

In the Northern Rivers and Far North key priorities were housing and children and young people, particularly children in out of home care. This community needs more social housing with an enforced minimum percentage of social and affordable housing in all new developments. But also protections for people in the private rental market, including legal protections for people living in caravan parks.

There are too many children in out of home care in this region and there needs to be more opportunities to engage with families early. The biggest focus should be early interventions across the board. Services need to be getting involved early enough to ensure the cycle does not continue. One pathway is early childhood education, and there are some great examples of that working in communities in this region.

Cost of living pressures are hard to keep pace with for many people in the region who are living on the brink of crisis and are vulnerable, living week to week.

“ The cost of public transport makes getting to education and training impossible, resulting in kids hitching to and from school or TAFE. ”

Cost of living

- Latest figures show the average annual personal income in the region was \$38,292, which was over \$12,000 dollars less than the state average
- In the year to July 2015 an average yearly electricity bill cost \$2,600 which is as much as \$500 more than the equivalent in Sydney and Newcastle
- Latest median weekly rental figures for 2 bedroom dwellings range from \$240 in the Richmond Valley hinterland, \$253 in the Clarence Valley, \$335 in the Tweed Valley, to \$345 in the Coastal areas of the Richmond Valley
- Latest figures show Local Government rate assessments the region were; \$588 in Richmond Valley, \$626 in Kyogle, \$669 in Ballina, \$1022 in Tweed, \$950 in Lismore, and \$898 in Byron, against a NSW rural average of \$531



Children and young people

- Latest figures show 65 in every 1000 children were involved in risk of significant harm reports and nearly 14 in 1000 were in out-of-home care
- The Sustaining NSW Families nurse home-visiting program is currently available in Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley and Ballina. But there are children in need throughout the district. In Clarence Valley 8.3% of children are developmentally vulnerable according to the Australian Early Development Census

“ Preschool and early development needs better funding. Children being ready for school is a big gap, with access and affordability of Early Childhood a big problem. ”

- 11,072 children in the region living below the poverty line, with a child poverty rate nearly double the state average at 21.6%. The Kyogle LGA has one of the worst rates of child poverty in the state at 28.2%
- In 2014-15, 180 young people aged 15-24 were hospitalised due to intentional self-harm

Dental wait list

- 510 children and 8222 adults are on the NSW public dental waiting list
- Only 42.7% of children age 5-6 years are free of dental caries
- On average, children age 5-6 years have 2.8 decayed, missing or filled teeth

Social Housing wait list

- Latest figure show there were 3,890 social housing units in the region, with 2,964 people still on the list waiting to be housed
- In the 12 months to 30 June 2015, 293 people were housed, with expected waiting times across the region for those still on the list generally between 5-10 years, with some areas such as Tweed Heads, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, and Murwillumbah exceeding 10 years