



The Central Coast Region: An Economic Profile

by John Wilkinson

1 Introduction

Until recently the Central Coast was not officially a region. While local inhabitants of the Gosford and Wyong local government areas (LGAs) popularly referred to their locality as the Central Coast, there was officially no region of that name. In 2005, however, the NSW Geographical Names Board officially recognised the Gosford-Wyong area as the Central Coast region. Five years later, the Keneally Government declared the Gosford-Wyong area to be the Central Coast region, for planning purposes, under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.¹

Two major features of the Central Coast economy can be noted, both connected to the region's proximity to the Sydney metropolitan region. One is the migration over the last few decades of residential population to the Central Coast, transforming it from a holiday and retirement area to "an urban fringe area of Sydney".² The other is the daily migration of a large section of the working population out of the region. According to [Regional Development Australia \(RDA\) Central Coast NSW](#), based on 2006 census

figures, around 38,000 residents commuted to jobs outside the region, representing around 29% of employed residents (37% male, 19% female).³ As discussed later in this e-brief (section 4.5), this mismatch between the region's residential and working population creates certain statistical difficulties.

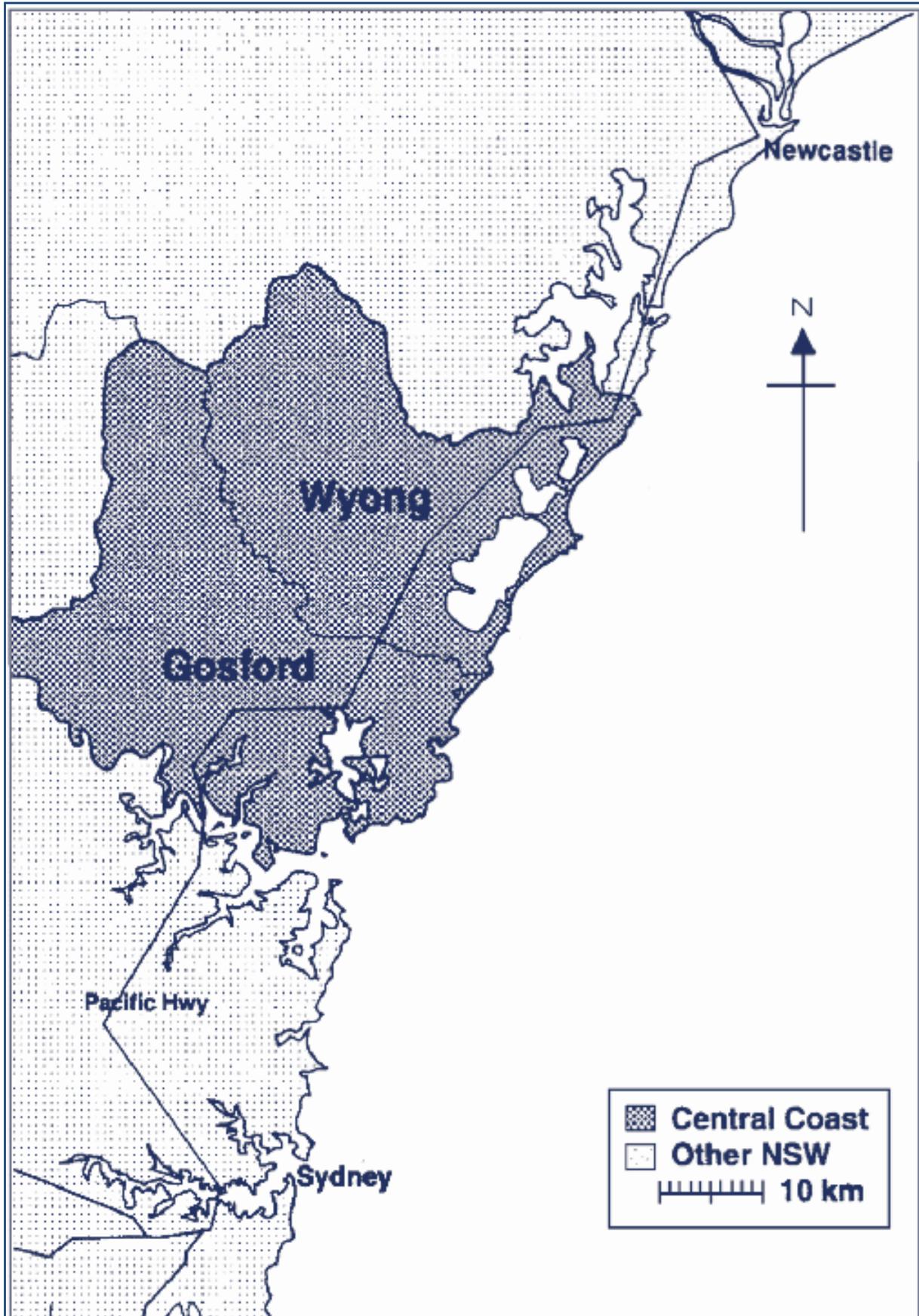
2 LGAs in the Central Coast region

2.1 Central Coast Region: LGAs

Gosford and Wyong, the two LGAs that form the Central Coast region are urban in nature. In 2011, out of a regional population of 321,545, Gosford had 52.5% of the population and Wyong had 47.5%. The individual populations of the two LGAs were as follows:

Gosford and Wyong: Populations as % of Central Coast Region (2011)⁴

Gosford	168,787 (52.5%)
Wyong	152,758 (47.5%)



Source: Central Coast Research Foundation, [Central Coast at a glance](#).

2.2 Geographical and Commercial Features

Gosford: Gosford covers an area of 940 square kilometres: from the Hawkesbury River (in the south) to Somersby (in the north). Some of the major public employers include Gosford City Council (1,700 full-time equivalent staff in 2011) and Gosford Hospital (2,034 full-time equivalent staff in 2008-09). Larger industrial employers (usually with 100 employees or more) include: Boral Masonry; Borg's Manufacturing; Ingham's Foods; and Sara Lee Bakery.⁵

Wyong. Wyong spans an area of 740 square kilometres, from Ourimbah (in the south) to Doyalson (in the north). Some of the major public employers include Wyong City Council (1,300 full-time equivalent staff in 2011) and Wyong Hospital (915 full-time equivalent staff in 2008-09). Larger industrial employers (usually with around 100 employees) include Mars Foods Australia and Sanitarium.⁶

3 Economic History of the Central Coast Region

3.1 Primary industry in the 19th Century

Just over thirty years after the First Fleet, arrivals from Britain began acquiring land around Broken Bay. The first land grant on the Central Coast was to James Webb, in 1824, at Orange Grove (Woy Woy).⁷ Arguably the first industry in the region was shell collecting. Oyster shells were collected and sent to Sydney where they were burnt over hot coals. The residual powder was slaked with water and then combined with sand, the mixture being used as mortar for bricks.

However, timber getting overtook shell collecting as the principal activity on the coast, particularly with the completion of the north coast railway in the late 1880s. A great deal of timber was despatched to Sydney in the form of railway sleepers and exported to New Zealand. Large quantities also were used for boat building, which developed into a major industry on the Central Coast.⁸ Darrell Fisher wrote that, "The first recorded boat being built was the *Sarah* by Robert Henderson in 1829 at Saratoga". Fisher has added that:

the best known shipbuilding family was the Davis family – Ben (at Davistown and Bensville); Rock (at Blackwall); Thomas (Terrigal); and Edward (at Cockle Creek – Davistown). Rock Davis began shipbuilding at Blackwall in 1862 and the yards continued production until 1912. All told, between 1829 and 1953, 500 vessels were built in the region.⁹

The completion of the railway, with the opening of the Hawkesbury River bridge in 1889, also stimulated the development of agricultural primary production. During the 1890s citrus growing developed on the Central Coast, becoming an important activity in the areas around Ourimbah. Dairying expanded as well and, in 1907, a butter factory opened at Wyong.¹⁰

3.2 Diversification in the 20th century

In the twentieth century these other forms of primary production overtook the timber industry. Anthony Scott wrote that:

In the 1920s the timber industry started to decline and mixed farming became the major focus. . .In 1926 the [Wyong] butter factory

commenced the supply of milk to Sydney and in the 1930s and 40s the industry was flourishing. . .¹¹

Dairying expanded to the point where, in 1964, two million gallons of milk were processed at the Wyong factory.¹²

The citrus industry also continued to develop during the 1920s and onwards. By 1964 there were around 1,000 citrus farmers on about 10,000 acres, growing mainly oranges, lemons and passionfruit.¹³

Poultry farming developed during the 1920s, particularly at Kanwal and Warnervale, which became one of the largest egg producing districts in the State. In 1961, 96 million eggs were produced on the Central Coast. The railway was also used to transport fish caught by an increasing number of professional fishermen. In the 1960s a fishing co-operative was established at Tacoma (near Wyong) on the shores of Lake Tuggerah.¹⁴

Alongside these rural types of production, more modern forms also began to develop. The 1920s saw the emergence of one of the major elements of the services sector, the tourist industry. David Scobie Architects has written that:

As early as 1917 tourism brochures highlighted Tuggerah, The Entrance and Norahville as highlights of the Central Coast. By 1920 subdivisions were being made at The Entrance, with a high proportion of the lots devoted to future holiday home accommodation. A second subdivision was made at The Entrance in 1922 and another in 1924.¹⁵

Building and construction expanded on the Central Coast after the Second

World War. Joan Fenton and Kathryn Pry, wrote that in the Gosford LGA:

[from 1947] to 1967, about 800 new buildings were constructed yearly. A building boom was experienced in the five or six years following 1967, reaching a peak in 1973 when almost 2,500 new buildings were constructed. . .¹⁶

By the late 1990s the Central Coast was ranked 20th amongst all domestic localities visited by Australians. In 1998 the figures for visits to the Central Coast were as follows:

Domestic Visitors to Central Coast/Australia: 1998¹⁷

Central Coast	1,449,000
Australia (all localities)	73,811,000

Manufacturing also expanded on the Central Coast during the twentieth century. In 1921, Garnet Adcock established the Jusfrute factory in West Gosford. The purpose of the factory was to use locally produced citrus to produce oils for perfumes, as well as to produce essences for fruit drinks. Ten years later, Jusfrute was exporting essences and fruit juice concentrates to South East Asia.¹⁸

Meat processing began in the 1920s when an abattoir opened in Gosford. At its peak of production, the abattoir was the largest employer in the Gosford LGA, with over 1,000 workers.

A brickworks was established in Gosford in 1937. In 1969, Masterfoods relocated its factory from Sydney to the Wyong LGA. A year later, Sara Lee opened a factory at Lisarow (just north of Gosford).¹⁹

Electricity production developed on the Central Coast during the 1950s, when the newly formed State Electricity Commission of NSW announced the

building of two major power stations on the southernmost shores of Lake Macquarie. The first, Vales Point A, had its original turbo-generator commissioned in 1963. In the following three years, three more were added. By 1966 Vales Point A was, for a time, the biggest single producer of electricity in the State.

The second power station (Munmorah) had its original turbo-generator commissioned in 1967. In the following two years, three more were added. By 1969 Munmorah had, momentarily, overtaken Vales Point as the largest power station in NSW. In 1978 two additional power generation units were added to Vales Point (called Vales point B). In 1989 the "A" section of Vales Point was closed down and, in the early 1990s, production at Munmorah was reduced.²⁰

In 1991 the Greiner Government renamed the State Electricity Commission of NSW, calling it Pacific Power. Four years later the Fahey Government separated the activities of Pacific Power: transmission operations were given to a new body, the Electricity Transmission Authority (Transgrid); while Pacific Power's activities were confined to generation. A year later, the newly-elected Carr Government began the process of separating Pacific Power into three government-owned instrumentalities: Macquarie Generation; Delta Electricity; and Eraring Energy.²¹ Operation of the two Central Coast power stations was transferred to Delta Electricity.²²

Coal mining developed, in the Wyong LGA, in tandem with the development of the power stations. The Chain Valley Bay Colliery, Endeavour Colliery, Munmorah State Coal Mine, Wallarah Colliery and Wyee State

Colliery were all linked by conveyor belt to the Vales Point and Munmorah power stations.²³

In addition to these developments in heavy industry, the 1980s witnessed growth in retail, a significant component of the services sector. Erina Fair, which is currently owned by GPT and Australian Prime Property Fund, opened in 1987 and is now the largest non-metropolitan shopping mall in Australia. Westfield opened a shopping mall at Tuggerah in 1995; Westfield Tuggerah is presently the second-largest mall on the Central Coast.²⁴

3.3 State Government Initiatives towards developing the Central Coast

The main and most consistent form of government initiatives for the Central Coast have been in the form of infrastructure construction. In 1960, the Labor Premier Robert Heffron officially opened the completed electrified railway line from Sydney to Gosford. Four years later, Heffron's Government oversaw the completion of the Calga to Ourimbah section of the F3. Then between 1965 and 1968, Askin's Coalition State Government oversaw completion of the Berowra to Hawkesbury River, Hawkesbury River to Mount White and Mount White to Calga sections of the F3.²⁵ As Darrell Fisher remarked, "Now the Central Coast was within commuting distance of Sydney."²⁶

In 1968 the Askin Government's Sydney Region Outline Plan (SROP) pinpointed the Central Coast as an overflow outlet for Sydney's population.²⁷

At a federal level, the newly elected Whitlam government established a Department of Urban and Regional

Development (DURD) which collaborated with the Askin Government on decentralisation and growth centre policy.²⁸ Although Gosford-Wyong was not chosen as a growth centre, the Whitlam Government did commission urban planning investigations, as Rolf Fenner explains:

in 1972/73 a study team undertook a detailed investigation of the Gosford-Wyong area and commissioned the CSIRO to prepare and run a mathematical planning model (Technique for the Optimum Placement of Activities into Zones – TOPAZ) to help select policy choices from six initial possible development strategies. The six alternative urban strategies were published in late 1973. . .It was from this phase that the three potential regional plans contained in the Gosford-Wyong Structure Plan were released for comment in 1975. The three alternative plans related primarily to different forms of development for Wyong's new town of Warnervale.²⁹

During the 1970s, according to David Scobie Architects, "the Central Coast became the fastest growing urban district in south-eastern Australia."³⁰ Frank Stilwell observed in 1980 that:

Gosford-Wyong...is a designated growth centre and its population growth of 56,000 persons, over the decade to 1976...is not far short of a doubling of the 1966 population.³¹

There were, however, some noticeable features of the population in the Central Coast. Stilwell commented that:

The situation regarding relative incomes is particularly striking in the Gosford-Wyong area; the median household income is only some 70 per cent of the average for

[NSW]...and the proportion of households with incomes over \$18,000 [p.a.] is only some 40 per cent of the average for [NSW].³²

The unemployment rate in Gosford-Wyong, in 1977, was also higher than the average for Sydney:

Gosford-Wyong/Sydney: Unemployment Rates (1977)³³

Gosford-Wyong	10.7%
Sydney	5.6%

Unemployment amongst younger workers was noticeably high. Over 15% of young workers in Gosford-Wyong were unemployed.³⁴

In 1978, with the Wran Government in office, the NSW Planning and Environment Commission (PEC) established a regional office in Gosford. In 1981 the Government gazetted a plan providing for the development of a major industrial area at Somersby (near Gosford). Two years later the Wyong Bypass section of the F3 (from north of Ourimbah towards Warnervale) was opened to traffic. Three years later, a new section of the F3 was completed, from Calga to Somersby (to connect two sections of freeway already in use). The work included a new bridge over Mooney Mooney Creek). In 1989, under the Greiner Government, the Berowra to Wahroonga section of the F3 was finished, thereby establishing freeway conditions from the outskirts of Sydney to the Central Coast.

Again in 1989, the Greiner Government closed the Gosford PEC office. In 1996, the Carr Government not only reappointed a regional co-ordinator from the Premier's Department but actually appointed a Minister for the Central Coast.³⁵

3.4 The current economic landscape

In the 21st century there are two principal features of production and employment on the Central Coast. Firstly production is largely carried on by small businesses. Buchan Consulting, in an employment strategy prepared for the Central Coast, divided businesses in the region on the basis of employees:

Businesses on the Central Coast by Number of Employees: 2007³⁶

Businesses by Staff Employed	No.
between 1 and 4	6,471
between 5 and 19	2,544
between 20 and 99	750
100 or more	72

[RDA Central Coast NSW](#) comments that:

The larger employers include the health service, local government, several manufacturers, food processors, logistics centres, clubs, resorts, call centres, large retailers and the education sector (schools, university and TAFE). The Region has been successful in attracting larger businesses in goods-producing industries (manufacturers and food processors) and in some goods-related services (logistics), with these businesses being part of national or global enterprises. There are only a handful of locally grown large businesses located on the Central Coast.³⁷

Secondly, consistent with the general shift in employment towards the services sector, the majority of businesses operate in that sector. In 2007 in Gosford, for example, out of:

13,464 active businesses located in Gosford...property and business services (3,801) and construction (3,039) businesses accounted for over half the total.³⁸

However, as [RDA Central Coast NSW](#) observes, the development of the services sector on the Central Coast is not as broad-based as in other regions. It states in this respect:

Compared with other regions, the Central Coast has a narrow jobs base that is highly reliant on population related services (mainly health, retail, construction) and is under-represented in knowledge and business services (business services, professional services, technical services, finance) jobs. Many of the Central Coast residents who are employed in the knowledge and business services sectors are commuting to jobs in Sydney.³⁹

4 Key economic facts and figures

4.1 Business Entries and Exits

In 2007 there were 13,464 businesses in the Gosford LGA. The figures for concerns operating in the LGA, as well as for business entries and exits, were as follows:

Businesses Active in the Gosford LGA (plus Entries/Exits): 2007⁴⁰

Total Businesses	13,464
Entries	2,190
Exits	2,211

In 2007 there were 9,084 businesses in the Wyong LGA. The figures for concerns operating in the LGA, as well as for business entries and exits were as follows:

Businesses Active in the Wyong LGA (plus Entries/Exits): 2007⁴¹

Total Businesses	9,084
Entries	1,584
Exits	1,539

4.2 Employment and Unemployment

Between February 2012 and April 2012 the following numbers of people

(on a three-month average) were employed and unemployed in the combined Gosford and Wyong LGAs:

**Employed/Unemployed: Gosford-Wyong
(Average Feb 2012–April 2012)⁴²**

Employed	147,200
Unemployed	10,600

As shown in the table below, the unemployment rate in Gosford-Wyong fluctuated over the last decade. It reached a high of 9% in December 2009, dropped to a low of 4.0% at the end of 2010, but has risen since to 6.7% in December 2011. The region's unemployment rate has generally been above the NSW unemployment rate:

**Unemployment Rate (%): Gosford-Wyong/
NSW/Australia
(Dec 1999 – Dec 2011)⁴³**

Year	Gosford-Wyong	NSW	Australia
1999	7.0	5.8	6.6
2000	8.8	5.6	6.2
2001	6.5	6.0	6.7
2002	8.6	5.9	6.1
2003	6.1	5.3	5.6
2004	6.7	5.0	5.0
2005	6.4	5.2	5.0
2006	5.1	4.8	4.5
2007	7.5	4.6	4.2
2008	5.7	5.2	4.5
2009	9.0	5.8	5.3
2010	4.0	4.5	4.8
2011	6.7	5.5	5.0

Youth unemployment on the Central Coast, in recent years, has been higher than it was in the late 1970s. Whereas in 1977 (as mentioned above) the rate was 15%, in 2010 it was 25.8%.⁴⁴

As noted, a significant feature of employment on the Central Coast is the number of people who commute to Sydney. In 2006 around 38,000 Central Coast residents commuted to Sydney. According to Buchan Consulting,

Many of the Central Coast residents, who are professionals and managers employed in knowledge

and business services, are commuting on a daily basis to Sydney.⁴⁵

4.3 Employment by Sector

Set out in the table below is the breakdown of employment by industry for the residential population of the Central Coast region (for the difference between the residential and working population see section 4.5). The figures are 12 month averages from February 2011 to February 2012.

Central Coast Employment: Feb 2011 – Feb 2012⁴⁶

Health Care and Social Assistance	21,580
Retail	21,368
Building and Construction	18,235
Property and Business Services	13,255
Accommodation and Food Services	12,156
Other Services/Arts	9,399
Manufacturing	9,232
Public Administration and Safety	8,048
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	7,192
Education and Training	5,406
Financial and Insurance Services	5,118
Wholesale	3,066
Communication Services	2,972
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1,555
Mining	1,033
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	842
TOTAL	140,457

4.4 Central Coast Employment by Industry: State-Wide Comparison

Employment by Industry 2011-2012: % Central Coast and % NSW Employment⁴⁷

	% Central Coast	% NSW
Health Care and Social Assistance	15.4	11.6
Retail	15.2	10.8
Building and Construction	13.0	8.3
Property and Business Services	8.9	13.7
Accommodation and Food Services	8.7	7.2
Other Services/Arts	6.7	6.9
Manufacturing	6.6	7.9

Public Administration and Safety	5.7	6.0
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	5.2	5.3
Education and Training	3.8	7.2
Financial and Insurance Services	3.6	5.0
Wholesale	2.2	3.8
Information Media/ Telecommunications	2.2	2.4
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1.2%	1.1
Mining	0.8	1.2
Agriculture	0.7	2.3

4.5 Employment Growth Sectors

For comparative purposes the two sources of regional employment statistics employed in this e-brief are the 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publication *Census of Population: Selected Education and Labour Force Characteristics for Statistical Local Areas (New South Wales 2001)*⁴⁸ and the 2011/12 figures provided in the Labour Market Information Portal of the federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).⁴⁹

As explained in previous e-briefs in this series of economic profiles, one issue that arises, in employing these two sets of figures, is that before 2006 the ABS used 17 occupations of employment, whereas after 2006 19 occupational categories were employed. An explanation of the approach adopted in this series can be found [here](#).

As noted in the introduction to this e-brief, a more pressing statistical problem in respect to the Central Coast arises from the mismatch between its residential and working population. The problem is that the 2003 ABS publication and the DEEWR figures relied on for 2011/12 are figures for the region's residential population employment by industry.

This data set is not restricted to those whose jobs are located in the region; rather, it refers to all employed persons resident in the region whether they are working on the Central Coast or elsewhere. For most regions this would not be a major issue, but it is certainly significant for the Central Coast where around a quarter of all employed persons work outside the Central Coast. The upshot is that the figures for employment by sector for 2011/12 must be treated with caution, as (to take one example) many of those residents identified as working in the mining sector may in fact travel to work to the Hunter region. The result is that shifts up or down in employment may not be solely attributable to developments on the Central Coast.

With that cautionary note in mind, ranked in terms of percentage increase in employment, the biggest growth sectors in the decade from 2001 to 2011/12 are set out below. Growth in employment is also expressed in percentage terms. As well as identifying the areas of employment growth over the last decade, this section points to the key players and developments in several industries.

Mining: there has been a small but significant increase in employment in mining over the last 10 years.

Employment in Mining: (2001-2011/12)⁵⁰

2001	362
2011	1,033
Increase	671 (186%)

Employment in coal mining has been growing steadily in the Wyong LGA; by 2005-06 it had increased from 362 (in 2001) to 565.⁵¹

Accommodation and Food Services: Accommodation and food

services saw the second-largest percentage increase in employment.

Employment in Accommodation and Food Services: (2001-2011/12)⁵²

2001	5,588
2011	12,156
Increase	6,568 (118%)

The category "Accommodation and Food" Services incorporates the tourism sector. Over recent decades, tourism has been the dynamic area of employment on the Central Coast. Darrell Fisher wrote in 1997 that:

In 1994-95 tourism expenditure on the Central Coast was \$340 million and this was an increase of 8.3% over the previous year. As a service industry the tourism industry provides the main basic employment in the region..⁵³

The period from 2007 (from just before the global financial crisis) has seen a decline in tourists visiting the Central Coast. This can be seen in a comparison in visitor numbers between 1998 and 2010-2011:

Visitors to the Central Coast: 1998/2010-2011⁵⁴

1998	1.4 million
2010	1.1 million
2011	1.2 million

Despite the drop in visitor numbers, employment in tourism appears to have been sustained by new tourism projects on the Central Coast. Multiplex began construction of the Outrigger Ettalong Beach Resort (built over the Ettalong Beach Memorial Club) in 2002, a project completed in 2005.⁵⁵ Mirvac's Magenta Shores, just north of The Entrance (a \$530 million project) was completed in 2006. CPG (now owned by Investa) began work on its Kooindah Waters Golf Resort (near Wyong) in 2004, and opened the resort in 2008.⁵⁶

Public Administration and Safety: Public administration and safety witnessed the third biggest percentage increase in employment.

Employment in Public Administration and Safety (2001-2011/12)⁵⁷

2001	3,797
2011	8,048
Increase	4,251 (112%)

Local government is a significant employer, with Gosford City Council employing 1,700 FTE staff and Wyong City council employing 1,300 FTE staff. In 2002, the Carr Government increased employment in this sector by relocating both the Workcover Authority, and the Long Service Leave Corporation, from Sydney to Gosford.⁵⁸ Seeming to reverse this trend, in May 2012 it was reported that more than 100 jobs with the WorkCover Authority could be transferred back to Sydney.⁵⁹

Health Care and Social Assistance: This category experienced the next biggest percentage increase in employment.

Employment in Health Care and Social Assistance (2001-2011/12)⁶⁰

2001	12,391
2011	21,580
Increase	9,189 (74%)

Health care and social assistance is a major employer on the Central Coast. As noted, in 2008-09 Gosford Hospital employed 2,034 equivalent full-time staff and Wyong Hospital employed 915 FTE staff. There are around 60 retirement villages and nursing homes on the Central Coast.⁶¹

Building and Construction: Building and construction witnessed a significant increase in employment.

**Employment in Building and Construction:
(2001-2011/12)⁶²**

2001	10,804
2011	18,235
Increase	7,431 (69%)

Employment in building and construction has been sustained by a numbers of sizeable projects, including the three tourist resorts mentioned above. Another major development was Delta Electricity's gas-powered Colongra Power Station. This was built by Alstom at a cost of \$500 million. It was begun in 2007 and completed in 2009, employing over 300 workers.⁶³

Transport, Postal and Warehousing:

Transport, Postal and Warehousing and Warehousing has seen sizeable employment growth over the last ten years.

**Employment in Transport, Postal and Warehousing:
(2001-2011/12)⁶⁴**

2001	4,339
2011	7,192
Increase	2,853 (65%)

A boost to employment in this sector occurred in 2006 with the opening of Belkin Australia's warehouse and distribution facility at Tuggerah. A year later, Woolworths opened a Regional Distribution Centre (RDC) at Warnervale. The facility is one of the biggest in Australia, supplying supermarkets from the northern suburbs of Sydney to Coffs Harbour, and employs over 300 people. Two years later, Toll IPEC opened a transport terminal on the Central Coast.⁶⁵

Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services: This category experienced a modest increase in jobs between 2001 and 2011.

**Employment in Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services:
(2001-2011/12)⁶⁶**

2001	1,018
2011	1,555
Increase	537 (53%)

Delta Electricity (which currently operate the Vales Point, Munmorah and Colongra power stations) employs about 300 people.⁶⁷ Contributing to the increase is the activity in electricity network building on the Central Coast. According to the *Central Coast Business Review*,

Ausgrid is undertaking a record capital works program. More than \$600 million is being invested, in the five years to 2014, to renew and upgrade the electricity network across the Wyong and Gosford local government areas.⁶⁸

Communication Services: This category also saw a modest increase in employment.

**Employment in Communication Services:
(2001-2011/12)⁶⁹**

2001	2,223
2011	2,972
Increase	749 (34%)

Other Services/Arts and Recreation:

These joint categories encompass occupations that, in the 2001 census, were combined together as "other". This category included "personal and other services" and "cultural and recreational" services. "Personal and other services" covered the small business sector and included: funeral services; dry cleaning and hair dressing; security services; video hire services; and veterinary care for pets.⁷⁰

As shown by the table below, while the increase in employment in this sector is not as high in proportional terms as in some others, the actual increase in jobs is significant.

Employment in Other Services/Arts and Recreation (2001-2011/12)⁷¹

2001	7,250
2011	9,399
Increase	2,149 (30%)

Financial and Insurance Services:

This category of employment has experienced an increase in employment over the last ten years. With so many Central Coast residents commuting to work in Sydney, the extent to which the jobs increase in this sector has been within the region itself must be in doubt.

Employment in Financial and Insurance Services: (2001-2011/12)⁷²

2001	4,100
2011	5,118
Increase	1,018 (25%)

Property and Business Services:

The same observation may apply in respect to this sector where a substantial part of the increase in employment may be explained by the commuter factor.

Employment in Property and Business Services: (2001-2011/12)⁷³

2001	11,280
2011	13,255
Increase	1,975 (17%)

"Property and business services" includes professions such as accountancy, law, and engineering.⁷⁴ There are around 30 firms of solicitors and nine firms of accountants on the Central Coast.⁷⁵

Retail: Retail has seen a steady increase in the actual number of jobs over the last decade.

Employment in Retail: (2001-2011/12)⁷⁶

2001	18,991
2011	21,796
Increase	2,805 (15%)

A great deal of retail activity is concentrated in the two major

shopping malls: Erina Fair and Westfield Tuggerah. These two centres alone account for 37% of retail jobs on the Central Coast.⁷⁷

Education and Training: In percentage terms, this category experienced the fourth biggest decrease in employment.

Employment in Education and Training: (2001-2011/12)⁷⁸

2001	6,865
2011	5,406
Decrease	-1,459 (-21%)

In 2009 there were 59 government primary schools and 16 government secondary schools on the Central Coast. There were also 11 non-government primary schools and 6 non-government secondary schools in the region.⁷⁹ There are three TAFE campuses on the Central Coast (Gosford, Ourimbah and Wyong), with around 14,000 students.⁸⁰ Around 4,000 students attend the University of Newcastle's Ourimbah campus.

Manufacturing: In terms of actual jobs, by far the biggest decline experienced by any sector over the past decade was in manufacturing.

Employment in Manufacturing: (2001-2011/12)⁸¹

2001	12,277
2011	9,232
Decrease	-3,045 (-25%)

Manufacturing on the Central Coast had already begun to decline during the 1980s. The brick company and the abattoir, located in Gosford, closed in 1984 and 1989 respectively. In recent years there have been further company closures in the region. Between 2004 and 2005, Warren Yachts transferred its operations from Kincumber to Brisbane. In 2009 Albany International, which

manufactured textiles for the paper and fibre-cement industry, announced that it was ceasing operations in Gosford and relocating to China. Similarly in 2009, Procter and Gamble (after acquiring the Wella hair products plant, at Somersby, in 2003) ceased operations. During the same year, Domino Mining Equipment (of Tuggerah) was deregistered.⁸²

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing: In percentage terms, the second largest decline in employment over the past 10 years has been in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Employment in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (2001-2011/12)⁸³

2001	1,262
2011	842
Decrease	-420 (-33%)

Primary production has experienced a long term decline on the Central Coast, as more and more agricultural land has been acquired for residences and industry. This is illustrated by figures for citrus production on the Central Coast, since the early 1980s:

Citrus Production: Central Coast (1982-2006)⁸⁴

1982	15,300 tonnes
1994	12,700 tonnes
2006	5,300 tonnes

Wholesale. The largest percentage and second largest actual drop in employment between 2001 and 2011 was experienced in the wholesale sector.

Employment in Wholesale: (2001-2011/12)⁸⁵

2001	5,437
2011	3,066
Decrease	-2,371 (-46%)

On a general level, the wholesale sector has been substantially adjusting over the last 10 years.

5 ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

From an area characterised by its rural nature and ocean landscape in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Central Coast has developed into a more urban and industrial region on the fringe of the Sydney metropolitan region. With railway electrification and road improvement the population rapidly increased. These developments, in turn, gave rise to a new regional identity, which culminated in 2010 in the official recognition of the Central Coast as a region for planning purposes. By 2031 the region is expected to have 100,000 more people than in 2006.⁸⁶

The region's economic future will be dependent on many factors, not least its proximity to Sydney, the impact of which on the Central Coast is complex and varied. One impact is demographic, with older persons from Sydney retiring to the Central Coast, resulting in an above average concentration of people aged 55 and over (28%), compared to NSW (22%) as a whole.⁸⁷ A flow-on effect is a lower workforce participation rate, around 5 or 6 percentage points below the NSW and Australian average. According to the [Central Coast Research Foundation](#):

This latter characteristic works as a structural brake on the regional economy as it limits the wage pool available for consumption expenditure in the Region, compared with the whole of NSW and Australia...⁸⁸

The ageing population of the region has implications for the future pattern of demand for public and private services. The same is true at the other end of the demographic scale, with the Central Coast experiencing a

significant migration of families from the Sydney region, in search of more affordable housing and a coastal lifestyle, resulting in a bulge in families with school-aged children.

As noted, in its overall assessment of the Central Coast economy, [RDA Central Coast NSW](#) observed that the Central Coast has a relatively "narrow jobs base" that is highly reliant on population related services and is under-represented in knowledge and business services. It is also the case that many of the Central Coast residents who are employed in the knowledge and business services sectors are commuting to jobs in Sydney. Based on these observations, identified by RDA Central Coast NSW is the need to "increase and diversify job opportunities and increase the level of employment self-containment".⁸⁹

The latest strategy for growth on the Central Coast is the Regional Economic Development and Employment Strategy (REDES). REDES was prepared by Buchan Consulting in 2009 and adopted by RDA Central Coast NSW in 2010.⁹⁰

The key forces lying behind future development on the Central Coast, have also been summarised by Buchan Consulting in a report prepared specifically for Gosford Council:

The major future drivers of regional growth are: the substantial growth in the regional population in the Central Coast...as the Central Coast continues to be an attractive area for living due to location, environment, accessibility and housing affordability; the attraction of businesses to industrial areas in the region; and continued development of the tourism sector.⁹¹

Buchan Consulting considered that the existing industrial strengths that could provide foundations for future growth, are as follows:

food and beverage production. . .[an already developed] logistics hub for food products and for other products. . .building products production and light industry.⁹²

Inevitably, to a significant extent the economic future of the Central Coast will be linked to Sydney and to a lesser extent the Hunter. In broad terms, just as past government initiatives for this area focused on infrastructure development, that would still seem to be a key concern for future growth, both for movement and communication within the region and beyond. In addition to improved "transport connectivity", RDA Central Coast NSW identifies:

the urgent need for town centre development and enabling infrastructure. Priorities are: Gosford Revitalisation and The Landing; Warnervale Town Centre and Wyong Employment Zone; and The Entrance.⁹³

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- ⁷ Darrell Fisher, *The Central Coast of New South Wales: Environment and People* (Hobbs and Hobbs Publishing, East Gosford, 1997), p.33.
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- ¹⁸ Fisher, n.7, p.44.
- ¹⁹ Fisher, n.7, pp.51-52, 55-56.
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- ²¹ National Competition Council, *National Competition Policy and Related Reforms: First Tranche Assessment*, vol.I, *Assessment of Commonwealth, State and Territory Progress* (AusInfo, Canberra, 1999), p.37.
- ²² P. Brown, A. Cottrell, P. Scaife, M. Searles and L. Wibberly, *A Life Cycle Assessment of the New South Wales Electricity Grid* (QCAT Technology Transfer Group, Brisbane, 2006), p.8.
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- ²⁵ Fenton and Pry, n.16, p.64.
- ²⁶ Fisher, n.7, p.35.
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