

AGRITOURISM AND THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Wollondilly's rural landscapes and scenic values have long been recognised as one of the area's distinguishing features and key strengths. Wollondilly is also an important agricultural region in NSW, producing fresh and perishable produce and accounting for up to 12% of NSW's total agricultural production (combined Sydney Basin output). With Wollondilly's location in close proximity to Sydney, the Shire has excellent potential to position itself as an agritourism and visitor economy destination.



What is Agritourism?

Agritourism is a tourism-related experience or product that connects agricultural products, people or places, with visitors to a farm. This includes the following:

- **Farm gate premises** – used to provide visitors to the farm, on a commercial basis, with agricultural products predominantly from the farm, supplemented by products from other farms in the region, or with services or activities related to the products, including the following—
 - (A) processing, packaging and sale of the products, but not the processing of animals,
 - (B) the preparation and serving, on a retail basis, of food and drink to people for consumption on the premises, whether or not liquor, take away meals and drinks or entertainment are also provided,
 - (C) tastings or workshops,
 - (D) the provision of information or education related to the products.

Farm gate premises includes cellar door premises.

- **Farm experience premises** – used to provide visitors to the farm, on a commercial basis, with small-scale and low-impact tourist or recreational activities, including the following, but not including motor sports-
 - (i) Horse riding,
 - (ii) Farm tours,
 - (iii) Functions or conferences,
 - (iv) Farm field days.

What is the Visitor Economy?

- **visitor economy use** means the following—
 - (a) camping grounds,
 - (b) food and drink premises,
 - (c) information and education facilities,
 - (d) markets,
 - (e) recreation facilities (indoor),
 - (f) recreation facilities (major),
 - (g) recreation facilities (outdoor).
- **tourist and visitor accommodation** means a building or place that provides temporary or short-term accommodation on a commercial basis, and includes any of the following—
 - (a) backpackers' accommodation,
 - (b) bed and breakfast accommodation,

- (c) farm stay accommodation,
- (d) hotel or motel accommodation,
- (e) serviced apartments.

- **eco-tourist facility** means a building or place that—
 - (a) provides temporary or short-term accommodation to visitors on a commercial basis, and
 - (b) is located in or adjacent to an area with special ecological or cultural features, and
 - (c) is sensitively designed and located so as to minimise bulk, scale and overall physical footprint and any ecological or visual impact.

It may include facilities that are used to provide information or education to visitors and to exhibit or display items.

Starting an agritourism or visitor economy business – things to consider

Location

Aim to location activities, buildings or accommodations in locations that take the best advantage of the views and features of your property and the surrounding vistas, without impacting on day-to-day farming operations or exposing guests to hazards. Consideration must also be given on how the development will fit into the landscape and relate to neighbouring land uses, and how it could potentially impact upon existing rural character or environmentally sensitive areas.

Design

The design of your agritourism or visitor economy business should complement the character of your farm, the natural landscape, and broader locality.

This may include the adaptive reuse of existing buildings (e.g. old farm sheds) to create an authentic experience, the siting of new buildings so that they do not dominate the landscape, the use of natural and non-reflective materials (e.g. timber, galvanised iron), and attractive landscaping.

Traffic impacts

Due to the rural nature of much of the Shire, and current lack of public transport alternatives, most guests will be arriving to your development by car.

Safe access and egress must be available from the driveway (or suitable upgrades may be required). The provision of safe areas for car parking and pedestrians must be provided, with any hard-standing car parking areas to be appropriately located or landscaped to avoid negatively impacting rural vistas.

Depending on the type of development proposed, a traffic plan may be required to assist in identifying how vehicle movements will be managed.

Access

Ensuring people with disability have access to your agritourism activities includes more people and could also provide an opportunity for your business.

Commonwealth legislation, standards and Council policy requires accessibility for everyone to be considered, and equal access where it is safe to do so. This may require the provision of such features as disability parking, entry ramps or toilets with additional space, and clearances around entry doors. Speak with Council or a registered certifier to determine the specific requirements that may apply to your property.

Signage

Adequate signage in advance of entries and exits will ensure drivers can make early decisions and stop safely at your business. Avoid signage that negatively impacts the streetscape, farming operations or road corridor – keeping it simple is the best approach!

Signage is generally considered to be exempt development under [Division 2 Advertising and Signage Exempt Development Code](#); however, please check with Council if you are unsure or cannot satisfy the provisions under this code.

Land use conflicts

Agritourism and visitor economy businesses must supplement and be secondary to the agricultural use of the land, and must not impact on the ability of adjoining landowners to continue or

commence farm activities on their property. This includes considering the potential effects of odour, noise and dust from adjoining agricultural operations on the proposed agritourism or visitor economy development; and likewise the potential impacts of odour and noise generation that some agritourism and visitor economy uses may produce.

Talking to your neighbours while you are planning your business and its location could help you to identify issues you will need to address.

The NSW Government's [Right to Farm Policy](#) promotes farmers' rights to undertake lawful agricultural practices without conflict or interference arising from complaints from neighbours and other land users.

Providing information to your guests and visitors about what they should expect where agritourism activities are located close to farming operations, either on your property or on nearby farms, will also help minimise complaints and conflicts.

Biosecurity

Practising good biosecurity means protecting your property, your farming operations and the surrounding environment from the negative effects of pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants. Legislation is in place to reduce the risk of transmission of harmful biological or biochemical substances between crops and livestock.

Agritourism businesses can be high biosecurity risks as visitors can unknowingly carry infectious agents on clothes and shoes; or through the petting, feeding or handling of animals by visitors.

A biosecurity management plan may be required to identify the risks on the farm and prioritise the relevant biosecurity practices. Find out more about [biosecurity management plans](#).

Hazards and risks

Much of Wollondilly's rural land is affected by bushfire, flooding and other natural disasters. You'll need to protect yourself, visitors and workers from the potential risks from these hazards, and other hazards associated with being on a farm and in a rural location. This includes consideration of safe evacuation, closing the premises during periods of extreme fire or flood risk, and visitor information and induction on farm safety.

What planning changes have been introduced to help encourage agritourism and the visitor economy?

In 2023, the NSW Government introduced planning rules to make it easier for farmers to use their land for agritourism businesses for new income streams. The agritourism policy introduced new land use definitions for on-farm activities that can be undertaken as exempt and complying development if they meet specified development standards. This means landowners will have the opportunity to set up agritourism businesses without the complexity and cost of lodging a development application.

In addition to the changes brought in by the State Government, Wollondilly Shire Council is also committed to developing tourism and establishing Wollondilly as a vibrant destination, particularly in our rural areas, as evidenced by planning changes to the *Wollondilly Local Environmental Plan 2011* (WLEP 2011) which came into effect in 2022 and 2023. These changes included increasing opportunities for events (refer to Clauses 7.13 and 7.15 of WLEP 2011), enabling weddings, functions, and diverse accommodation options on our rural land (with consent), and permitting a variety of other visitor economy related land uses in our rural areas (e.g. eco-tourist facilities, restaurants and cafes, recreation facilities, markets, and artisan food and drink industries).

What approval is required for a agritourism or visitor economy development?

There are different planning approval pathways depending on the potential impacts of the proposed development. The relevant planning approval pathways are summarised in the table below:

PLANNING APPROVAL PATHWAY	SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS
Exempt development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No planning or building approval is needed As long as the proposal meets specific standards and land requirements

FACT SHEETS

PLANNING APPROVAL PATHWAY	SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be exempt development, the project must comply 100% with all of the relevant development standards • Applies to a range of minor and low-impact developments • It's the landowners responsibility to satisfy themselves that the proposal meets the development standards at the time of undertaking development. The NSW Government recommends that a record is retained of any notes and details of the exempt development for future reference. This will assist if queries are raised or if the Codes SEPP change. This will provide proof of compliance with the Codes SEPP at the time the works were carried out.
Complying development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fast-track approval process for straight forward development • As long as the proposal meets specified predetermined development standards. • Complying development certificates can be granted by council or an accredited certifier without the need for a full development application
Development application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A formal application for development that requires consent • Usually made to council • Involves a merit-based assessment of the proposal

Agritourism and the Visitor Economy under the Development Application (DA) pathway

Subject	Agritourism and visitor economy through the DA pathway
<p>In what zones can I do agritourism under WLEP 2011?</p>	<p>Agritourism is permitted with consent under WLEP 2011 in the following rural and environmental zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RU1 Primary Production • RU2 Rural Landscape • RU4 Primary Production Small Lots • C4 Environmental Living
<p>Is there a specific clause in WLEP 2011 relating to agritourism?</p>	<p>Clause 5.25 of WLEP 2011 provides objectives and provisions for farm gate premises.</p>
<p>In what zones can I do tourist and visitor accommodation?</p>	<p>Tourist and visitor accommodation is permitted with consent under WLEP 2011 in the following rural and environmental zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RU1 Primary Production • RU2 Rural Landscape • RU4 Primary Production Small Lots • C4 Environmental Living <p>Please consult the Land Use Table in the WLEP 2011 for permissibility of other specific visitor economy-related land uses.</p>
<p>In what zones can I do a function centre?</p>	<p>Function centres are permitted with consent under WLEP 2011 in the following rural zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RU1 Primary Production • RU2 Rural Landscape • RU4 Primary Production Small Lots <p>Please consult the Land Use Table in the WLEP 2011 for permissibility of other specific visitor economy-related land uses.</p>

Are there any Development Control Plan (DCP) controls?

There are no adopted controls specifically for agritourism and visitor economy uses within the Wollondilly Development Control Plan 2016; however, draft DCP controls are currently under development by Council.



Refer to the Agritourism and Farm Stay Accommodation section – under Guides for New Farmers – of the AgriHub webpage for additional information on agritourism and the visitor economy.