

Sustainability Position Statement

RATIONALE

Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers (RDA-NR) is a non-profit community-based and regionally focused organisation that connects people and businesses in our region to opportunities through partnerships focusing on community, environment and economy.

RDA-NR recognises that sustainability is as much a process as an end result. Sustainability acknowledges the links between the region’s environment, economy and quality of life, both now and in the future. Sustainable development can be defined as an activity that improves the prosperity of the region, or at least maintains it, without prejudicing the capacity for future generations to enjoy the environment¹.

PRINCIPLES

RDA-NR recognises that sustainability is a high priority for the Northern Rivers region, and advocates that the region’s economic development objectives and activities embrace the following sustainability principles² as a key platform:

- **Inter-generational equity:** All people have the right to an environment that supports and improves their health and wellbeing; Decisions should be made which benefit the whole community; We must ensure that our children’s children are at least able to enjoy what we have – socially, economically and environmentally
- **Conservation of biodiversity and ecological integrity:** A healthy environment means a healthy economy; Biodiversity and the web of life is worth protecting and conserving in its own right
- **Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms:** We should identify and acknowledge the real costs of what we do, including the costs of production, use, management and disposal; Our decisions need to recognise the full range of values, even if these cannot always be quantified; The community needs to be made aware of the full costs of development and activities; Incentives should be applied to develop creative solutions to environmental problems
- **The precautionary principle:** We must think before we act and take responsibility for what we do; We must take steps to ensure the prevention of serious or irreparable damage to the environment even in circumstances where we have no firm knowledge that significant damage will be done

¹ Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils, Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Organisation and the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. 1997. *Framework for a Sustainable Future for the Northern Rivers Region*.

Northern Rivers Regional Development Board. 2005. *Regional Industry and Economic Plan for the Northern Rivers: A community road map to developing our future*.

² These sustainability principles are derived from the following resource: Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils, Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Organisation and the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. 1998. *Guiding Principles for a Sustainable Future for the Northern Rivers Region: Final Report for Phase One of the Northern Rivers Regional Strategy*, refer to pages 9 - 11

- **Global perspective:** We should look beyond our own backyard – think globally, act locally; Our region is not an economic island (nor an environmental one)
- **Qualitative development:** Development means more than just economic growth; Development should enhance our quality of life (recognising that this means different things to different people) without compromising our environment; Conservation of resources needs to be an integral consideration in the planning and implementation of development and activities
- **Limits on natural resource use:** We should care for our region’s natural and human resources: we must use them efficiently – aim for the optimum sustainable yield and look for alternatives; we must recognise our region’s limited resources and its limited ability to assimilate waste
- **Constant natural capital and sustainable income:** Our natural capital is part of our region’s greatest assets; Development and activities in our region should not exceed the carrying capacity of our remaining natural capital
- **Efficiency and resilience:** Social, economic and ecological diversity encourage resilience; Maximising our use of resources will increase our efficiency – aim for the greatest output per unit
- **Community participation:** The community has a vital role to play in decision making; Education and access to information will ensure effective community involvement

DATE OF ADOPTION

Version 1 adopted by Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers 11 December 2009

DATE OF REVIEW

December 2012