. The initial priority will be to establish local and regional partnerships for packages and marketing. Once established, these can expand to national and international linkages, which will be especially key for ACRA and international study–tourism audiences.

6.c Pricing & Cost Recovery Strategy

The Living Classroom is a not–for–profit endeavour that uses a community enterprise business model. This means that pricing is structured to achieve a modest surplus on each initiative, or deliver on a cost–neutral basis at worst. This strategy ensures financial viability while providing for fair remuneration of staff and contractors as well as covering overheads.

The price–point for the various Initiatives is 'middle of the market', being below the prices for comparable commercial offerings (conferences, courses, consultancy and so on) and above those offered by grass–roots charities and community groups.

The pricing strategy achieves a high level of affordability. General tours and entry fees are to be very 'family friendly' ($5/head, $20/family), courses for farmers will average a modest $250 for two–days with community–oriented courses averaging only $50 each.

6.d Partnerships

Partnerships are key to the success of The Living Classroom by bringing resources, in the broadest sense of the word, to enable collaborative marketing, sharing information and building the regenerative agriculture network.

Key requirements for successful partnerships are:

- Alignment ~ shared planning to identify and build common interest and activities
- Performance ~ monitoring and reporting of agreed activities for progress and outcomes
- Learning ~ reflective and reflexive processes to clarify success factors, identify opportunities and agree areas for improvement
- Communication ~ frequent, two–way, communication with respect to both collaborative activities and other relevant developments

More significant partnerships will require formal agreements addressing:

- Project objectives, outcomes and timeframes
- Roles and responsibilities of each partner including service standards or specific contributions

- Resources to be applied by each partner
- How partners identify and share risks and benefits
- How the project will be evaluated
- How progress and outcomes will be reported

In addition to the existing partnerships (refer Section 2.c.iv Existing Partners, Supporters and Funding), further collaboration will be sought with the organisations below and the other various Complementary Initiatives (Section 5.g).

Potential Partner	Potential Role & Contribution
Agrifood Skills Australia	Recruitment and training programs to address the national labour shortage, including collaboration with the *Make it Work* initiative
Bingara Fish Hatchery	Development of aquaculture for lake and pond systems
Bingara Garden Club	Development and maintenance of the gardens
Bingara Men's Shed	Co-location on site and assistance with development and maintenance of the site
Commercial partners	Sponsorship and in-kind support providing materials, such as building products, fencing, feed, seedlings, etc.
Country Women's Association	Engagement and involvement of women, and incorporation of regenerative agriculture into the CWA's regional development policies
Local and regional tourism sector	Cross promotion and packages Development of accommodation facilities
Schools	Organising student Rural Adventure programs

6.e Funding & Resource Strategy

The following six streams have been identified as the most viable and aligned to fund and resource the development and operation of The Living Classroom:

1. Gwydir Shire Council support. This includes underwriting of self-funded activities (detailed below) and the direct investment detailed in Sections Error: Reference source not foundError: Reference source not foundand 2.f.ii Gwydir Shire Council.
2. Self-funding activities on a fee-for-participation basis. This comprises the Regenerative Farm and each of the various courses, conferences, membership, public tours, advisory services and so forth. Most of the Initiatives have been structured on this basis to achieve the lowest possible financial overheads
3. Grants for activities and capital works. A large range of grants are available from government and business. Philanthropic grants are mostly conditional on being made to an approved tax-deductible recipient. Ongoing research is required to create and

maintain a database of relevant grants. An affordable grant advisory service is the NSW Easy Grants Newsletter which is purchasable from Our Community.

4. Partnerships. This involves contributions such as sponsorship, grants or in-kind (refer sections 2.c.iv Existing Partners, Supporters and Funding and 6.d Partnerships)
5. Voluntary contributions. This can be sourced from volunteer groups (such as Grey Nomads, WWOOFers (Willing Workers on Organic Farms), Lions, Bingara Garden Club), internships (The Brolga Project, Universities), through work experience and work-for-welfare (for example, Job Network providers, universities, TAFE and schools) and apprenticeship programs (such as The Brolga Project), in particular aggregating participation through event-based projects (see further details below)
6. Fundraising. This can incorporate crowd-sourcing or appeals, particularly for specific needs like equipment or projects

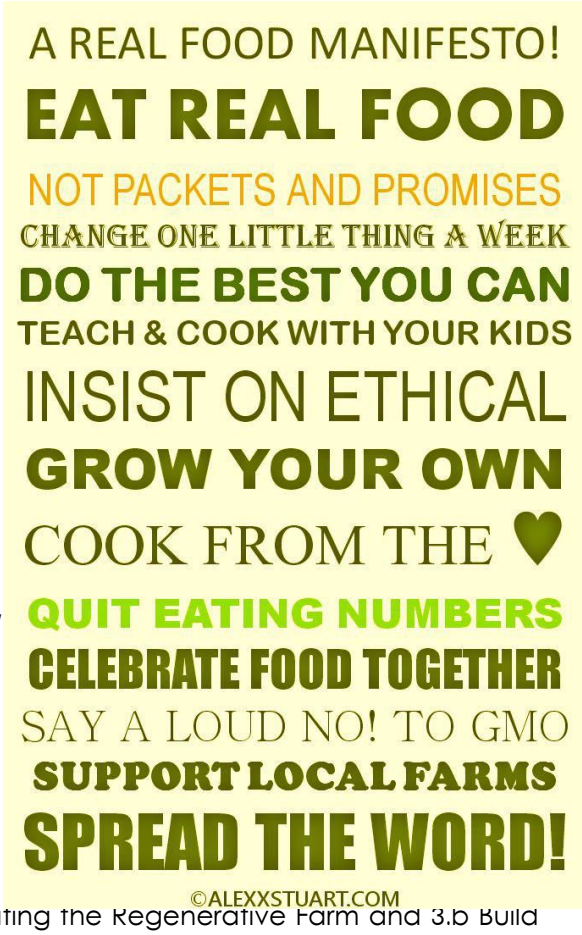
With the establishment of a Foundation, additional income streams become available, particularly tax-deductible donations and philanthropic grants.

Two of the Initiatives (refer Sections 3.a Creating the Regenerative Farm and 3.b Build the Interpretive Centre) involve coordinating the use of the above array of options to collaboratively design and develop key aspects of The Living Classroom with volunteers and partners as a learning-by-doing approach.

Popular and proven working-bee models can similarly utilise and focus this wide range of resources and include PermaBlitz and contemporary variations on the USA "Barn Raising" concept. Both are similar in that they create event-based activities which enable large-scale participation to very quickly build or create features on the farm or at a larger site.

The western NSW town of Trundall was one of many rural communities which ran a program to attract urban "tree changers" to relocate and contribute to the regeneration of their town. Trundall's strategy was to offer heavily discounted rental accommodation ($1/week) in disused farm houses in exchange for volunteer labour. This labour was mostly directed at restoration of the farm houses. However directing this to The Living Classroom is another option.

6.f First Year (2013) Priorities



The Living Classroom is a creative exercise in learning to grow food using regenerative agriculture principles so as to ensure a sustainable farming and rural future.

This Business Plan details several dozen actions spanning research, education, advisory services, training, extension and tourism that will be implemented to achieve this aim. While it would be much easier to focus on a few priorities, specific actions which are able to attract sufficient resources will potentially come from any of the options detailed. In recognition of this, the Business Plan presents a compendium of actions which envision the many streams of work coming into being in an integrated and complementary fashion.

The overarching performance measure for the first full year of implementation is that 50% of the local community and current partners have been directly engaged with The Living Classroom.

Staging of Development

The Business Plan reflects a strategy of enabling Initiatives to come online as the capacity of The Living Classroom grows. Two of the Initiatives, 3.a Creating the Regenerative Farm and 3.b Build the Interpretive Centre, together with all associated site landscaping, are the first priorities. Both initiatives include activities that are immediately possible because existing facilities can be utilised (for example, the Primary Industry Trade Training Centre and Bunkhouse accommodation). Also immediately possible are the applied learning and participation programs which will contribute to the further development of the site.

The staging of these activities will take into consideration the priorities and available resources of Council, partners and the community to ensure the optimal timing and potential impact, as well as ensuring that duplication is minimised. For example, negotiations are being held with Border Rivers–Gwydir Catchment Management Authority at the time of writing to establish a biodiversity corridor through The Living Classroom as part of a larger landscape–scale connectivity project. The corridor would form an important part of landscaping the site.

Governance & Legal

Completion of work on formalising the Section 355 structure for the Board is a key priority with respect to consolidating governance processes, leadership and oversight of The Living Classroom. Procedures for monitoring and reporting progress and performance will be finalised as part of this process.

Implementation of key legal structures will form a major part of the broader governing structures, particularly in regard to trademarking logos, creative commons licensing for intellectual property

and standard contract terms for sub-contracted professional services used in implementing the various courses, events and other activities.

Resources & Funding

Initially, a funding database (see also Section 6.e Funding & Resource Strategy) will be created to assess alignment with funding criteria and enable easy tracking of available funds over time. Similarly, following negotiations with partners (refer Sections 2.c.iv Existing Partners, Supporters and Funding and 6.d Partnerships) agreements for specific collaboration and contributions aligned with this plan will be established.

The particular character of what can be initially resourced will shape the timing of each of the initiatives and how The Living Classroom is established. This reflects the growing and learning nature of the endeavour, as well as being pragmatic and responsive to the reality of the funding environment for innovative non-profit activities, and especially applicable to capital expenditure. Negotiations with Gwydir Shire Council are especially important with respect to start-up working capital (as exampled by the Roxy Theatre Complex), and for recruitment of the Project Director.

Program Development

A program of events and courses which involve partners, volunteers and interns will be developed to both utilise existing facilities and channel involvement in further development of the site.

Analysis of the range of events and courses identified in the Plan will prioritise those which are most ready for development and implementation, matched with existing capacity of the site, resources and funding.

The financial model assumes 15 activities will be undertaken in 2013, including continuation of the school programs; the launches and forums to commence work on each of the Regenerative Farm and Interpretive Centre; and conducting of five educational courses.

Marketing & Communications

Establishment of a web presence and the core website is a priority. The Living Classroom is currently hosted by Gwydir Shire Council. However, a dedicated, fit-for-purpose site and web presence is required (for which $20,000 has been allocated for this work in 2013).

Regular communication and promotion will match fundraising and program activities detailed above, including the visitor and learning programs and key information about The Living Classroom and regenerative agriculture. Digital-based marketing strategies and systems are identified as being most affordable and able to directly reach target markets. $10,000 has been allocated for this work in 2013.

Systems

Designing and implementing key business systems (see Section 4.b Technology & Communication) is also another priority for the first year. Thorough tracking of performance is essential for credibility and continual improvement. Board reporting requires financial systems, programs information, farm and asset management and analysis to be in place.

7 Financial Projections

7.a Overview

Consolidated total income is projected to exceed $4.2m over the five-year period of this plan.

Consolidated	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals						
Income	$249,656	$561,432	$752,776	$1,215,735	$1,475,484	$4,255,084
Expenditure	$325,626	$529,643	$745,874	$1,217,541	$1,413,612	$4,232,296
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	-$75,970	$31,790	$6,902	-$1,806	$61,872	$22,788
Activities	15	42	64	92	128	341
Participants	4,572	9,751	14,155	19,630	24,131	72,238
Person Days/Nights	5,054	17,171	25,591	48,392	60,044	156,252
Cash Position						
Opening Cash Position	$100,000	$24,030	$55,820	$112,722	$259,316	$100,000
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	-$75,970	$31,790	$6,902	-$1,806	$61,872	$22,788
Add: Depreciation	$0	$0	$50,000	$148,400	$148,400	$346,800
Add: Capital Income	$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000	$0	$0	$2,415,000
Less: Capital Expenditure	-$185,000	-$1,010,000	-$1,220,000	$0	$0	-$2,415,000
Closing Cash Position	$24,030	$55,820	$112,722	$259,316	$469,588	$469,588

The financial model is staged to match Initiatives coming online as the facilities and capacity of the farm and centre are developed. Activities rise from 15 to 128 per year over a five-year period. Participant numbers total 72,000 over five years, creating 150,000 person day/nights in Bingara and immediate district.

Most activities are structured to achieve a modest surplus to contribute to covering core and fixed costs. This embeds a principle of financial self-sustainability, strengthened by expenditure being committed in sync with revenue generating opportunities. Each activity is largely costed on a variable basis, using sub-contracted services for course delivery, cleaning, catering, etc. This approach reduces fixed overheads and provides flexibility to adapt activities over time to be viable, rather than being locked into costs for a particular course, program structure or topic.

A proportion of the costs running each activity are directly allocated back to core operations, on the basis that the Project Director and other staff will directly contribute to their delivery. This also reflects the Project Director's active role in developing and delivering the program and activities.

The exception to this financial self-sustainability principle are the areas of core operating costs and overheads. These include staffing, repairs and maintenance, energy, etc. for the whole facility (excluding the Regenerative Farm which is also financially self-sustaining). Core costs are covered by the net return on activities and other income.

Break-even is achieved in year two of operations (2014), with a full-time Project Director, contractors and volunteers delivering a program of 42 activities. From this time, activities increase each year, together with increased centre staffing to be able to deliver the larger program.

Start-up capital of $100,000 is required to cover and underwrite core costs for the first two years. All material assumptions are detailed for each section of the financial model as detailed below.

7.b Economic Model

The projected economic impact of The Living Classroom incorporates both its direct impact ($6.7m over five years) and the increased economic activity that is to be produced as a result.

Wider economic activity is most significantly generated through visitation as associated spending in Bingara and surrounding district ($21.5m over five years). Further economic opportunities are created through using sub-contractors to deliver the various courses, events and other program activities ($1.6m over five years).

The sub-contracting opportunities reflect a strategy of engaging specialists, including farmers and educators, to design and deliver courses, events and other activities. Cleaning and catering are also sub-contracted and are largely variable in nature reflecting the levels of accommodation and venue usage.

Economic Model

		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Total Economic Activity							
The Living Classroom		$434,656	$1,571,432	$1,972,776	$1,215,735	$1,475,484	$6,670,084
Average Daily Spend		$667,079	$2,300,617	$3,480,123	$6,679,532	$8,412,144	$21,539,495
Total		$1,101,735	$3,872,050	$5,452,899	$7,895,267	$9,887,628	$28,209,579
	Note						
The Living Classroom							
Capital & Income		$434,656	$1,571,432	$1,972,776	$1,215,735	$1,475,484	$6,670,084
Capital		$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000	$0	$0	$2,415,000
Income		$249,656	$561,432	$752,776	$1,215,735	$1,475,484	$4,255,084
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		-$75,970	$31,790	$6,902	-$1,806	$61,872	$22,788
Activities		15	42	64	92	128	341
Participants		4,572	9,751	14,155	19,630	24,131	72,238
Person Days/Nights		5,054	17,171	25,591	48,392	60,044	156,252
Sub-Contractor Opportunity		$73,002	$180,022	$284,889	$453,511	$591,349	$1,582,773
Average Daily Spend	1	$667,079	$2,300,617	$3,480,123	$6,679,532	$8,412,144	$21,539,495

Assumptions

(1) Average daily spend of $132 for visitors/travellers based upon Destination NSW figures NENW Region for year ended 31 March 2012

Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012

All figures are inclusive of GST

As detailed earlier in the plan, the strategy also involves developing a pool of suitable contractors, particularly through the Cooperator Farm and education networks, to deliver these programs. This will provide complementary off-farm income, and additional opportunities for educational providers.

7.c Consolidated Financial Model

Consolidated	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals						
Income	$249,656	$561,432	$752,776	$1,215,735	$1,475,484	$4,255,084
Expenditure	$325,626	$529,643	$745,874	$1,217,541	$1,413,612	$4,232,296
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	-$75,970	$31,790	$6,902	-$1,806	$61,872	$22,788
Activities	15	42	64	92	128	341
Participants	4,572	9,751	14,155	19,630	24,131	72,238
Person Days/Nights	5,054	17,171	25,591	48,392	60,044	156,252
Cash Position						
Opening Cash Position	$100,000	$24,030	$55,820	$112,722	$259,316	$100,000
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	-$75,970	$31,790	$6,902	-$1,806	$61,872	$22,788
Add: Depreciation	$0	$0	$50,000	$148,400	$148,400	$346,800
Add: Capital Income	$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000	$0	$0	$2,415,000
Less: Capital Expenditure	-$185,000	-$1,010,000	-$1,220,000	$0	$0	-$2,415,000
Closing Cash Position	$24,030	$55,820	$112,722	$259,316	$469,588	$469,588
Income						
Accommodation	$27,430	$58,504	$65,822	$91,278	$96,523	$339,557
Commissions	$0	$1,000	$1,500	$2,000	$2,500	$7,000
Conference Fees	$17,500	$30,000	$0	$70,000	$0	$117,500
Course Fees	$35,000	$93,000	$219,000	$378,000	$564,000	$1,289,000
Entry Fees	$16,327	$32,653	$48,980	$65,306	$81,633	$244,898
Farm Skills Visa Program	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Grants	$20,000	$50,000	$75,000	$100,000	$100,000	$345,000
Hire Income	$0	$1,800	$2,400	$3,000	$3,600	$10,800
Membership	$0	$2,500	$5,000	$11,000	$22,000	$40,500
Pro-Bono/In-Kind	$85,000	$70,975	$5,075	$5,151	$5,228	$171,430
Produce Sales	$0	$60,000	$60,000	$125,000	$125,000	$370,000
Professional Services	$0	$50,000	$70,000	$100,000	$150,000	$370,000
Rural Adventure	$38,400	$96,000	$180,000	$240,000	$300,000	$854,400
Sponsorship	$10,000	$15,000	$20,000	$25,000	$25,000	$95,000
Tour Fees	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total Income	**$249,656**	**$561,432**	**$752,776**	**$1,215,735**	**$1,475,484**	**$4,255,084**
Expenditure						
Depreciation	$0	$0	$50,000	$148,400	$148,400	$346,800
Employee Costs	$70,062	$149,932	$172,922	$288,548	$314,244	$995,707
General Expenses	$10,000	$10,150	$10,302	$10,457	$10,614	$51,523
Energy & Fuel	$10,000	$10,150	$10,302	$10,457	$10,614	$51,523
Exhibits & Displays	$0	$0	$5,000	$35,075	$45,451	$85,526
Insurance	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Marketing	$30,000	$20,000	$25,000	$30,000	$30,450	$135,450
Office Supplies	$10,000	$10,150	$10,302	$10,457	$10,614	$51,523
Overheads	$32,563	$52,964	$74,587	$121,754	$141,361	$423,230
Repairs & Maintenance	$65,000	$65,975	$66,965	$67,969	$68,989	$334,897
Small Equipment	$20,000	$20,300	$20,605	$20,914	$21,227	$103,045
Sub-Contracted Services	$73,002	$180,022	$284,889	$453,511	$591,349	$1,582,773
Volunteer Costs	$5,000	$10,000	$15,000	$20,000	$20,300	$70,300
Sub-Total	**$325,626**	**$529,643**	**$745,874**	**$1,217,541**	**$1,413,612**	**$4,232,296**
TLC Core Services	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total Expenditure	**$325,626**	**$529,643**	**$745,874**	**$1,217,541**	**$1,413,612**	**$4,232,296**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	**-$75,970**	**$31,790**	**$6,902**	**-$1,806**	**$61,872**	**$22,788**

7.d Stress Test

The Financial Projections and Economic Model withstand material stress testing.

The combined effect of a significant number of sizeable reductions (broadly being 25% reductions in course, consultancy and visitation numbers as well as a halving of produce sales) results in a consolidated net deficit of $300k (compared with essentially a break-even result otherwise). This assumes that Farm employee costs are also halved to keep reduced produce sales in check.

Cash remains balanced (albeit a reduction of $500k on the unstressed end cash position).

It is important to reiterate at this point that The Living Classroom's purpose of regenerative farming and regenerating rural communities delivers significant community, financial and environmental outcomes. The enterprise and trading aspects of this business model still significantly contribute to the delivery of what is essentially a public good.

Consolidated (Stressed)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals						
Income	$224,303	$492,048	$641,722	$1,044,726	$1,240,948	$3,643,746
Expenditure	$315,972	$498,216	$694,682	$1,137,009	$1,299,718	$3,945,597
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	-$91,669	-$6,168	-$52,960	-$92,284	-$58,771	-$301,851
Activities	15	40	61	87	121	323
Participants	3,313	7,174	10,613	14,794	18,298	54,192
Person Days/Nights	3,760	12,872	19,390	36,666	45,508	118,196
Cash Position						
Opening Cash Position	$100,000	$8,331	$2,163	-$797	$55,320	$100,000
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	-$91,669	-$6,168	-$52,960	-$92,284	-$58,771	-$301,851
Add: Depreciation	$0	$0	$50,000	$148,400	$148,400	$346,800
Add: Capital Income	$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000	$0	$0	$2,415,000
Less: Capital Expenditure	-$185,000	-$1,010,000	-$1,220,000	$0	$0	-$2,415,000
Closing Cash Position	$8,331	$2,163	-$797	$55,320	$144,949	$144,949

The Economic Model (Illustration 41: Economic Model (Stressed)) still shows five-year consolidated income as exceeding $3.5m, as well as $1.3m in sub-contractor opportunities, involvement of 54,000 participants and nearly 120,000 bed nights and associated local spending of more than $16m.

Economic Model (Stressed)

		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Total Economic Activity							
The Living Classroom		$409,303	$1,502,048	$1,861,722	$1,044,726	$1,240,948	$6,058,746
Average Daily Spend		$496,308	$1,724,592	$2,636,813	$5,060,999	$6,375,684	$16,294,395
Total		$905,611	$3,226,640	$4,498,535	$6,105,724	$7,616,631	$22,353,142
	Note						
The Living Classroom							
Capital & Income		$409,303	$1,502,048	$1,861,722	$1,044,726	$1,240,948	$6,058,746
Capital		$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000	$0	$0	$2,415,000
Income		$224,303	$492,048	$641,722	$1,044,726	$1,240,948	$3,643,746
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		-$91,669	-$6,168	-$52,960	-$92,284	-$58,771	-$301,851
Activities		15	39.5	60.5	87	120.5	322.5
Participants		3,313	7,174	10,613	14,794	18,298	54,192
Person Days/Nights		3,760	12,872	19,390	36,666	45,508	118,196
Sub-Contractor Opportunity		$63,931	$150,033	$235,865	$376,138	$481,323	$1,307,290
Average Daily Spend	1	$496,308	$1,724,592	$2,636,813	$5,060,999	$6,375,684	$16,294,395

Assumptions

(1) Average daily spend of $132 for visitors/travellers based upon Destination NSW figures NENW Region for year ended 31 March 2012
Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012
All figures are inclusive of GST

Assumptions of the Stressed Financial Projection, together with the total impact on each initiative for the five-year period of the model are as follows:

- Regenerative Farm
  - Produce sales halved and mitigated halving employee costs
  - Reduced course participant numbers by 25%
  - Combined effect is a net deficit of around $30-35k for five-year period
- Interpretive Centre
  - It is important to note that this is a significant cost area due to including repairs and maintenance costs for the majority of built infrastructure
  - Bed nights reduced by 25%
  - Net deficit is increased by $40-45k for five-year period
- Learning & Visitor Program
  - This is the major profit centre
  - Visitation numbers reduced by 25%
  - Net surplus is reduced by $60k ($475k to $413k) for five-year period

- Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture
  - Course participant numbers reduced by 25%
  - Net surplus reduces by $23k to $107k for five-year period
- Commercial
  - Number of participating farms reduced by 25%
  - Net surplus reduces by $14k for five-year period
- Income from grants (average $70k per annum) and sponsorship (average $20k per annum) remain unchanged

7.e Initiatives

7.e.i Creating the Regenerative Farm

Regenerative Farm		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals							
Income		$57,500	$140,000	$205,075	$335,151	$395,228	$1,132,955
Expenditure		$49,250	$130,535	$228,563	$331,830	$375,868	$1,116,045
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		$8,250	$9,465	-$23,488	$3,321	$19,361	$16,909
Activities		3	4	6	9	12	34
Participants		90	120	240	360	480	1,290
Person Days/Nights		270	360	720	1,080	1,440	3,870
	Note						
Income							
Accommodation							$0
Commissions							$0
Conference Fees	1	$7,500					$7,500
Course Fees	2	$20,000	$60,000	$120,000	$180,000	$240,000	$620,000
Entry Fees							$0
Farm Skills Visa Program							$0
Grants							$0
Hire Income							$0
Membership							$0
Pro-Bono/In-Kind	3	$20,000	$5,000	$5,075	$5,151	$5,228	$40,455
Produce Sales	4		$60,000	$60,000	$125,000	$125,000	$370,000
Professional Services							$0
Rural Adventure							$0
Sponsorship		$10,000	$15,000	$20,000	$25,000	$25,000	$95,000
Tour Fees							$0
Total Income		**$57,500**	**$140,000**	**$205,075**	**$335,151**	**$395,228**	**$1,132,955**
Expenditure							
Depreciation	5			$50,000	$50,000	$50,000	$150,000
Employee Costs	6		$58,385	$59,260	$120,299	$122,103	$360,047
General Expenses							$0
Energy & Fuel		$5,000	$5,075	$5,151	$5,228	$5,307	$25,761
Exhibits & Displays	7			$5,000	$5,075	$5,151	$15,226
Insurance							$0
Marketing							$0
Office Supplies							$0
Overheads							$0
Repairs & Maintenance							$0
Small Equipment		$5,000	$5,075	$5,151	$5,228	$5,307	$25,761
Sub-Contracted Services	1,2,3	$31,000	$44,000	$68,000	$92,000	$116,000	$351,000
Volunteer Costs							$0
Sub-Total		**$41,000**	**$112,535**	**$192,563**	**$277,830**	**$303,868**	**$927,795**
TLC Core Services	1,2	$8,250	$18,000	$36,000	$54,000	$72,000	$188,250
Total Expenditure		**$49,250**	**$130,535**	**$228,563**	**$331,830**	**$375,868**	**$1,116,045**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		**$8,250**	**$9,465**	**-$23,488**	**$3,321**	**$19,361**	**$16,909**
Launch, Forum & Master-Class	**1**						
Number of Courses		1					
Average Participants		50					
Number of Course Days		3					
Course Fee		$150					
Course Income		$7,500					
TLC Core Services		30%					
Sub-Contracted Services		40%					
Applied Courses	**2**						
Number of Courses		2	4	6	9	12	33
Average Participants		20	30	40	40	40	38
Number of Course Days		3	3	3	3	3	
Course Fee		$500	$500	$500	$500	$500	$2,500
Course Income		$20,000	$60,000	$120,000	$180,000	$240,000	$620,000
TLC Core Services		30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	
Sub-Contracted Services		40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	

Other Assumptions

(3) Site Baselining & Monitoring, Border-Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority

(4) Produce Sales

(5) Depreciation is calculated based on 50 year life for all capital except equipment which assumes a 4 year life

(6) Farm Labourers, apprentices and trainees, includes on-costs

(7) Maintenance and renewal of exhibits based on 10% of initial capital cost per annum

Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012

Fees are benchmarked with previous forums & courses

All figures are exclusive of GST

7.e.ii Building the Interpretive Centre

Building the Interpretive Centre involves a similar applied learning strategy to that used for the Regenerative Farm ~ involving farmers, students and partners in the design process. With the Farm, participants can also be involved with the construction process, though for the Interpretive Centre this would require additional training funding (which is not modelled as it will be cost-neutral).

Once constructed the Centre is available for hire.

Accommodation use of the Bunkhouse is based on course participant numbers. Non-course participation bookings are also possible, though has not been included in financial projections.

Interpretive Centre			2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals								
	Income		$102,430	$127,279	$69,722	$96,278	$102,623	$498,332
	Expenditure		$87,215	$96,127	$101,075	$233,508	$237,750	$755,676
	Net Surplus/(Deficit)		$15,215	$31,152	-$31,354	-$137,230	-$135,127	-$257,344
	Activities		1	6	8	10	12	37
	Participants		964	2,250	2,523	3,444	3,616	12,799
	Person Days/Nights		1,014	2,250	2,523	3,444	3,616	12,849
		Note						
Income								
	Accommodation	1	$27,430	$58,504	$65,822	$91,278	$96,523	$339,557
	Commissions			$1,000	$1,500	$2,000	$2,500	$7,000
	Conference Fees	2	$10,000					$10,000
	Course Fees							$0
	Entry Fees							$0
	Farm Skills Visa Program							$0
	Grants							$0
	Hire Income	3		$1,800	$2,400	$3,000	$3,600	$10,800
	Membership							$0
	Pro-Bono/In-Kind	4	$65,000	$65,975				$130,975
	Produce Sales							$0
	Professional Services							$0
	Rural Adventure							$0
	Sponsorship							$0
	Tour Fees							$0
	Total Income		**$102,430**	**$127,279**	**$69,722**	**$96,278**	**$102,623**	**$498,332**
Expenditure								
	Depreciation	5				$98,400	$98,400	$196,800
	Employee Costs							$0
	General Expenses							$0
	Energy & Fuel							$0
	Exhibits & Displays	6				$20,000	$20,300	$40,300
	Insurance							$0
	Marketing							$0
	Office Supplies							$0
	Overheads							$0
	Repairs & Maintenance	4	$65,000	$65,975	$66,965	$67,969	$68,989	$334,897
	Small Equipment							$0
	Sub-Contracted Services	1,2,3	$16,472	$24,122	$27,289	$37,711	$40,049	$145,643
	Volunteer Costs							$0
	Sub-Total		**$81,472**	**$90,097**	**$94,253**	**$224,080**	**$227,738**	**$717,640**
	TLC Core Services	1,2,3	$5,743	$6,030	$6,822	$9,428	$10,012	$38,036
	Total Expenditure		**$87,215**	**$96,127**	**$101,075**	**$233,508**	**$237,750**	**$755,676**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)			**$15,215**	**$31,152**	**-$31,354**	**-$137,230**	**-$135,127**	**-$257,344**
Bunk House		**1**						
	Total Participants		4,572	9,751	14,155	19,630	24,131	72,238
	Portion of Participants		20%	20%	15%	15%	13%	
	Bed Nights		914	1,950	2,123	2,944	3,016	10,949
	Occupancy Rate		13.92%	29.68%	32.32%	44.82%	45.91%	166.64%
	Bed Rate		$30	$30	$31	$31	$32	
	Hire Income		$27,430	$58,504	$65,822	$91,278	$96,523	$339,557
	TLC Core Services		10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	
	Sub-Contracted Services		40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	
Launch & Forum		**2**						
	Number of Courses		1					
	Average Participants		50					
	Number of Course Days		2					
	Course Fee		$200					
	Course Income		$10,000					
	TLC Core Services		30%					
	Sub-Contracted Services		55%					
Centre Hire		**3**						
	Number			6	8	10	12	36
	Number of Participants			300	400	500	600	1,800
	Average Hire Fee			$300	$300	$300	$300	
	Hire Income			$1,800	$2,400	$3,000	$3,600	$10,800
	TLC Core Services			10%	10%	10%	10%	
	Sub-Contracted Services			40%	40%	40%	40%	

Other Assumptions

(4) Gwydir Shire Council provide in-kind support for repairs and maintenance 2013 and 2014

(4) Repairs & Maintenance calculated as 1/20th of Centre construction cost (excluding equipment & exhibits)

(5) Depreciation is calculated based on 50 year life for all capital except equipment which assumes a 4 year life

(6) Maintenance and renewal of exhibits based on 10% of initial capital cost per annum

Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012

Room rental and hire charges comparable with local hotels/motels and Roxy

All figures are exclusive of GST

7.e.iii Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture

The Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture is staged to commence slowly in 2013 with its official launch in 2014 with an inaugural bi-annual conference. Courses grow from three in 2013 to thirty by 2017 with 1,600 participants expected to be involved by then.

ACRA		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals							
Income		$15,000	$62,500	$95,000	$261,000	$322,000	$755,500
Expenditure		$12,750	$48,500	$80,500	$210,800	$272,600	$625,150
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		$2,250	$14,000	$14,500	$50,200	$49,400	$130,350
Activities		3	7	12	19	30	71
Participants		60	270	460	1,120	1,600	3,510
Person Days/Nights		120	440	720	1,840	2,400	5,520
	Note						
Income							
Accommodation							$0
Commissions							$0
Conference Fees	1		$30,000		$70,000		$100,000
Course Fees	2	$15,000	$30,000	$90,000	$180,000	$300,000	$615,000
Entry Fees							$0
Farm Skills Visa Program							$0
Grants							$0
Hire Income							$0
Membership	3		$2,500	$5,000	$11,000	$22,000	$40,500
Pro-Bono/In-Kind							$0
Produce Sales							$0
Professional Services							$0
Rural Adventure							$0
Sponsorship							$0
Tour Fees							$0
Total Income		**$15,000**	**$62,500**	**$95,000**	**$261,000**	**$322,000**	**$755,500**
Expenditure							
Depreciation							$0
Employee Costs							$0
General Expenses							$0
Energy & Fuel							$0
Exhibits & Displays							$0
Insurance							$0
Marketing							$0
Office Supplies							$0
Overheads							$0
Repairs & Maintenance							$0
Small Equipment							$0
Sub-Contracted Services	1,2,3	$8,250	$30,000	$52,500	$133,600	$178,200	$402,550
Volunteer Costs							$0
Sub-Total		**$8,250**	**$30,000**	**$52,500**	**$133,600**	**$178,200**	**$402,550**
TLC Core Services	1,2,3	$4,500	$18,500	$28,000	$77,200	$94,400	$222,600
Total Expenditure		**$12,750**	**$48,500**	**$80,500**	**$210,800**	**$272,600**	**$625,150**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		**$2,250**	**$14,000**	**$14,500**	**$50,200**	**$49,400**	**$130,350**
Bi Annual Conference	**1**						
Number of Conferences			1		1		2
Average Participants			100		200		300
Number of Course Days			2		2		
Conference Fee			$300		$350		
Conference Income			$30,000		$70,000		$100,000
TLC Core Services			30%		30%		
Sub-Contracted Services			40%		40%		
Extension, Field Days, Seminars, etc	**2**						
Number of Courses		3	6	12	18	30	69
Average Participants		20	20	30	40	40	36
Number of Course Days		2	2	2	2	2	
Course Fee		$250	$250	$250	$250	$250	
Course Income		$15,000	$30,000	$90,000	$180,000	$300,000	$615,000
TLC Core Services		30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	
Sub-Contracted Services		55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	
Membership	**3**						
Annual Fee			$50	$50	$55	$55	
Members			50	100	200	400	
Membership Income			$2,500	$5,000	$11,000	$22,000	$40,500
TLC Core Services			20%	20%	20%	20%	
Sub-Contracted Services			60%	60%	60%	60%	

Other Assumptions

Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012
Fees are benchmarked with previous forums & courses
All figures are exclusive of GST

7.e.iv Learning & Visitor Program

The Learning & Visitor Program includes general visitors to The Living Classroom as well as students and community members. General visitation is based on attracting a conservative percentage (detailed below) of current travellers to the region with an average gate fee of $5 per person.

Learning & Visitor Program		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals							
Income		$54,727	$131,653	$237,980	$323,306	$405,633	$1,153,298
Expenditure		$28,800	$74,100	$141,300	$192,600	$241,800	$678,600
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		$25,927	$57,553	$96,680	$130,706	$163,833	$474,698
Activities		8	15	24	33	42	122
Participants		3,457	7,071	10,876	14,621	18,307	54,332
Person Days/Nights		3,649	14,081	21,572	41,944	52,460	133,705
	Note						
Income							
Accommodation							$0
Commissions							$0
Conference Fees							$0
Course Fees	1		$3,000	$9,000	$18,000	$24,000	$54,000
Entry Fees	2	$16,327	$32,653	$48,980	$65,306	$81,633	$244,898
Farm Skills Visa Program							$0
Grants							$0
Hire Income							$0
Membership							$0
Pro-Bono/In-Kind							$0
Produce Sales							$0
Professional Services							$0
Rural Adventure	3	$38,400	$96,000	$180,000	$240,000	$300,000	$854,400
Sponsorship							$0
Tour Fees							$0
Total Income		**$54,727**	**$131,653**	**$237,980**	**$323,306**	**$405,633**	**$1,153,298**
Expenditure							
Depreciation							$0
Employee Costs							$0
General Expenses							$0
Energy & Fuel							$0
Exhibits & Displays							$0
Insurance							$0
Marketing							$0
Office Supplies							$0
Overheads							$0
Repairs & Maintenance							$0
Small Equipment							$0
Sub-Contracted Services	1,3	$17,280	$44,400	$84,600	$115,200	$144,600	$406,080
Volunteer Costs							$0
Sub-Total		**$17,280**	**$44,400**	**$84,600**	**$115,200**	**$144,600**	**$406,080**
TLC Core Services	1,3	$11,520	$29,700	$56,700	$77,400	$97,200	$272,520
Total Expenditure		**$28,800**	**$74,100**	**$141,300**	**$192,600**	**$241,800**	**$678,600**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		**$25,927**	**$57,553**	**$96,680**	**$130,706**	**$163,833**	**$474,698**
Courses, Workshops, Festivals, Events	**1**						
Number of Programs			3	6	9	12	30
Average Participants			20	30	40	40	130
Number of Course Days			1	1	1	1	
Program Fee			$50	$50	$50	$50	
Program Income			$3,000	$9,000	$18,000	$24,000	$54,000
TLC Core Services			30%	30%	30%	30%	
Sub-Contracted Services			40%	40%	40%	40%	
General Visitors	**2**						
Regional Visitor Numbers	**4**	3,265,300					
Percentage of Visitation		0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	
Number of Visitors		3,265	6,531	9,796	13,061	16,327	48,980
Days in Town/District		1	2	2	3	3	
Entry Fee		$5	$5	$5	$5	$5	
Total Entry Fee Income		$16,327	$32,653	$48,980	$65,306	$81,633	$244,898
Rural Adventure School Program	**3**						
Number of Programs		8	12	18	24	30	92
Average Participants		24	40	50	50	50	214
Number of Course Days		2	2	2	2	2	10
Program Fee		$200	$200	$200	$200	$200	$1,000
Program Income		$38,400	$96,000	$180,000	$240,000	$300,000	$854,400
TLC Core Services		30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	
Sub-Contracted Services		45%	45%	45%	45%	45%	

Other Assumptions

(4) Visitation based on Tourism NSW statistics for New England North West (2012) and Bingara Visitor Information Centre
Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012
Fees are benchmarked with previous school programs & community courses
All figures are exclusive of GST

7.e.v Commercial Deployment

Commercial Deployment includes advisory services (income and sub-contracted professional services) for the adoption of regenerative agricultural practices on commercial farms.

Commercial Deployment		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals							
Income		$0	$50,000	$70,000	$100,000	$150,000	$370,000
Expenditure		$0	$42,500	$59,500	$95,000	$147,500	$344,500
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		$0	$7,500	$10,500	$5,000	$2,500	$25,500
Activities			10	14	21	32	77
Participants			40	56	84	128	308
Person Days/Nights			40	56	84	128	308
	Note						
Income							
Accommodation							$0
Commissions							$0
Conference Fees							$0
Course Fees							$0
Entry Fees							$0
Farm Skills Visa Program							$0
Grants							$0
Hire Income							$0
Membership							$0
Pro-Bono/In-Kind							$0
Produce Sales							$0
Professional Services	1		$50,000	$70,000	$100,000	$150,000	$370,000
Rural Adventure							$0
Sponsorship							$0
Tour Fees							$0
Total Income		**$0**	**$50,000**	**$70,000**	**$100,000**	**$150,000**	**$370,000**
Expenditure							
Depreciation							$0
Employee Costs							$0
General Expenses							$0
Energy & Fuel							$0
Exhibits & Displays	2				$10,000	$20,000	$30,000
Insurance							$0
Marketing							$0
Office Supplies							$0
Overheads							$0
Repairs & Maintenance							$0
Small Equipment							$0
Sub-Contracted Services			$37,500	$52,500	$75,000	$112,500	$277,500
Volunteer Costs							$0
Sub-Total		**$0**	**$37,500**	**$52,500**	**$85,000**	**$132,500**	**$307,500**
TLC Core Services			$5,000	$7,000	$10,000	$15,000	$37,000
Total Expenditure		**$0**	**$42,500**	**$59,500**	**$95,000**	**$147,500**	**$344,500**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		**$0**	**$7,500**	**$10,500**	**$5,000**	**$2,500**	**$25,500**
Professional Services	**1**						
Number of Farms			10	14	20	30	74
Average Participants			4	4	4	4	16
Fee			$5,000	$5,000	$5,000	$5,000	
Services Income			$50,000	$70,000	$100,000	$150,000	$370,000
TLC Core Services			10%	10%	10%	10%	
Sub-Contracted Services			75%	75%	75%	75%	

Other Assumptions

(2) Cooperator Farm Trials: 2016 x 1; 2017 x 2

Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012

Fees are benchmarked with previous forums & courses

All figures are exclusive of GST

7.f Core Operations & Overheads

Recouped costs includes a minimum of 10% charged to all activities to contribute towards meeting the core operations and overheads for The Living Classroom. For most activities the recouped costs are around 30%, which is in line with the active involvement of the Project Director in developing and coordinating activities. Additional costs will be saved in the event that the Project Director has the capacity to more fully deliver activities (though this is not modelled).

Core & Overheads		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Totals
Summary & Totals							
Income		$20,000	$50,000	$75,000	$100,000	$100,000	$345,000
Expenditure		$147,611	$137,881	$134,936	$153,803	$138,094	$712,324
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		-$127,611	-$87,881	-$59,936	-$53,803	-$38,094	-$367,324
Activities							0
Participants							0
Person Days/Nights							0
	Note						
Income							
Accommodation							$0
Commissions							$0
Conference Fees							$0
Course Fees							$0
Entry Fees							$0
Farm Skills Visa Program							$0
Grants		$20,000	$50,000	$75,000	$100,000	$100,000	$345,000
Hire Income							$0
Membership							$0
Pro-Bono/In-Kind							$0
Produce Sales							$0
Professional Services							$0
Rural Adventure							$0
Sponsorship							$0
Tour Fees							$0
Total Income		**$20,000**	**$50,000**	**$75,000**	**$100,000**	**$100,000**	**$345,000**
Expenditure							
Depreciation							$0
Employee Costs	1	$70,062	$91,547	$113,661	$168,249	$192,141	$635,660
General Expenses	2	$10,000	$10,150	$10,302	$10,457	$10,614	$51,523
Energy & Fuel		$5,000	$5,075	$5,151	$5,228	$5,307	$25,761
Exhibits & Displays							$0
Insurance	3						$0
Marketing	4	$30,000	$20,000	$25,000	$30,000	$30,450	$135,450
Office Supplies		$10,000	$10,150	$10,302	$10,457	$10,614	$51,523
Overheads	5	$32,563	$52,964	$74,587	$121,754	$141,361	$423,230
Repairs & Maintenance							$0
Small Equipment		$15,000	$15,225	$15,453	$15,685	$15,920	$77,284
Sub-Contracted Services							$0
Volunteer Costs		$5,000	$10,000	$15,000	$20,000	$20,300	$70,300
Sub-Total		**$177,624**	**$215,111**	**$269,458**	**$381,830**	**$426,707**	**$1,470,730**
TLC Core Services	6	-$30,013	-$77,230	-$134,522	-$228,028	-$288,612	-$758,406
Total Expenditure		**$147,611**	**$137,881**	**$134,936**	**$153,803**	**$138,094**	**$712,324**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		**-$127,611**	**-$87,881**	**-$59,936**	**-$53,803**	**-$38,094**	**-$367,324**

Assumptions

(1) Centre Director salary based on Pay Scale and includes on-costs. Position re-graded once Centre is fully operational (2016)
(1) Support Staff (2014 0.5FTE, 2015 1FTE, 2016 1.5FTE, 2017 2FTE) salaries include on-costs.
(2) General Expenses includes Board support costs
(3) The Living Classroom is insured within Gwydir Shire Council policies, with the cost allowed for within Overheads (5)
(4) Marketing includes website establishment and maintenance
(5) Overheads based on 10% of total expenditure
(6) Recouped costs reflects a portion of Gross Income on all Initiatives to cover Core support and costs
Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012
All figures are inclusive of GST

7.g Capital Investment

Capital expenditure is staged to occur once capital grant income is secured.

Capital Assets		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Totals							
Income		$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000			$2,415,000
Capital		$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000			$2,415,000
	Note						
Capital Grants		$185,000	$1,010,000	$1,220,000			$2,415,000
Creating the Regenerative Farm							
Project Management		$25,000	$25,000				$50,000
Food Plants		$35,000	$35,000				$70,000
Livestock		$20,000	$20,000				$40,000
Aquaculture		$10,000	$10,000				$20,000
Flora		$20,000	$20,000				$40,000
Fencing		$35,000	$35,000				$70,000
Water System		$15,000	$15,000				$30,000
Exhibits, Displays & Signs		$25,000	$25,000				$50,000
Sub-Total		**$185,000**	**$185,000**				**$370,000**
Building the Interpretive Centre							
Project Management			$75,000	$75,000			$150,000
Landscaping			$100,000	$100,000			$200,000
Construction			$650,000	$650,000			$1,300,000
Front Fencing & Entry Way				$45,000			$45,000
Gravel Roads & Services				$100,000			$100,000
Equipment				$50,000			$50,000
Exhibits, Displays & Signs				$200,000			$200,000
Sub-Total			**$825,000**	**$1,220,000**			**$2,045,000**

Assumptions

Annual inflation of 1.5%, based upon the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for year ended June 2012
Capital Grants assume 50% co-funding by Gwydir Shire Council
Capital expenditure occurs during the same time period that capital grants are received
Design and installation of exhibits cost based on industry benchmark of $2,000/m2
All figures are inclusive of GST

7.h Asset Maintenance & Replacement

Small assets are depreciated and budgeted for replacement every four years. This particularly includes electronic equipment such as computers and data projectors.

Capital infrastructure such as buildings, fencing and other built infrastructure are depreciated over 25 years with repairs and maintenance budgeted at 2.5% per annum.

Interpretive displays need to be regularly updated and refreshed to ensure they are current and changing to attract students, visitors and so on. An annual budget of 10% of their capital value is provided for this purpose.

8 Appendices

8.a Disclaimer

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Readers are advised to make their own independent investigations (and seek professional legal, financial, technical and other advice) before implementing any conclusion made from the information presented in this report.

8.b Business Planning Methodology

Development of this Business Plan has involved the following processes:

- Research, including:
  - Assessment of the viability and existing evidence for the various Initiatives
  - Identification of similar models and operations to identify key success factors and areas of synergy for collaboration
  - Collation of market data on regenerative agriculture, food security, education and agri-tourism
  - Literature search on regenerative agriculture
  - Workshoping with partners and stakeholders to identify a shared vision and areas of common interest
- Findings from the above research have then been integrated where they are aligned with The Living Classroom's purpose and capacity

This process was overseen by The Living Classroom and the Starfish Board of Directors.

8.c Organisation Details

Name	Gwydir Shire Council
Trading Names	The Living Classroom
	Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture
Legal Form	Local Government Authority (NSW)
ABN	11 636 419 850
GST Status	Registered
Location	33 Maitland Street, BINGARA NSW 2404
Postal Address	Locked Bag 5, BINGARA NSW 2404
Date Established	Gwydir Shire Council was established on the 17 March 2004 as a result of the merger of Bingara and Yallaroi Shire Councils and 40% of Barraba Shire Council. The North West Weeds County Council administered by the former Yallaroi Shire Council also formed part of the amalgamation
Locations Registered	NSW, Australia
Websites	http://www.gwydirshire.com/
	http://thelivingclassroom.com.au & http://thelivingclassroom.net.au
	http://australiancentreforregenerativeagriculture.com.au & http://australiancentreforregenerativeagriculture.net.au
Contacts	Max Eastcott | General Manager
	meastcott@gwydir.nsw.gov.au | 02 6724 2021
	Garry McDouall | Chair, Board of Directors
	mcdouallg@bigpond.com | 0428 834 281

8.d Insurance

The Living Classroom is covered under Council's current insurance for Workers Compensation, Public Liability, Professional Indemnity, Product Liability and Business Assets.

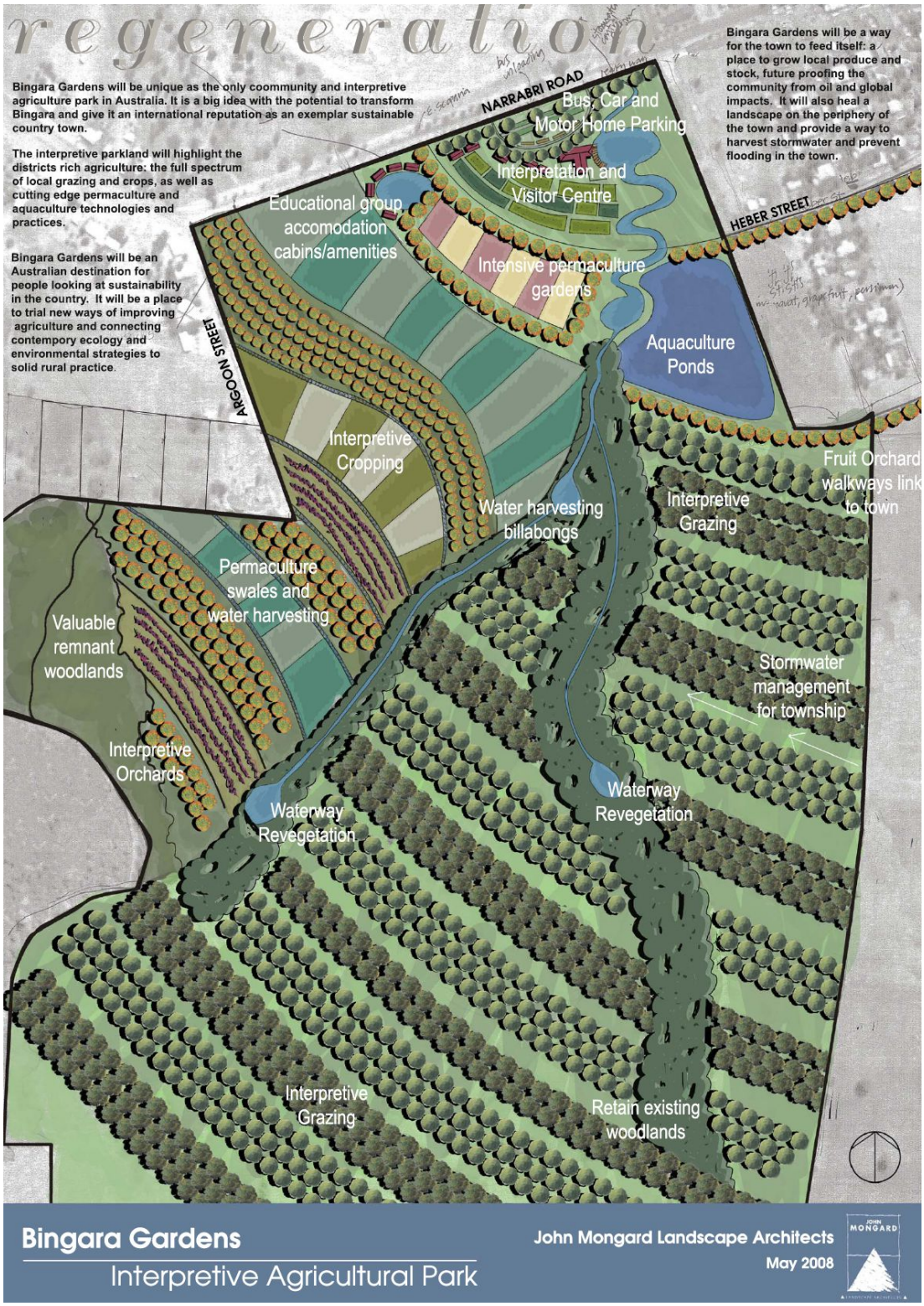
8.e Property & Premises

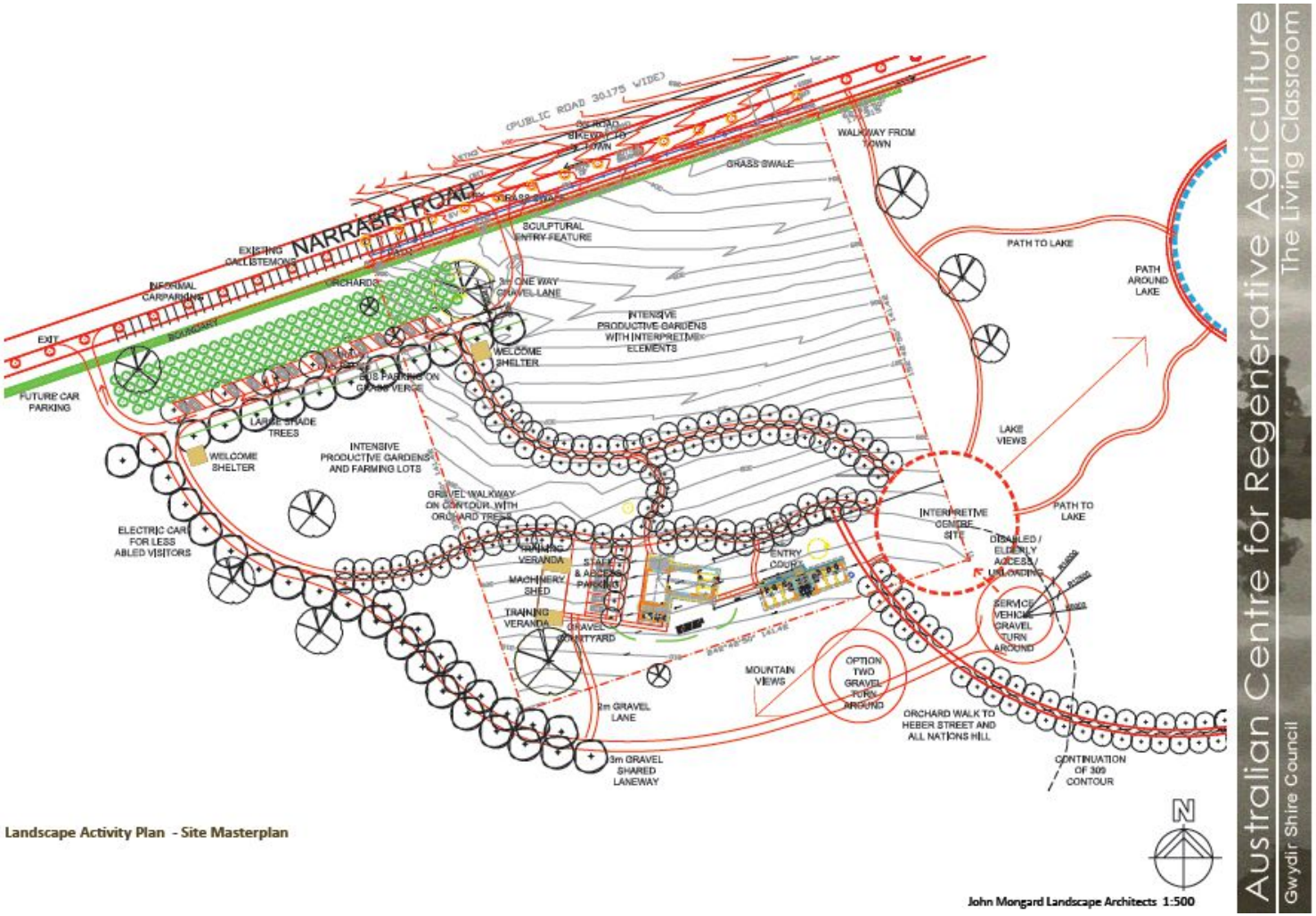
Lot 327 DP 723834

Cunningham Street, Bingara NSW Australia

Coordinates	Longitude 153.330000	Latitude 029.520000

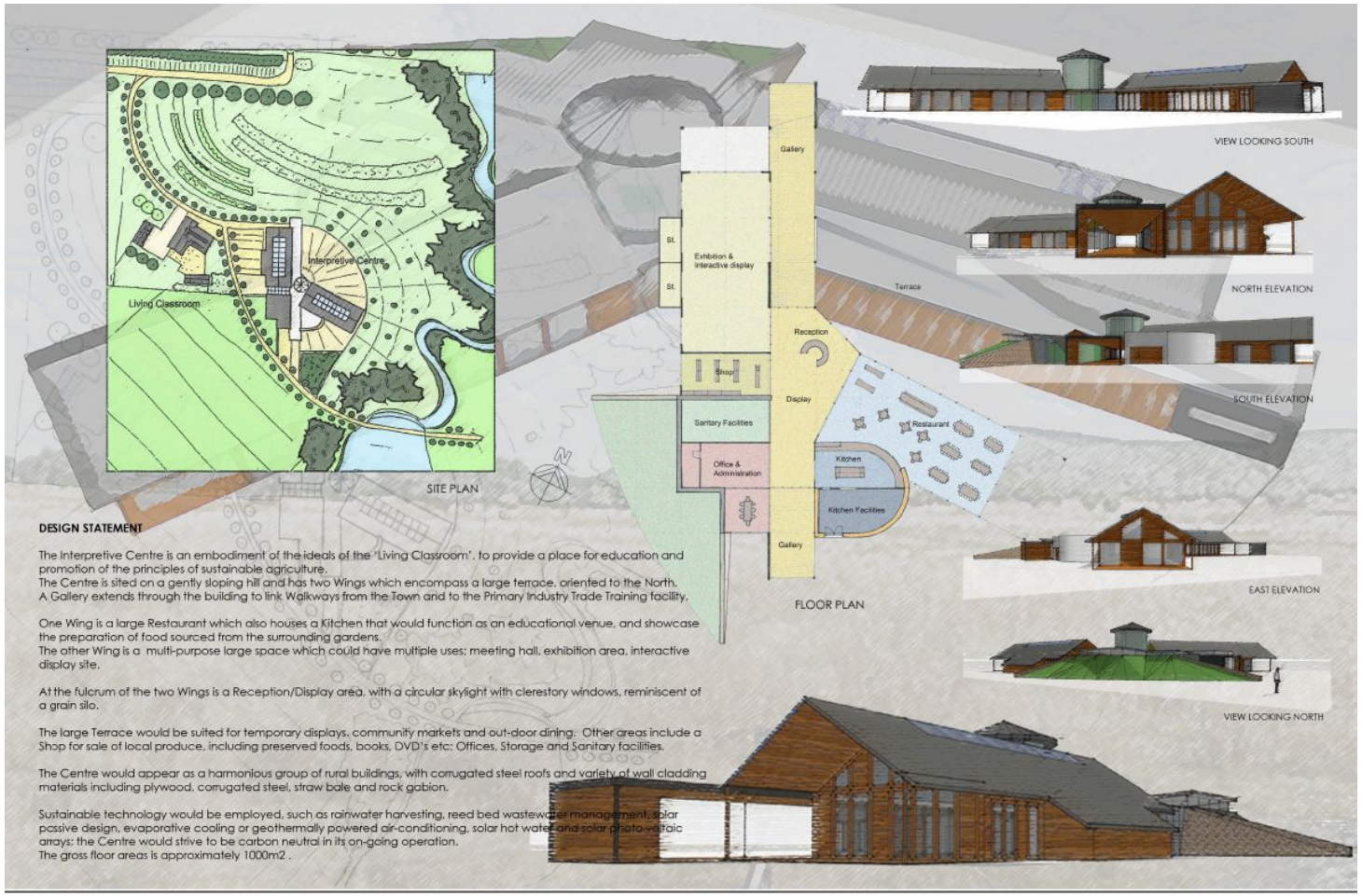
8.f Site Plans

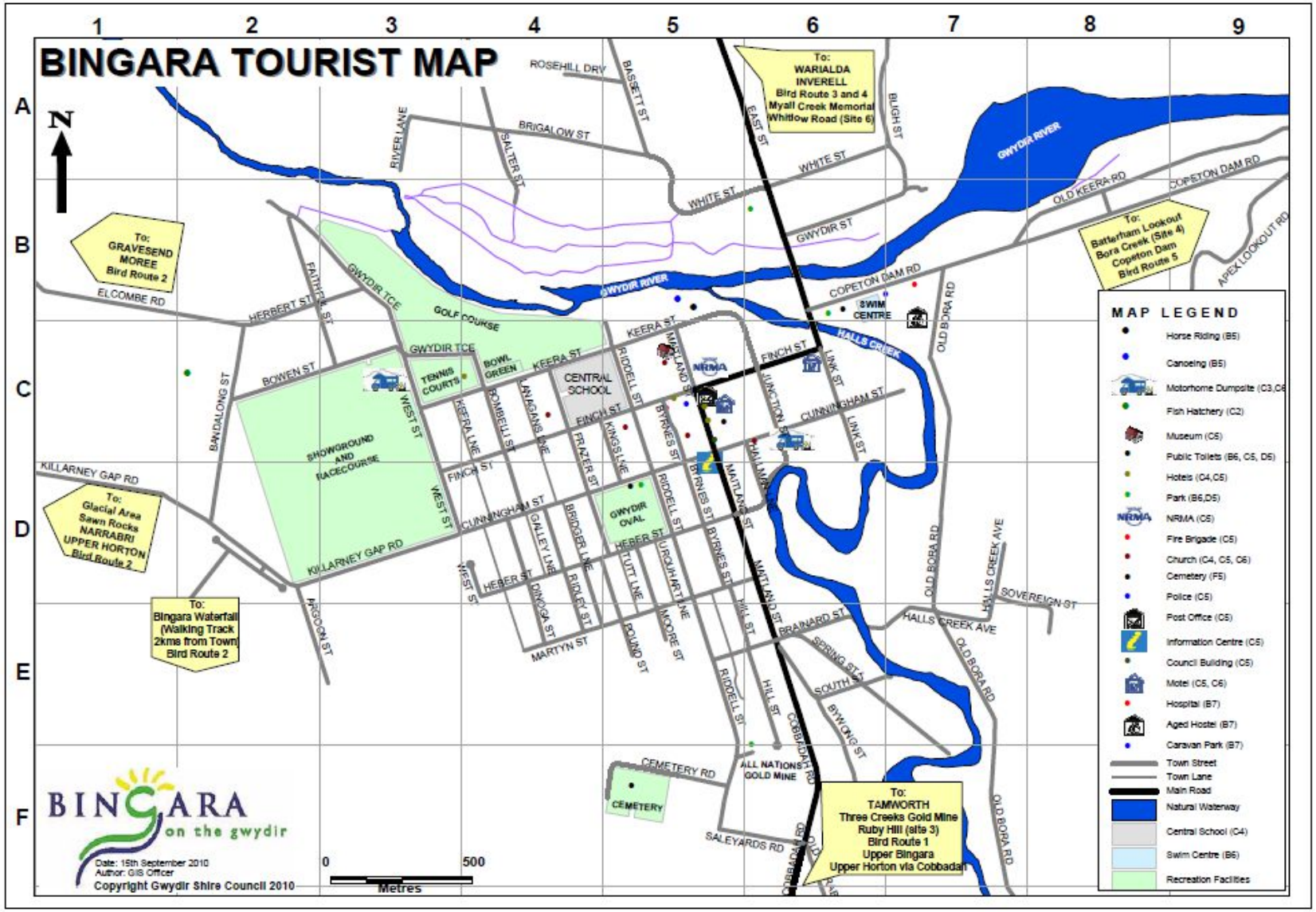



NARRABRI ROAD
(PUBLIC ROAD 30.175 WIDE)
EXISTING CALLISTEMONS
INFORMAL CARPARKING
BOUNDARY
EXIT
ORCHARDS
FUTURE CAR PARKING
LARGE SHADE TREES
WELCOME SHELTER
INTENSIVE PRODUCTIVE GARDENS AND FARMING LOTS
ELECTRIC CAR FOR LESS ABLED VISITORS
GRAVEL WALKWAY ON CONTOUR WITH ORCHARD TREES
TRAINING VERANDA
MACHINERY SHED
TRAINING VERANDA
GRAVEL COURTYARD
STAFF & ACCESS PARKING
ENTRY COURT
2m GRAVEL LANE
3m GRAVEL SHARED LANEWAY
MOUNTAIN VIEWS
OPTION TWO GRAVEL TURN AROUND
ORCHARD WALK TO HEBER STREET AND ALL NATIONS HILL
CONTINUATION OF 305 CONTOUR
SERVICE VEHICLE GRAVEL TURN AROUND
DISABLED / ELDERLY ACCESS / UNLOADING
INTERPRETIVE CENTRE SITE
PATH TO LAKE
LAKE VIEWS
PATH AROUND LAKE
PATH TO LAKE
WALKWAY FROM TOWN
GRASS SWALE
SCULPTURAL ENTRY FEATURE
2m ONE WAY GRAVEL LANE
INTENSIVE PRODUCTIVE GARDENS WITH INTERPRETIVE ELEMENTS
WELCOME SHELTER
BUS PARKING ON GRASS VERGE
N
Landscape Activity Plan - Site Masterplan
John Mongard Landscape Architects 1:500
Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture
The Living Classroom
Gwydir Shire Council

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
8
The Living Classroom
Aerial View of Precinct
1. Lake precinct
2. Chinese gardens
3. Interpretive centre
4. Trade training centre
5. Interpretive agricultural gardens
6. Indigenous gardens
7. Intensive farm gardens
8. Carbon offset forest and nursery
John Mongard Landscape Architects
February 2012
Australian Centre for Regenerative Agriculture
The Living Classroom
Gwydir Shire Council

The Living Classroom will regenerate a landscape on the periphery of the town; the project could utilise all stormwater and grey water and compostable wastes created in town. Overland water from All Nations Hill will be contoured along new waterways to harvest the water in the town common site. It will maximise solar efficiencies, reduce greenhouse gas, and sequestrate carbon. It will create long term wealth generating resources and increase educational and community gains throughout its development.


Interpretive Centre
Living Classroom
SITE PLAN
Gallery
St.
St.
Exhibition & Interactive display
Terrace
Reception
Shop
Display
Sanitary Facilities
Office & Administration
Restaurant
Kitchen
Kitchen Facilities
Gallery
FLOOR PLAN
VIEW LOOKING SOUTH
NORTH ELEVATION
SOUTH ELEVATION
EAST ELEVATION
VIEW LOOKING NORTH
DESIGN STATEMENT
The Interpretive Centre is an embodiment of the ideals of the 'Living Classroom', to provide a place for education and promotion of the principles of sustainable agriculture.
The Centre is sited on a gently sloping hill and has two Wings which encompass a large terrace, oriented to the North.
A Gallery extends through the building to link Walkways from the Town and to the Primary Industry Trade Training facility.
One Wing is a large Restaurant which also houses a Kitchen that would function as an educational venue, and showcase the preparation of food sourced from the surrounding gardens.
The other Wing is a multi-purpose large space which could have multiple uses; meeting hall, exhibition area, interactive display site.
At the fulcrum of the two Wings is a Reception/Display area, with a circular skylight with clerestory windows, reminiscent of a grain silo.
The large Terrace would be suited for temporary displays, community markets and out-door dining. Other areas include a Shop for sale of local produce, including preserved foods, books, DVD's etc; Offices, Storage and Sanitary facilities.
The Centre would appear as a harmonious group of rural buildings, with corrugated steel roofs and variety of wall cladding materials including plywood, corrugated steel, straw bale and rock gabion.
Sustainable technology would be employed, such as rainwater harvesting, reed bed wastewater management, solar passive design, evaporative cooling or geothermally powered air-conditioning, solar hot water and solar photo-voltaic arrays; the Centre would strive to be carbon neutral in its on-going operation.
The gross floor areas is approximately 1000m2 .
the living classroom interpretive centre - bingara
Magoffin & Deakin Pty Ltd
ARCHITECTS


BINGARA TOURIST MAP
N
To: GRAVESEND MOREE Bird Route 2
To: WARIALDA INVERELL Bird Route 3 and 4 Myall Creek Memorial Whitlow Road (Site 6)
To: Batterham Lookout Bora Creek (Site 4) Copiton Dam Bird Route 5
To: Glacial Area Sawn Rocks NARRABRI UPPER HORTON Bird Route 2
To: Bingara Waterfall (Walking Track 2kms from Town Bird Route 2
To: TAMWORTH Three Creeks Gold Mine Ruby Hill (site 3) Bird Route 1 Upper Bingara Upper Horton via Cobbadah
GWYDIR RIVER
HALLS CREEK
GOLF COURSE
SHOWGROUND AND RACECOURSE
TENNIS COURTS
BOWL GREEN
CENTRAL SCHOOL
GWYDIR OVAL
SWIM CENTRE
NRMA
ALL NATIONS GOLD MINE
CEMETERY
ROSEHILL DRY
BASSETT ST
BRIGALOW ST
RIVER LANE
SALTER ST
WHITE ST
GWYDIR ST
BLIGH ST
EAST ST
OLD KEERA RD
COPETON DAM RD
APEX LOOKOUT RD
ELCOMBE RD
HERBERT ST
FAITHFUL ST
GWYDIR TCE
BOWEN ST
BANDALONG ST
KEERA ST
FINCH ST
CUNNINGHAM ST
KILLARNEY GAP RD
WEST ST
KEERA LANE
BOMBELLI ST
LANAGANS LANE
FRAZER ST
KINGS LANE
BYRNES ST
RIDDELL ST
MAITLAND ST
JUNCTION ST
LINK ST
OLD BORA RD
HALLS CREEK AVE
SOVEREIGN ST
BRAINARD ST
SPRING ST
SOUTH ST
BYWONG ST
HILL ST
COBBADAH RD
SALEYARDS RD
CEMETERY RD
GALLEY LANE
BRIDGER LANE
RIDLEY ST
DINOGA ST
HEBER ST
LUTT LANE
URQUHART LANE
MOORE ST
POUND ST
MARTYN ST
BRIGGON ST
MAP LEGEND
Horse Riding (B5)
Canoeing (B5)
Motorhome Dumpsite (C3,C6)
Fish Hatchery (C2)
Museum (C5)
Public Toilets (B6, C5, D5)
Hotels (C4,C5)
Park (B6,D5)
NRMA (C5)
Fire Brigade (C5)
Church (C4, C5, C6)
Cemetery (F5)
Police (C5)
Post Office (C5)
Information Centre (C5)
Council Building (C5)
Motel (C5, C6)
Hospital (B7)
Aged Hostel (B7)
Caravan Park (B7)
Town Street
Town Lane
Main Road
Natural Waterway
Central School (C4)
Swim Centre (B6)
Recreation Facilities
BINGARA on the gwydir
Date: 15th September 2010
Author: GIS Officer
Copyright Gwydir Shire Council 2010
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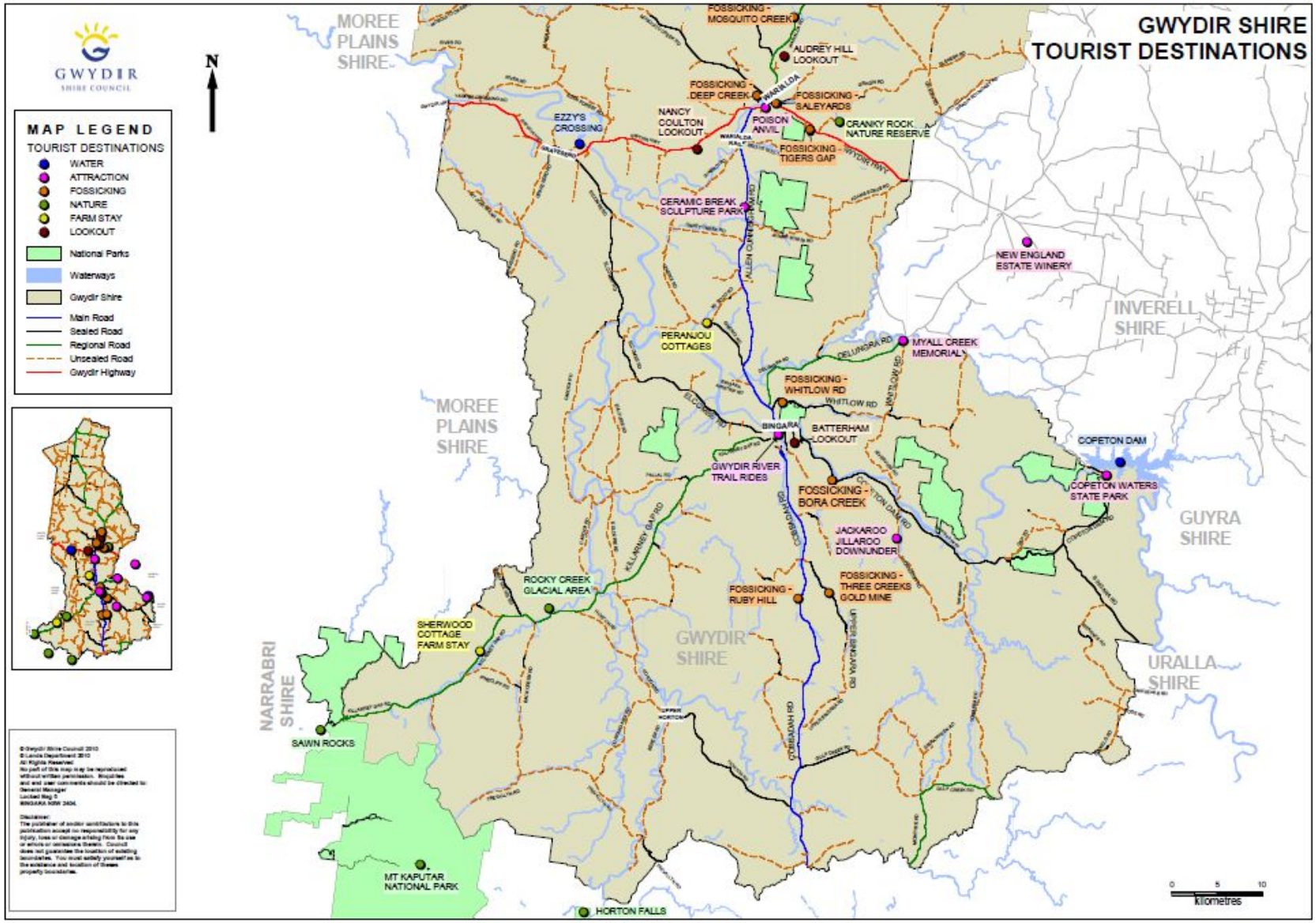
500
Metres

Business Development Plan 2013 ~ 2017



8.g Acknowledgements

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- The Living Classroom Board of Directors
- Willougby City Council

The Starfish Project Team members were:

- Adam Blakester | ParadigmPlay
- Matthew Cawood
- David Carr | Stringybark Ecological
- Prashanth van Houten
- Elizabeth Gardiner
- Josette Wunder | The Earth Welfare Company

8.h About Starfish

Starfish's purpose is to enable social change for rural and regional sustainability. Starfish is structured as a professional non–profit network that provides a platform of systems and support for community entrepreneurs to work individually and collectively on sustainability initiatives.

The principle at the core of Starfish's DNA, and the meaning behind our name and logo, is to enable, support and spin–off self–sustaining initiatives ~ mimicking the starfish's natural ability to grow an entire new starfish from a lost limb and regrow its limb!

Starfish facilitated and researched the community–level input for the Northern Inland Regional Development Plan and has developed sustainability strategies for the New England and Lismore Regions.

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8.j Acronyms

ABARE	Australia Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACDA	Australian Council of Deans for Agriculture
BRGCMA	Border Rivers–Gwydir Catchment Management Authority
CERES	Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies
DAFF	Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries
DPI	NSW Government Department of Primary Industries
GLR	Gwydir Learning Region
GSC	Gwydir Shire Council
I&I	NSW Government Industry & Investment
NENW	New England North West Region, NSW (same as NI)
NI	Northern Inland Region, NSW (same as NENW)
RDANI	Regional Development Australia Northern Inland
TAFE NEI	TAFE New England Institute
TLC	The Living Classroom
UNFAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation

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