



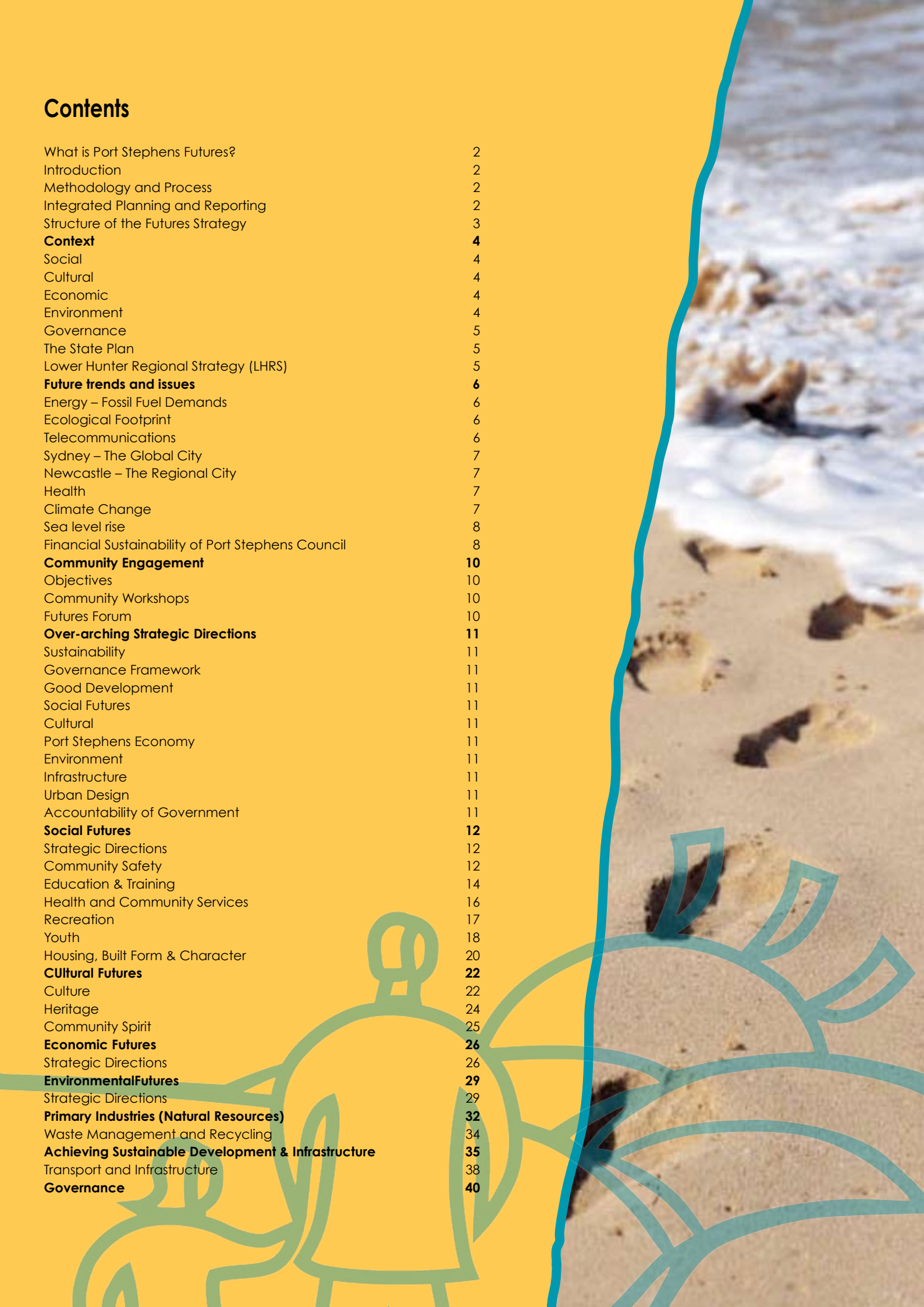
# Port Stephens Futures Strategy

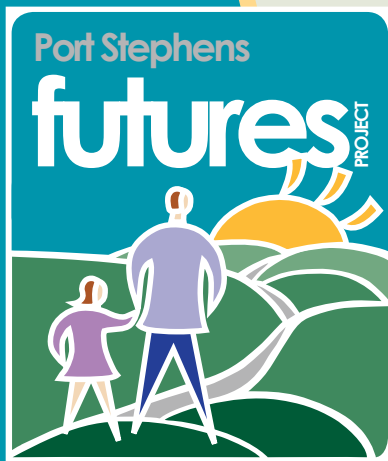
*Port Stephens*  
C.O.U.N.C.I.L



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## Introduction

This Port Stephens Futures Strategy is:

- A Council and community expression of the future that we want to create for the Port Stephens area and how to achieve this;
- A statement of Strategic directions based on **Sustainability** enabling:
  - Short term decisions to be taken based upon long term considerations;
  - A balance between social, economic, cultural and environmental factors;
- Actions to achieve the strategic directions which are proposed inclusions into the forthcoming Community Strategic Plan as required by the NSW Government. The proposed inclusions form a basis to engage all responsible government agencies and community organisations to achieve the defined future in partnership with Port Stephens Council; and
- A foundation for the Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan that is targeted to be before the State Government in early/mid 2011.

## Methodology and Process

The main elements in preparation of the Port Stephens Futures have been:

1. An audit of existing key policy documents - a "Situational Analysis";
2. A Key Issues Discussion Paper prepared by Strategy Hunter – *What are the big issues for the future of Port Stephens?* (September 2008) - as a basis for community and agency engagement;
3. Nine Community Workshops held in locations across the Local Government area;
4. Workshops with Councillors, management and staff of Council;
5. Workshops with Federal agencies, State agencies and community-based groups delivering services to the community;
6. A Futures Reference Group composed of representatives of Council, business, community interest groups, development industry and State agencies meeting monthly to provide advice;
7. The compilation and analysis of all of the outputs from the community workshops;
8. A professionally facilitated Port Stephens Forum held over one and half days;
9. Preparation of this Draft Strategy by Council staff based upon themes and input derived from the community consultation process; and
10. Submission to Council recommending adoption.

## Integrated Planning and Reporting

The NSW Government has prepared draft legislation and regulations, draft guidelines and a draft manual as part of its efforts to reform local government in NSW. The specific aims of the proposed reform package include:

- Improving the integration of various statutory planning and reporting processes undertaken by Councils required by the *Local Government Act* and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*;
- Strengthening of Councils' strategic focus;
- Streamlining of reporting processes; and
- Ensuring that the Local Government Act and the Department of Local Government's guidelines support a strategic and integrated approach to planning and reporting by local councils.

What is  
Port Stephens  
Futures?

Consequently, Council is responding as a Category One Council and will prepare:

- A Community Strategic Plan (12+ yrs) that identifies the community's main priorities and expectations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals.;
- A Delivery Program (4 yrs) that is a statement of commitment from each newly elected council and includes:
  - Long Term Financial Planning
  - Workforce Management
  - Planning
  - Asset Management Planning;
- An Annual Operational Plan that must be prepared under the Delivery Program. It must directly address the actions outlined in the Delivery Program and identify projects, programs or activities that Council will undertake within the financial year towards addressing these actions;
- An Annual Report to the community that identifies Council's implementation of the Delivery Program and Operational Plan activities; and
- The Community Strategic Plan 2010-2022; the Delivery Program 2010-14 and the Operational Plan 2010-11 are programmed to be exhibited during April 2010.

**short term** – (1 to 4 years);

**medium term** – (4 to 12 years); and

**Long term** – (12 years plus).

- **Council's Role:**

Council as **lead** agency;

Council as **Partner** - working collaboratively with other organisations;

Council as **advocate** – role as a lobbying/advocacy agency; and

Council as **support** - Reliance upon other agencies and/or community groups for action for advocacy/ lobbying but with some level of support from Council.

## Structure of the Futures Strategy

There are overarching strategic directions all-embracing, fundamental platforms for the Strategy. Strategic directions and actions are expressed within the five pillars of sustainability (compatible with the Department of Local Government requirements) – social, cultural, economic, environmental and governance. "Achieving Sustainable Development and Infrastructure is a synthesis of relevant policies because of its high level of significance to the community and in achieving the desired social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes.

The five pillars, based upon Council's Sustainability Policy and Department of Local Government requirements, are presented with underlying themes that reflect key issues identified by Council professional staff and by community consultation. Each pillar contains a background context, relevant priorities from the NSW State Plan, relevant strategic directions from the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy, strategic directions for Council and actions to achieve the strategic directions are recommended for inclusion into the forthcoming Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, Operational Plan and means of implementation.

A basic principle for the Strategic Directions of the Futures Strategy is to make clear connection with who does what and when for implementation. Hence, the proposed actions are **S.M.A.R.T – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed**.

That is not to say that more "out of left field" visions should not be included – that may be currently unrealistic, but through substantial change in policy in the medium to long term and/or engagement of "community energy" could still be brought to fruition.

The proposed actions include:

- **Timeframes:**

**immediate** – to be initiated during the next year's budget/business Plan phase;





# Context

This Section summarises the current social, cultural, economic and environmental characteristics of Port Stephens Local Government Area (LGA) and the most important 'big picture' trends and issues shaping the future of the Hunter region and the Port Stephens area. This Port Stephens Future Strategy provides strategic directions on how Council and the community will respond to these issues and trends.

## Social

Some key demographics of Port Stephens are:

- Port Stephens accounts for 9.5% of the Hunter Regional population and has experienced the highest population growth (25.6%) since 1991. The estimated population in 2006 was 62,550;
- The projected population in 2031 is 117,700;
- 22% of the population is under 14 years compared to 20.6 for NSW and the ages 60 and over are growing significantly in proportion – 50% between 2001 and 2006; and
- 17.5% of the population has some form of mobility impairment – including 23% in Nelson Bay.

Housing in Port Stephens is comparatively affordable – particularly in the western sector. The environment of the Port Stephens area offers a diversity of lifestyles for a range of demographics. The settlement pattern of Port Stephens consists of dispersed towns and villages that provide challenges for the funding and provision of infrastructure and services particularly public transport and provision of medical and educational services.

## Cultural

The towns and villages of Port Stephens provide opportunities for individual cultural identity by creating more local places with associated cultural and economic themes. This is considered of value to the community interested in promoting and retaining local character and is integral to growing the tourism industry and creating local employment opportunities.

## Economic

Council adopted the Port Stephens Economic Development Strategy in October 2007. The two main themes of the Strategy are:

- Growing community: business growth, new businesses, employment base and increased skilled jobs; and
- Improving place/living community: town development, town improvement, infrastructure and industrial zones.

The major advantages of the area to support economic development and employment growth are:

- The quality of the coastal and natural environment (including rural lands);
- range of lifestyle opportunities across the LGA;
- accessibility (regional, State, national and international) including close proximity to Newcastle – Australia's sixth largest city and two hours from Sydney; and
- industry base (particularly Defence, Defence support, civil aviation, manufacturing, tourism and retail).

The major constraints to economic and employment growth include; limited high order knowledge base services, skill shortages; a relatively small population and reliance on economies of scale by association with the Hunter Region; infrastructure gaps; appreciation of the amenity, tourism and economic value of the area's biodiversity, management of ecologically constrained land, variable tourism market and limited public transport.

37% of Port Stephens residents who are employed commute out of the LGA each day. There is a significant need to create local jobs to reduce escape spending and reduce local resident transport costs. This will require the integration of future residential areas with compatible employment opportunities and stronger physical links to current and future employment areas.

Planned and well managed co-existence of the RAAF Base at Williamstown with existing and future residential areas in terms of aircraft noise management is also a significant issue.

## Environment

The combination of National Parks, Hunter Water Catchment areas, state forests, crown land, council reserves and wetlands comprise almost 60% of the land area of the LGA. 31% of land in the LGA is flood affected, and the preferred and supplementary habitat embodied in the Koala Plan of Management comprises 18.85% of the LGA. One of the greatest challenges for Port Stephens Futures and the planning framework adopted by State Government and Council is balancing the sensitive, high quality environment with future growth and development.

Recent and proposed changes to state and federal government policy, bio-banking, carbon trading, etc, have highlighted a shift in thinking to viewing the natural environment as having quantifiable economic value.

Port Stephens is well placed to take advantage of future policies that are likely to continue on this same vein. As population increases care needs to be taken not to lose the natural assets that the area is recognised for and at the same time protect our eco-tourism industry. Together with Council's Sustainability Policy, the "think global, act local" theme underlies the planning, operational management and community advocacy across the Port Stephens area.

## Governance

There are ongoing and increasing demands placed upon Council's accountability by the community and State Government in planning initiatives and decision making and the provision and maintenance of services under Council's responsibility. Hence, openness and transparency of decision making processes are a key factor in the preparation, review and implementation of Port Stephens Futures.

The preparation of Futures involved input from a range of stakeholders. The document embodies a governance framework that reflects a desired partnership with State Government agencies, business groups and community interest groups to implement recommended actions. How the governance framework is constructed and formalised is a key component of this Strategy.

## The State Plan

The State Plan (adopted by the State Government in 2006 – undergoing review in September/October 2009) contains a range of actions pertinent to all local government areas in NSW. The Futures Strategy makes connections between local needs and actions and the contents of the State Plan. This facilitates local residents, community and business groups to lobby and Council to advocate to the State government for programs, policies and funding to meet local needs. This includes funding and provision of infrastructure and services and program funding to support local community resident and business needs.

## Lower Hunter Regional Strategy (LHRS)

The LHRS was endorsed by State Government in October 2006. It sets the directions from the State Government for the major residential growth, employment generating options and, in conjunction with the Regional Conservation Strategy, establishes environmental and conservation priorities for the Lower Hunter until 2031. The Strategy predicts a population growth of 160,000 in the region by 2031. The key contents of the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy for the Port Stephens area include:

- Two major urban release areas – Kings Hill (up to 5,000 dwellings) and Medowie (approx. 3,000 dwellings);
- Employment land: Tomago/ Williamstown and Newcastle airport with the latter being a specialised centre with the related Defence and related employment zones totalling planned vision of 3,000 jobs;
- Major regional centre: Raymond Terrace – 1,600 jobs and 300 dwellings; and
- Tourism precinct Nelson Bay 1,500 jobs and 1,200 dwellings.



# Future trends and issues

**With technology bringing rapid change to nations and the global economy, the residents of Port Stephens are becoming increasingly interconnected with the rest of the world. With Sydney, a global city, only some 2 hours away by car, the economic and social trends, influences and issues experienced by its residents will inevitably and invariably impact upon the residents of Port Stephens. This chapter scopes some of the trends and issues that may influence Port Stephens in the future.**

**It is crucial that the Draft Strategy is not "continuing the past into the future". It is also about scenario thinking – asking what the future may hold, different from the past, that should have a bearing on policy making in the present.**

## Energy – Fossil Fuel Demands

An economic driver for development in Port Stephens over the last 60 years has been increasing personal mobility via the private motor vehicle supported by relatively cheap petrol. Today, people can live in Nelson Bay and drive to work in Newcastle or own a home in the LGA, work in the Central Coast or Sydney during the week and spend their weekends at home – or vice versa. However, global factors in energy production and consumption may significantly curtail our mobility and use of fossil fuel for private transport in the future.

Increasing world demand, crude oil production approaching capacity limits; under investment in oil refining and infrastructure; and, political instability in oil producing regions, mean that insecurity of fuel supply will be an increasing significant issue over the next 20 to 30 years.

If petroleum costs significantly increase over time and an economically and environmentally acceptable alternative is not available, possible community and market responses could include:

- Consumer switch to smaller or more fuel efficient motor vehicles;
- Increase demand and corresponding increase in residential densities around existing towns and centres that are well connected by public transport and/or are relatively self contained;
- Increased localised agricultural production and production of goods and materials (e.g. for construction) for local consumption as high energy costs make it uneconomic to transport produce, goods and materials over long distances; and
- A plateau in growth of standalone car dependent retail centres and a corresponding growth in size and diversity of retailing in district and local/neighbourhood centres.

## Ecological Footprint

Ecological footprint is the amount of land required to sustain an individual or a community's daily activities. This includes land to produce food, water, and energy and to dispose of waste.

The concept of "ecological footprint" is a tool to quantify and understand the environmental impacts that communities have upon the local and global environment and determine appropriate and measurable responses to reduce the impact.

According to information derived from the following website [www.bestfootforward.com/footprintlife.htm](http://www.bestfootforward.com/footprintlife.htm) a Port Stephens resident requires an average of 8.1 hectares of land to produce the energy, material goods, food and water to maintain current lifestyles. With 62,500 people, the amount of land required to sustain the LGA at current rates of energy, material goods and food consumption would be approximately 500,000 hectares. This is just over 5 times the actual area of the LGA. This warrants increasing attention on reducing energy and water consumption, increasing recycling, increasing tree planting and reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions.

## Telecommunications

Technology and telecommunications are underpinning the transition to a 'knowledge' economy and facilitating flexibility, rapidity and mobility for business establishment, operation

and location. Wireless broadband internet, mobile phone and laptop computers are allowing the decentralization of employment. Lake Macquarie Council has found that there are 6875 home based businesses that generate a turnover in excess of \$1.3 billion and employ 14,558 workers representing 15.4% of the city's working population. As a result, 55% of jobs are located away from traditional town centres and industrial zoned areas.

Lend Lease research (2003) relating to the next decade anticipates that advances in technology will:

- Enable remote development via wireless communications that will particularly affect office locations and "freedom from the grid";
- Reduce nonresidential space needs;
- Facilitate faster change; and
- Enable Property management and operations (office and retail) to become more profitable.

## Sydney – The Global City

Sydney is home to 4.2 million people and is likely to grow to 5.3 million by 2031. It is Australia's largest and most prosperous city with resident incomes significantly higher than the rest of the nation. The size of the city and the mobility and wealth of its residents influence areas within a 2½-hour drive radius from the city including Port Stephens. This is evident by the short stay tourist market and anecdotal evidence of the increasing number of residents who commute to work in Sydney and return daily or for weekends.

Demographic, economic and cultural changes are likely to increase the number of "seachangers" seeking coastal amenity and lifestyle within a 2-hour drive of large cities (Salt 2005). "Seachangers" include retirees and people who have sufficient job flexibility that they can choose to work from home or commute. The towns that are populated by work from home people have attractive settings and are near freeways that connect capital cities (Salt, 2005).

Sydney, and to a lesser extent Newcastle, attract the young, talented and ambitious job seekers away from Port Stephens to the "bright lights" and higher incomes. Retaining these people is difficult, but the civilian and military aeronautical industry centred on Williamtown Airport and continued diversification and maturing of the regional economy will assist local employment retention.

Also, the rail connection between Sydney and Newcastle warrants consideration of substantial upgrading to reduce travel times and provide better connection between the two cities.

## Newcastle – The Regional City

Newcastle has been identified in the LHRs as the key to the identity of the region and providing higher order services, culture and employment to the residents of the region.

For Port Stephens services such as health and education located in Newcastle, mean that the area will always inextricably linked to the city. However, the degree of dependence on Newcastle for other services (entertainment, retailing etc) will be dependent on how the LGA is able to attract and or develop such activities that are economically and demographically viable and can create a point of difference to similar activities offered in the city or elsewhere in the region.

## Health

The phenomenal growth in private motor vehicle usage and the design of our cities, towns and neighbourhoods around the car over the last 80 years raises questions about costs on human health in terms of air quality from emissions, obesity and sedentarism through lack of exercise and injury and death from crashes.

In 2001, about 9 million Australians (46% of population) over the age of 18 were estimated to be overweight or obese, with 3.3 million in the high-risk obese group. If current trends continue it is likely that there will be another 1 million obese adults by 2010 and another 2 million by 2020. 20 years earlier the prevalence of adult obesity was 8% (Dixon and Waters, 2003).

Relevant factors are:

- Aesthetic features of the physical environment and convenience or access to local facilities are consistently associated with walking behaviour;
- Positive perceptions of the environment and the presence of open space and green space relates to physical activity patterns;
- People will walk more if there are destinations, such as shops or places that people want to go to, and if there are good footpaths and a perceived safe environment to get there;
- Physical activity more likely in areas with older housing, compared to newer housing areas, suggesting that better street connectivity may be a contributor to fostering physical activity; and
- Proximity to desired destinations is important.

## Climate Change

According to the Bureau of Meteorology Australia's mean annual temperature has increased by 0.7°C since 1910, with the decades at the end of the century the hottest ever recorded. Records of changes in sea level occur at Sydney and show that relative sea level has risen  $1.38 \pm 0.18$  mm per year between 1897 and 1998 (Australian Greenhouse Office, 2002 and 2005).

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) is considered to provide the most reliable and comprehensive assessments of global climate change. The most recent 2007 fourth Assessment Report provides some extremely concerning predictions of the impacts of climate change, and the implications for national and international mitigation efforts required to minimize these impacts. **Since the release of the IPCC report there have been numerous reports from respected scientific institutions around the world that both the rate of GHG emissions growth, and the rate of environmental change have both largely equaled or exceeded the worst case scenarios modeled in the 2007 IPCC Report.** The latest of these assessments from the Climate Congress in Denmark in March 2009 states that "many key climate indicators are already moving beyond the patterns of natural variability within which contemporary society and economy have developed and thrived ... including global mean surface temperature, sea-level rise, global ocean temperature, Arctic sea ice extent, ocean acidification, and extreme climate events".

Australia is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases on a per capita basis. About 32 tonnes of greenhouse gas are released for every Australian annually (Local Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Port Stephens).

## Sea level rise

Average global sea level rise during the 20th century was between 10 and 20cm whilst between 1990 and 2100 sea levels are projected to rise between 9 and 88 cm (Australian Greenhouse Office 2005). However, the 2007 IPCC report clearly states that sea level rise predictions do not include “the full effects of changes in ice sheet flow, therefore the upper values of the ranges are not to be considered upper bounds for sea level rise”. Many scientists will not rule out sea level rise greater than 1 metre by 2100. Council has recently adopted 0.91 metre sea level rise by 2100 – the State Government and CSIRO estimate – as a basis for planning purposes (0.46 metre by 2050). This relates to the ocean foreshore – no specific data is available on the implications of sea level rise for the LGA. However, as large areas of the LGA are low lying and flood affected it is reasonable to assume that these areas will be sensitive to predicted sea level changes, associated storm surges and ground water level changes.

Port Stephens Council has recently completed a climate change risk assessment and adaptation planning exercise in relation to council operations. The first step to implementing the adaptation action plan is to gather additional information on how specific climatic changes will impact upon the LGA and then update its policies and practices accordingly.

Council is also investigating opportunities with other Lower Hunter Councils to determine a consistent, regional approach to managing development in areas affected by climate change, particularly in relation to sea level rise.

It will be vital to undertake community education and consultation exercises alongside these adaption responses to ensure that the community understands and supports the difficult decisions that will need to be made.

The Australian Greenhouse Office (A.G.O) under the Department of the Environment and Heritage suggests the following guidelines for Councils to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

Greenfield development:

- Increase density requirements;
- Mixed uses;
- Interconnected street grid network;
- High-frequency and high-quality public transport connections;
- Use of energy-efficient building materials, high solar access, energy-efficient building and subdivision design principles;
- On-site containment of water/ runoff, or reuse;
- Use of bunding and other techniques to control runoff during construction of buildings and roads;
- data on infrastructure cost and savings in energy use during construction phase and to householders, and in greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Substitution of local retailing and service facilities linked to public transport for large car based retail centres.

Urban infill:

- Identification of suitable locations for mixed uses and medium density development within 400 metres of a suitable public transport stop and activity centre and large suitable sites;

- Concentration of mixed use and medium density development within these defined areas in place of incremental small scale single use medium density development in any residential areas;
- Strict limitations on car parking provision in developments near public transport; and
- Measurable density, heritage protection, urban design, energy efficiency, transport, resource conservation, waste minimisation and management and other suitable criteria able to be understood and applied consistently by a range of users.

## Financial Sustainability of Port Stephens Council

Trends in Council's operating revenue and expenses indicate a significant gap between the two. The single most significant driver of this gap is the exponential growth in Council's expenditure on the maintenance and renewal of infrastructure. According to a report on the condition and management of local government infrastructure in NSW submitted to the Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of Local Government (Jan. 2006), Councils in NSW, including Port Stephens, are characterized by:

- Local governments are the custodians of approximately \$50 billion of community assets of which \$8 billion are water and sewer assets;
- The service potential of these assets is being consumed at an estimated rate of \$0.9 billion per year; approximately double the rate at which assets are currently being replaced;
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that most citizens think local government earns two to six times the revenue that it actually receives, which may fuel false expectations of what it is capable of doing;
- An unknown but significant proportion of local government infrastructure was first provided from sources of revenue other than Council rates. In developing urban areas most local infrastructure was first constructed by developers with little analysis of the life cycle cost of services provided by this infrastructure;
- This issue has not been apparent in the past, because a relatively small proportion of infrastructure has required renewal. Councils have funded the maintenance and operation of assets from current sources of revenue, with a limited amount of renewal;
- Most Councils are unlikely, under existing arrangements, to have the capacity to generate sufficient revenue to maintain and renew infrastructure. For example, Councils in rapidly developing urban areas in the 1970's had little power to halt this development. Infrastructure valued in the billions was transferred to Councils to maintain and ultimately renew with little or no analysis on whether the life cycle costs of this infrastructure could be supported by the increased rate revenue. The life cycle cost of infrastructure could be double the equivalent revenue for providing infrastructure related services; and
- Better management will make this process transparent and inform policy choices for the future, but will not solve the underlying distortion between costs and revenues.

The dispersed pattern of settlement across such a large geographical area creates remoteness from services, facilities and infrastructure as opposed to creating a critical mass of

population concentrated within a smaller geographical area, which is required to justify and support investment in major infrastructure such as hospitals and schools. Port Stephens.

The final report by the Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of NSW Local Government (May 2006) states that local government is under many pressures, including:

- The public expects it to supplement state services (eg. health and human services);
- The public wants Councils to give highest priority to waste management, roads, pavements, kerbing, parks and gardens, litter and graffiti control, water & sewerage, maintenance of waterways and the environment;
- The public is least satisfied with local roads, pavements, kerbing, traffic management, parking facilities, town planning and timely processing of building applications;
- Regional and rural Councils have to subsidise doctors and their premises to attract them to their towns;
- State and local demands for better environmental management are putting cost pressures on Councils;
- As the population ages more retirees will move to coastal and inland regional centers where they expect Councils to provide aged care services (e.g. nursing homes and meals on wheels);
- "Sea" and "tree changers" used to city standards demand higher grades of service than non metropolitan Councils can afford;
- To counteract the decline in their populations, some Councils in rural areas or non-regional centres are under local pressure to pursue costly and sometimes risky economic development initiatives;
- On limited sample data provided by Councils to the Inquiry, the total burden of 'cost shifting' may be costing NSW local government anything between \$70 million and \$350 million per annum. This equate to 2-5% of total revenue; and
- The Local Government Act 1993 freed up Councils to embrace a 'maximalist' (people servicing) role, yet by restricting taxes to property rates and retaining rate pegging and fee capping, in reality, local government has remained constrained to a minimalist (property servicing) role. In the absence of a wider tax base and constraints on other sources of revenue, Councils might need to curb their recurrent spending ambitions until they have overcome the shortfall in their capital spending on infrastructure renewals (especially roads, pavements, kerbing, public places, etc).

Council's infrastructure backlog is currently estimated at \$25-30 million and in response to this Council has developed a long term financial plan to provide strategic guidance to the management of Council's finances and to identify strategies for addressing the backlog. Council is in the fortunate position of owning a significant property portfolio. The strategic management of this portfolio is seen as one of the opportunities available to Council to supplement rates, fees and charges income over time with either long term property rental income or, where appropriate, property sales income which will improve Council's ability to allocate an appropriate amount of money towards the maintenance and renewal of Council's infrastructure.





# Community Engagement

## Objectives

The objectives of the community engagement undertaken to prepare Port Stephens Futures include to:

- Engage the community in thinking about the major issues facing Port Stephens now and in the future;
- Engage Council with local residents on the major issues for their village, town or area;
- Enable residents, community groups and other stakeholders, Council staff and Councillors to experience working together in a positive way;
- Develop an appreciation and ownership of Port Stephens Futures across Council;
- Clarify what Council's roles and responsibilities are and how Council can influence or not influence issues outside of its responsibilities;
- Develop community ownership and understanding of issues, actions and their role; and
- Create a platform of goodwill in community engagement and community partnerships for future planning activities.

A range of groups were engaged in the process

- Council employees piloted and refined the process;
- A workshop for Council Senior Managers to set directions and priorities for actions/challenges;
- Workshops were conducted with Councillors;
- Councillors participated in the community workshops and Futures Forum; and
- Residents participated in nine (9) Community workshops throughout the Shire; submitted feedback forms and attended the Futures Forum

A Workshop was held with government and community based agencies.

Other stakeholders included:

- Resident Groups;
- Members of the Futures Reference Group;
- Port Stephens Interagency;
- Domestic Violence Committee;
- Bayway Village mobile home owners;
- Raymond Terrace Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Meeting;

- Indigenous Strategic Committee (Worimi); and
- Youth Interagency

Youth and Children:

- youth discussions;
- school activities (secondary school); and
- Children's Week activity 'Windows of Change'.

## Community Workshops

Nine workshops were independently facilitated (by "Straight Talk Pty Ltd") across the Port Stephens LGA during November 2008. They were held at Anna Bay; Fern Bay; Karuah; Medowie; Nelson Bay; Raymond Terrace; Salamander Bay; Tilligerry Peninsula; and Williamstown.

The outcomes from these workshops were summarised in a "Community Workshop Report December 2008" prepared by "Straight Talk" Pty Ltd. These outcomes were incorporated into the Background Papers prepared for Day One of the Forum.

## Futures Forum

The Futures Forum was held over one and a half days, (Friday 15th May and Thursday 21st May 2009). Day One was attended by approximately 180 people and Day Two by approximately 130 people representing residents, community groups and agencies.

The outcomes from the Forum include:

- Establishing a dialogue between Council and the community;
- Visions drafted for each of the themes considered at the Forum;
- Suggested actions to deliver the vision;
- Ideas relating to partnership with council and other agencies;
- Identification of skills within the community;
- Quick actions and actions that will have the most impact were identified for each theme; and
- Whether the vision statements and actions could align with existing Council or agency activities.

# Over-arching Strategic Directions

## Sustainability

Sustainability will be:

- Increasingly the foundation for Council policies and operations;
- Increasingly the basis for Council promotion and advocacy of energy and water conservation and carbon neutral operations of public and private sector agencies operating in the Shire;
- The basis for planning the overall design of the new urban release areas;
- The basis for planning a balance between development and environment in the Shire;
- Achieving inter-generational equity in terms of environmental conservation and service provision and the basis of financial management of Council; and
- Council exercising responsibility to "think globally and act locally" to a reasonable extent.

## Governance Framework

A framework is established to coordinate the policies, budgets and work programs of agencies to deliver this Strategy and in particular a framework to improve the cohesive approach of State agencies to implement this Strategy, the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and the State Plan in Port Stephens.

## Good Development

Port Stephens Council stands for "good development", ie. supporting development that:

- Fulfils the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy directions;
- Respects the coastal and environmental attributes and heritage of the Shire;
- Establishes reasonable clarity about the long term development pattern and capacity of the Shire for the development industry, investors and the community;
- Is consistent with the State and local legal and policy framework; and
- Is based upon policies providing increased certainty to the development industry, investors and the community and supporting increasingly efficient development assessment.

## Social Futures

### Strategic Directions

To achieve continuous improvements in:

- Community safety;
- Community capacity;
- Housing opportunities tailored to demographic structure and community needs; and
- Quality of facilities tailored to demographic structure and community needs.

## Cultural

To enhance collaboration between cultural groups to progressively enhance cultural opportunities, cultural events and related employment opportunities.

## Port Stephens Economy

Economic Development is planned and managed to:

Build upon existing strengths (aviation, defence industry, tourism, aluminium production, bus manufacturing etc.)

To increase the provision of locally based jobs and increase the proximity of employment opportunities to existing and future development areas.

## Environment

The unique coastal and natural environmental attributes of Port Stephens are protected and enhanced.

Opportunities are taken directly by negotiations with developers, or through voluntary planning agreements to conserve and enhance environmental lands and corridors.

## Infrastructure

Planning and delivery of infrastructure (social and physical infrastructure for public services and facilities) is improved in terms of integration with development pattern and timing and is based upon a clear framework of public sector and private sector funding commitments.

## Urban Design

The quality of the built environment is continuously improved by:

- Rolling out a program of locality planning which reflects distinctive characteristics of towns and villages in the Shire; and
- Placing more emphasis on policy making and development assessment on urban design and architectural design – particularly in Nelson Bay and Raymond Terrace as the specialist and subregional centres.

## Accountability of Government

Council will follow processes and policies that support openness, transparency and accountability of assessment and decision making, particularly in planning and environmental management matters.



# Social Futures

## Strategic Directions

Work in partnership with education providers and employment providers to enhance employment opportunities;

Positively influence the reduction of early leaving school rates

Improve access to education (eg; TAFE), training, work experience opportunities and employment to retain young people after completing their school education

Create safe communities, particularly for aged persons and young people to socialise and develop independence.

Promote 'healthy teenaging' through links with 'healthy ageing' programs to support the collaboration of youth and aged.

Work in partnership with community and health service providers to improve access and integration of facilities and services

Provide a diverse range of recreational assets which are safe and highly accessible – balanced with abilities to maintain on a financially sustainable basis

Provide for a range of lot sizes and housing types to respond to demographic needs and affordability.

To prepare a Plan for Senior Living Accommodation that reflects demographic need and preferred locations for community, retails, medical and public transport facilities

To implement child friendly policies into planning for urban release areas and by amendments to Port Stephens Development Control Plan.

## Community Safety

Vision:

*"A community where people feel safe"*

### Background

Perception of crime and reality are often quite different. In Port Stephens surveys indicate residents perceive crime as being a major issue, whereas official data does not support this.

However, there are areas in Port Stephens where crime and community safety are "real" issues particularly the high incidence of domestic violence and assault related crimes.

Crime prevention is not the sole responsibility of the Police but of the whole community. Since 2001 Council has forged a number of very strong and effective partnerships with key stakeholders such as the Police. This has resulted in a broad community safety network that is working together to find ways of increasing the safety of the whole Port Stephens community.

The *Port Stephens Crime Prevention Plan 2006-2009* established four main priority areas for action:

- Domestic and community violence
- Security of self, family and property
- Community spirit
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Young people and crime

### State Plan Priorities

Relevant State Plan priorities are:

- R1: Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime
- R2: Reducing re-offending
- R3: Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour
- S5: More students complete Year 12 or recognised vocational training
- F1: Improved health and education for Aboriginal people
- F4: Embedding the principle of prevention and early intervention into
- Government service delivery in NSW
- F7: Reduced rates of child abuse and neglect

### Directions from Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

The Strategy promotes safety in commercial centres through increased mixed use development (p 7)

### Links to other themes

- Education /Training
- Tourism / Economy
- Recreation
- Housing

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan,

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Make local data on criminal activities and associated public safety data publicly available	Short term	Advocate	Police
Increase crime prevention and safety education in our schools/ community	Short term	Partner	Police, schools
Decreasing drug and alcohol abuse through community education	Medium term	Advocate	Health Dept.
Develop policies that increase building design that enable improved overlooking/surveillance of streets and public spaces	Short term	Lead	Developers, project home companies, Landcom
Utilise community capacity building in community development	Short-term		Businesses service providers
Lobby for more General Practitioners to ensure baseline service levels are achieved at a minimum at different locations	Short term	Lead/Advocate	Department of Health Department of Planning General Practitioners
Review planning provisions to encourage more local General Practitioners	Short term	Lead	
Appointment of more Police School Liaison Officers to enable more school visits	Short term	Advocate	State Government
Seek more funding to be made available for crime prevention programs and resources	Short term	Lead/ Advocate	Council Government
Conduct regular community safety audits and safety forums	Short term	Lead/ Partner	Council Police Community
More good news stories are reported and successes to newspapers and television	Short term	Lead/Partner/Advocate	Council Agencies Community
Encourage greater visibility of Police Officers playing an active and positive role in the community and encouragement of support for policing process by community	Short term	Advocate/Partner	Police Council Community
Make careers in the Police Force more attractive to young people	Medium term	Advocate	State Government
Encourage respect for all people in positions of authority (police, teachers, bus drivers etc) by whole community	Short term	Partner/Advocate	Government Council
Educate people so that they become aware of why they should report crime and so that they have a better understanding of the court system	Short term	Partner/Advocate	Agencies Council
There are more severe penalties for secondary supply of drugs and alcohol	Medium term	Advocate	State Government
Apply 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Principles' (ie; CPTED) safer by design in the assessment of relevant development applications and in planning for/designing public places.	Short term	Lead	Council Development Industry Police
Undertake 'community impact assessment' of applications to the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming & Racing for the granting of liquor licences.	Short term	Lead	Council Development Industry State Agencies
Continuously maintain, implement and review a Crime Prevention Plan.	Short term	Lead	Council Development Industry State Agencies
Maintain and implement a Graffiti Management Plan – including a reward system for volunteers.	Short term	Lead	Community Interest Groups NSW Police



## Education & Training

Vision:

*"People of all ages are equipped with the knowledge, skills and experiences required to maximise their participation in the economic and community life of Port Stephens"*

### Background

Port Stephens is serviced by 17 preschools, 20 K-6 primary schools, 2 K-12 schools and three 7-12 high schools. According to the ABS Census 2006, school completion rates for Year 12 in the LGA (28.7% of residents) are lower than the regional average (30.7%) of Hunter Region.

A person's level of education generally impacts upon their ability to access employment and other aspects of community life. In recent years the term "Lifelong Learning" has gained popularity as it defines education as 'learning from the womb to the tomb' covering all forms of formal and informal education and training (eg; preschool, primary/high school, tertiary, adult learning, inter-generational informal sharing of stories, history, ideas and sharing of experiences between groups and individuals).

Community feedback indicates that Port Stephens faces the challenges of poor school completion rates, equipping our existing and future labour force with the necessary knowledge and skills required to secure existing and future emerging employment opportunities locally and regionally. Equally important is seizing existing and emerging opportunities such as technology to ensure all residents are able to access education and training in a flexible way.

## State Plan Priorities

Relevant State Plan priorities are:

- S4: Increasing levels of attainment for all students
- S5: More students complete Year 12 or recognised vocational training
- F1: Improved health and education for Aboriginal people
- F2: Increased employment and community participation for people with disabilities
- F6: Increased proportion of children with skills for life and learning at school entry
- P4: More people participating in education and training throughout their life
- P7: Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy directions

Strategy promotes access to education. Education is a large employer in the Lower Hunter. Sustainability Criteria 8 requires quality & equity to services for education

### Links to other themes

- Tourism / economy
- Youth
- Urban Growth
- Ageing
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Health & Community Services
- Registered training organisations



## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Create and maintain a website with relevant information and links to education and employment sector.	Short Term	Partner	Schools Major Industry Business Sector Department of Education
Facilitate an annual stakeholder forum to collaborate and review existing and new and emerging plans and issues to ensure education and training offered is tailored to local and regional employment opportunities.	Short Term	Lead	Schools Major Industry Business Sector Government
Increase local representation on relevant local and regional forums and networks to ensure local education and training needs and/or emerging issues are recognised and addressed.	Short term	Lead	Hunter Councils DET
Facilitate intergenerational opportunities for people to share stories, be inspired, supported and mentored to enable a stronger sense of self confidence and sense of community belonging.	Medium Term	Advocate	Smith Family Planet Youth Beacon Foundation Living Book Program Church Youth Groups
Increase community awareness of existing education and training opportunities provided on a local and regional basis	Short Term	Partner/ Advocate	Schools Major Industry Business Sector Government
Seek the Department of Education to review current courses offered by schools to explore and identify real opportunities for greater flexibility and collaboration between schools to enable students to access desired courses aligned with their career aspirations from a number of sources	Short Term	Advocate	Schools Major Industry Business DET
Seek the Department of Education to review current traditional school delivery model to explore and identify real opportunities for greater flexibility in school delivery to ensure structure is age appropriate and reflects best practice.	Short Term	Lead	Schools Major Industry Business DET
Strengthen connectivity of public transport services to increase local participation in local and regional education and training programs and institutions.	Short Term	Advocate	Schools Major Industry Business DET MOT
Enhance access to education and training through greater use of technology, and local venues	Medium Term	Partner/ Advocate	Schools Major Industry Business DET
Review courses and programs offered by adult education providers are aligned with local employment needs and aspirations such as aviation and defence industries.	Medium Term	Partner/ Advocate	Schools Major Industry Business DET Defence Airport
Plan for education and training services and facilities to be provided locally are expanded/provided in accordance with forecast population growth	Long Term	Lead/ Partner/ Advocate	Schools Major Industry Business DET
Investigate and pursue opportunities to improve and expand access to existing TAFE courses and facilities including viability of localised service/facility provision.	Medium Term	Partner	Schools Major Industry Business DET TAFE NSW
Investigate and pursue opportunities for the provision of selective schools in Port Stephens (eg: Trades Schools).	Medium Term	Partner	Schools Major Industry Business DET TAFE NSW
Initiate collaborative programs with registered training organisation to enhance educational opportunities	Short Term	Partner	Registered Training Organisations



## Health and Community Services

Vision:

*Port Stephens is a vibrant community where services and infrastructure are integrated and support a culture in which people are cared for, feel healthier, more active, informed and better connected.*

### Background

Port Stephens has pockets of social disadvantage with Raymond Terrace being the most socially disadvantaged area. Social indicators reflect relatively low school completion rates, high unemployment/generational un-employment, high levels of domestic violence, low literacy and numeracy levels, and high numbers of social housing tenants.

Government and non-government organisations provide a diverse range of social support services, community development and capacity building programs across the LGA to residents experiencing stress, crisis and social disadvantage. Services include education and training, counselling, family and parenting support, employment assistance, crisis intervention, legal aide, refugee settlement services, home care, food services, Aboriginal, youth, disability and aged care.

Current State and Federal funding for community services is being targeted towards those organisations that are able to implement strategies that focus on early intervention and prevention, greater integration, partnership development, collaborative planning, and work practices that are more coordinated.

To assist with service integration a number of well established agency networks exist including the Port Stephens Interagency Network and the Combined Services Network. Both Networks aim to identify opportunities where partnerships and collaboration can occur to ensure better outcomes for residents via more efficient and effective service delivery.

In terms of health service delivery, under 'Hunter New England Health Hub & Spoke model of service delivery, Port Stephens is classified as a spoke to the hubs of Maitland and Newcastle where regional hospitals and specialist services are located.

Port Stephens is serviced by a range of community and allied health services operating primarily in Raymond Terrace and on the Tomaree Peninsula which includes the Tomaree Community Hospital, which is the only hospital in Port Stephens, providing albeit a limited polyclinic service.

### State Plan priorities

Relevant State Plan priorities are:

- S1 Improved access to quality healthcare
- S2 Improve survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness through improvements in health care
- S3 Improved health through reduced obesity, smoking, illicit drug use and risk drinking

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy Directions

Health is a major employer in the Lower Hunter region with an ageing population. The strategy stresses transport and infrastructure, access to health and community facilities, sustainability criteria 8 requires quality and equity in services for health and services

This Strategy is not directly relevant.

### Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Ongoing implementation of local Plans – Disability Action Plan Social and Community Plan Cultural Plan	Short term	Lead	Service providers
Advocate and support the creation of a HealthOne centre in Raymond Terrace	1-4 yrs	Partner	HNEH
Create on line data base of health and community service needs against actual service provision	1-4 yrs	Partner	State agencies NGO's
Increase community awareness of available community and health services and facilities	Short term	Partner/Advocate	Council State Agencies Local GPs (Division of GPs) HNE Health Community Health / Allied Health Providers Education Dept schools
Seek to facilitate the provision of a broad range of accessible and integrated community and health services and facilities, at service levels required to support the community needs and population growth.	Short to Medium Term	Advocate/Lead/ Partner	Hunter Councils Govt Agencies Community Groups HNE and NSW Health Federal Government Private Business Local GPs (Division of GPs) Community Health Allied Health Providers
Encourage and empower communities to enhance their quality of life through 'Asset Based Community Development' initiatives.	Long Term	Partner	Residents Community Groups
State & Federal Government and private consortiums to work together to address major community needs – hospitals, ambulance, fire, schools etc	Short term	Partner	Government agencies Service Providers
Seek to improve the range of medical services available on the Tomaree Peninsula and improve transport to medical facilities for Tomaree residents.	Short term	Partner/Advocate	NSW Department of Transport Hunter New England Health

## Recreation

### Vision

*"Port Stephens Council will work in partnership with the community, other government agencies and all suppliers to ensure that there is safe access to a range of high quality sustainable recreation opportunities for all people in the community"*

### Background

The Port Stephens community and its Council have developed effective structures, processes and relationships to assist in a providing a community partnership approach to managing recreation assets. This is via sports councils, parks forums and community halls forum. Council works closely with these groups to plan for and manage a broad range of community and recreation assets

The range of assets that is provided for the community is very diverse and the ongoing ability of the council and community to fund these is a critical issue for future generations.

The current replacement value of these assets is in excess of \$75 million. Utilisation rates of the facilities are very high and there is continued demand for additional facilities to be provided.

Council is now taking a pro-active approach to managing these assets and has drafted and commenced implementing Asset Management Plans for them.

## State Plan Priorities

E8 More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities and participating in the arts and cultural activity.

Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

Ensure that planning and design of new release areas is based on the Neighbourhood Planning Principles.

Relevant neighbourhood principles are:

- A range of land uses to provide the right mix of houses, jobs, open space, recreational space and green space;
- Easy access to major town centres with a full range of shops, recreational facilities and services along with smaller village centres and neighbourhood shops; and
- Conservation lands in and around the development sites, to help protect biodiversity and provide open space for recreation.

### Links to other themes

- Youth
- Urban Growth
- Housing
- Transport and infrastructure
- Community Safety

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Set up a one stop shop for event management within Port Stephens	Short term	Partner	
Continue to support and utilise formal structures for partnership approach to management and planning of assets	Short term	Lead/Partner	Sports Councils, Park Forum, Halls Forum
Continue to focus on improving sustainability of all assets	Short term	Lead	Industry experts
Focus on creating a high quality network rather than just quantity	Medium term	Lead	User groups, Developers, Sustainable Planning
Promote out of season/normal operating hours activities to increase use of all assets	Long term	Lead	User groups
Develop a strategy to guide future management and development of all open space areas	Short term	Lead	Other sections
Map recreational facilities, their condition, attributes and requirements for additional facilities in the future	Medium term	Partner	Other sections
Ensure existing space is utilised to provide maximum community benefit	Medium term	Lead/Partner	User groups
Improve safety of sites by utilising safer by design principles	Medium term	Partner	User groups
Investigate and utilise industry best practice in design and management of facilities and assets	Medium term	Partner	Industry peak bodies, other Councils
Ensure works completed are designed and constructed to focus on quality outcomes for all future users	Medium term	Lead/Partner	Users groups
Develop and implement an Asset Management Plans for all assets	Short term	Lead	
Increase accessibility to information via range of mediums including Council website, newspaper, etc	Medium term	Partner	Communications and Customer Relations
Upgrade carrying capacity and improve access to facilities	Long term	Lead	Industry peak bodies, User groups



## Youth

### Vision

*"Young people are sufficiently resourced and supported to participate in the community as role models of today and leaders of the future"*

### Background

Port Stephens is generally recognised as a place for retirement as reflected in the demographics of the LGA where some 23% of people are over the age of 60. However, young people are a significant proportion of the community (10 to 17 yrs – 10% and 18 to 25 yrs – 9% of the Port Stephens population).

Designing and developing our towns and villages needs to reflect the diversity of public places and activities required to meet residents of all ages. As per Council's Child Friendly Communities program, "if you plan for children you plan for everyone". For young people there needs to be recognition that there is a diversity of mobility and independence commensurate to their age to live active and healthy lives. This includes:

- Creating housing connected within walking distance by footpaths to parks, bushland etc;
- Streets that are pedestrian friendly;
- Village and town centres and other public places that offer range of recreational amenity, are good to hang out and have good public surveillance; and
- Creating employment and education/training opportunities within towns and villages or improve public transport access between residential areas and employment/training areas for youth who undertake study and/or work part time or casual.

Engaging with the youth of Port Stephens is important not only to involve them in decision making on issues that directly affect their local area but also to provide opportunities for their own personal development, values of self-respect, learn from others and civic responsibilities.

### State Plan Priorities

- E8: more people using parks, sporting fields and recreation facilities
- R4: Increased participation and integration in community activity
- P2: Maintain and invest in infrastructure
- P4: More people participating in education and training throughout their life
- P7: Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

There are no provisions directly related to youth in the Strategy

### Links to other themes

- Housing
- Education / training
- Community spirit
- Governance
- Culture
- Recreational



## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Develop the Port Stephens Independent Youth Network (PSIYN) as a 'vehicle' to support youth leadership initiatives and activities in local communities of Port Stephens	Short	Lead	Young People Beacon Foundation & High Schools
Encourage that local papers emphasise 'good' news, especially with regards to young people.	Short term	Partner/Advocate	Council Media
Make youth-friendly spaces part of new plans with local youth assisting with the planning	Short term	Lead	Council Government
Recognise and promote on line media as a primary source of media that young people engage with.	Short term	Lead/Partner	Council Media Community
Support development of mentoring opportunities and access to leadership training for local youth through stronger relationships across generations	Short term	Partner/Advocate	Young People. High Schools. Youth organisations & community groups.
Create a defined link between Port Stephens Independent Youth Network initiatives and council planning processes.	Short – Med Term	Lead	Young people
Develop stronger partnerships with Ministry of Transport and Dept of Education, including local High Schools, to advocate and plan for specific service delivery.	Medium term	Partner/Advocate	High Schools Government agencies
Build up knowledge of resources, through research and audit, of available transport and education assets in local community and those accessed outside of Port Stephens.	Short term	Lead	Community Groups Govt Agencies
Transport and Education a focus for future Youth Forum.	Short term	Lead	High Schools Youth Interagency
Implement Child Friendly Communities principles and policies into planning framework	Short term	Lead	
Develop strong partnerships with Local Area Command and specific Police personnel with a youth focus, including stronger relationships between young people and Police.	Short term	Partner	Police Young People
Maintain Snak & Rap and continue to build on developing Alliance initiative – assertive outreach involving interagency approach to youth work on the street and in public places.	Short term	Lead	Community organisations. Government Dept.
Address community concerns through regular conversation and use of media.	Short term	Lead	Media outlets Community groups
Develop resourced youth facilities across the LGA including strong Port Stephens PCYC presence.	Medium term	Partner	PCYC Com. orgs Govt Depts.
Provision of general recreational infrastructure including skate parks & public access 'ball courts'.	Short term	Lead	Com. groups Govt Dept.



## Housing, Built Form & Character

Vision:

*Housing that is sustainable; well designed; matched to demographic needs; considerate to the environment; integrated to meet planning and infrastructure and includes a component of affordability. Approval and delivery of housing is open and transparent.*

### Background

The State Government's emphasis on urban consolidation and infill development has led to concerns about the retention of local character. Increased density in appropriate locations can provide greater variety of housing in each local village.

Adopting a place-making approach to Council's work programme will enable local cultural, economic and environmental building design to be factored into outcomes.

The principles of local place-making will be explored through the review of LEP 2000 and DCP 2007.

The variety of housing is limited with x% of single dwelling, x% townhouses and x% of medium density housing. These figures highlight a lack of diversity of housing type across the LGA.

This has implications for attracting a wide range of people to the area. It also impacts on the ability of residents to adjust housing to suit varying life stages while remaining in the LGA.

It could be argued that Port Stephens has a high quality natural environment but, to a significant extent, a lower quality built environment. Measures to improve the design of the urban environment and public place create challenges, particularly at Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay – also having regard to feasibility and affordability of development.

Research in preparation for community engagement highlighted the following issues:

- A range of housing options is required to meet the whole of life needs of the residents of Port Stephens area;
- Accessibility, location and affordability are important considerations;
- New buildings need to respect the aspects that make the Port Stephens area unique; protect and enhance the natural and agricultural environment; minimize energy and water use, maximize opportunities for recycling and utilize recycled/recyclable materials;
- The visual amenity and local village character of foreshore areas and villages is protected and maintained; and
- The preferred option is for density and heights to occur within designated areas and for height to not dominate or change the existing or planned character.

### State Plan Priorities

- R1: Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime
- R3: Reduced levels of antisocial behaviour
- R4: Increased participation and integration in community activities
- P2: Maintain & invest in infrastructure
- E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users

- E2: A reliable electricity supply with increased use of renewable energy
- E3: Cleaner air and progress on Greenhouse Gas reductions
- E4: Better environmental outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways
- E5: Jobs closer to home
- E6: Housing affordability
- E7: Improve the efficiency of the road network
- E8: More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities and participating in the arts and cultural activity
- F2 Increased employment and community participation for people with disabilities
- S6 Increasing share of peak hour journeys on a safe and reliable public transport system
- S7 Safer roads
- P2: Maintain & invest in infrastructure

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

The Strategy provides that 60% of new dwellings will be provided in new release areas and 40% will be provided in existing urban areas – that is a 60:40 split in the provision of green field housing and urban infill. New release areas are located to ensure new housing has access to major centres and employment lands, minimising impacts on regionally significant agricultural lands and biodiversity corridors.

The major release areas for Port Stephens are Kings Hill and Medowie. New release areas should be designed based on Neighbourhood Planning principles which include:

- A range of land uses within neighbourhoods;
- Easy access to townships;
- Streets and suburbs are planned so that residents can walk to shops for their daily needs;
- Diversity of housing choice;
- Conservation lands in around development sites to protect biodiversity and provide open space; and
- Public transport networks link frequent buses into the rail system (p26:LHRS:2006)

New release areas will aim to achieve 12 dwellings per hectare with higher densities in suitable areas with careful planning and design. Increased densities within renewal areas should deliver high quality architecture that respects local character. This will be achieved through well connected and usable public spaces supporting accessible and vital centres.

### Links to other themes

- Urban growth
- Built Environment and Character
- Natural environment
- Waste Management
- Tourism (character of area is on show)
- Recreation
- Culture/Heritage
- Transport
- Community Spirit
- Social (Seniors Living)

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Variation of block sizes and suitable for housing design Increased energy efficiency in design Building controls protect and reflect character of local place Building design and materials consider production methods and the green house emissions that lead to global warming Building design considers long term financial viability			DoH Hunter Water Energy Australia Planning Legislation Council to be advocate on opportunity for partnership Federal Government make it happen State Govt to follow through on rebates
Controls require a range of housing for all areas A diverse range of housing types to meet demographic and other needs Special needs met and space allocated	Medium term		Dept Planning DoH Developer Council – coordinating / planning
Reduce cost to streamline without compromising principles	Ongoing		HROC, Dept L G ALGA, ALGSA UDIA, LGSA Unions, LGMA MBA, Homeowners Assoc
Increase land Provide for diverse densities	Medium		
Develop a strategy to encourage more affordable housing – including opportunities for mobile home parks	Short to medium	Lead/Partner/ Advocate	Department of Housing



# Cultural Futures

## Culture

Vision:

*"Experiencing a sense of place and enhanced quality of life through participating in a vibrant and creative community"*

### Strategic Directions:

- Promote collaboration between a diverse range of cultural groups to work together;
- Promote community participation in cultural event and activities;
- Promote employment opportunities through cultural tourism & creative industries;
- Port Stephens community values, recognises and celebrates its cultural diversity;
- Partner with Worimi and Karuah indigenous communities to promote and foster their culture promote and capitalise the European heritage of Port Stephens;
- Increasing and diversifying community participation;
- Creating effective Council-community relationships;
- Increasing community spirit and togetherness; and
- Creating a sense of belonging for new residents.

### Background

Culture is about: social norms and values; relationships; shared memories; experiences; identity; history; a sense of place; different cultural and religious backgrounds; and, about the things we consider valuable for passing on to future generations. It is our way of connecting the present with the past and the future.

Cultural planning can help councils tackle social issues, contribute to urban regeneration, create employment opportunities, build safer communities, improve community well being and encourage healthier lifestyles.

"Culture" has three dimensions:

- Our sense of place, our values and our identity;
- The material products of creative processes; and
- Our engagement with and participation in creative processes.

The communities of Port Stephens do not have one culture. Rather, each village, town and locality that characterise the local government area has its own identity. Therefore, planning controls, development design, community development initiatives and council decision making should recognise and support this.

Council is an advocate for culture, supporting community groups in the delivery of cultural programs across Port Stephens. Council's cultural development program is delivered in partnership with the community and government agencies.

### Addressing State Plan Priorities

E8 More people using parks, sporting fields and recreation facilities; and participating in the arts and cultural activity

- R4 Increased participation and integration in community activity
- P1 Increased business investment
- P2 Maintain and invest in infrastructure
- P4 More people participating in education and training throughout their life
- P7 Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

The culture of the lower Hunter Region is recognised. Retaining this culture through increased development is a desired outcome. Rural landscapes are identified as part of the cultural heritage.

### Links to Other Themes

- Tourism/economy
- Built environment/character
- Education/training
- Community spirit
- Youth voice

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Port Stephens Cultural Plan is implemented to be a community partnership, clarifying the roles of organisations in delivering identified cultural priorities.	Short term	Lead/Partner	Cultural & Com groups Gov agencies
'Culture Port Stephens': A cultural network, with representation from organisations interested in culture and the arts, is established as a committee of Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner in the delivery of identified cultural priorities – as outlined in the Port Stephens Cultural Plan;</li> <li>Advise Council on cultural matters;</li> <li>Assist with strategic / facility planning;</li> <li>Provide a mechanism for community engagement;</li> <li>Provide training for members;</li> <li>Facilitate communications between cultural organisations;</li> <li>Promote opportunities for the broader community to be involved; &amp;</li> <li>Advocate to all levels of Government on cultural matters.</li> </ul>	Short term	Lead	Cultural groups Community groups Gov agencies
Working groups coordinate the efforts of various organisations in addressing identified cultural priorities – as required. (The Arts Councils operate as part of the Culture Port Stephens Network.)	Short term	Lead/Partner	Cultural groups Community groups Gov agencies
An 'Event Planners Network' (EPN) is established to maximise opportunities for cross-promotion and resource sharing. (The EPN operates as part of the Culture Port Stephens Network.)	Short term	Partner	Event organisers Entertainers Venues / vendors Tourism industry
The annual 'Cultural Projects Fund' assists non-profit community organisations to deliver projects addressing the cultural priorities.	Short term	Lead	Cultural groups Community groups
Broad awareness of opportunities to be involved in cultural events and programs through marketing such as a calendar, website, email bulletins, cross-promotion.	Short term	Partner	Cultural groups Community groups
Take measures to support expression and celebration of community spirit through cultural programs and events.	Short term	Partner and advocate	Cultural groups Community groups
Promote the arts to be recognised and utilised as a medium for influencing people's lifestyles. EG: sustainability, health promotion, safety, etc.	Short term	Partner and advocate	Cultural groups Com groups Govt age.
Strengthen cultural awareness and harmony between Aboriginal people and the broader community. EG: NAIDOC week.	Short term	Partner and advocate	Aboriginal Land Councils Community groups
Community/cultural festivals and events are linked with tourism and economic development partners.	Short term	Lead	Tourism industry Cultural groups
Some exhibition and performance spaces in some cafes, restaurants and clubs	Short term	Advocate	Business sector
Public spaces are designed to support cultural activity such as events and busking.	Short term	Lead	Development Industry
Heritage and cultural walk/drive trails are implemented, including travel-guides and interpretive signage at key sites.	Short term	Partner	Heritage groups
Develop Aboriginal cultural tourism including supporting development of the 'Murrook Centre'.	Short term	Partner/advocate	Aboriginal Land Councils Community groups
Professional practices of aspiring artists are developed through improved access to training. Achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training pathways established and promoted</li> <li>Expanded TAFE facilities &amp; programs</li> <li>Practitioners with established careers in creative industries are showcased and engaged in mentoring programs</li> </ul>	Medium Term	Advocate	Registered Training Organisations Schools Gov agencies Creative professionals
Opportunities for artists to exhibit and perform are created through development of cultural infrastructure and events.	Medium Term	Lead	Cultural groups Community groups
Arts Councils contribute to the delivery of place-based strategies in each of the three council wards and feed into the LGA wide cultural planning processes. (The Arts Councils operate as part of the Culture Port Stephens Network.)	Short term	Lead/Partner and advocate.	Cultural groups Community groups
Public art and mural projects are delivered; engage the community and reflect the significance of the sites.	Short Term	Partner	Cultural groups Community groups
'Signature' events are developed for/by each community, which reflects their cultural identity and community values.	Short term	Support	Cultural groups Community groups
Council and community gallery spaces are established as a 'Port Stephens Art Gallery Network' (AGN), to maximise opportunities for cross-promotion and public access to local exhibitions. (The AGN operates as part of the Culture Port Stephens Network.)	Short term	Partner	Gallery operators Visual artists Tourism industry



## Heritage

Vision:

*"We express our identities and values by connecting and embracing all cultures and art forms across the past present and future".*

### Background

Port Stephens Council has a rich heritage - both indigenous and European. The Worimi people have history that goes back thousands of years and their connection to the land is ongoing. European history is also very rich and varied.

Port Stephens has a substantial and varied built heritage. A large amount of this heritage is formally recognised in planning or policy documents. However, there are also items that may be heritage significant that do not have formal protection.

There are two Heritage Conservation Areas in Port Stephens LGA at Raymond Terrace and Hinton. Both areas are facing consistent pressure for insensitive development.

The Port Stephens Heritage Committee continues to play a strong role.

The farming landscape and villages are linked to and contribute to the heritage of Port Stephens.

Local heritage societies, interest groups and individuals are active in the area and are an invaluable resource in helping to preserve the heritage of Port Stephens.

### State Plan Priorities

N/A

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy directions

N/A

### Links to other themes

- Built Environment and Character
- Economics/Tourism
- Growth and Density

### Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
<b>Build stronger links with the Worimi in arts and culture</b>  Implementation of Heritage Trails  Pursue signage for Heritage precincts (e.g. the Ministry of Transport has worked with Maitland City Council on a similar project)  Capitalise on existing organisations and places e.g. historical societies, museums and heritage buildings  Use of the internet for better communication e.g. web forums	Short term to Long term		Port Stephens Heritage Committee

## Community Spirit

### Vision

*"A proud community, built through participation."*

### Background

The Port Stephens LGA consists of a series of towns, villages and commercial centres which are spread far and wide.

Each of these towns has its own distinct character and sense of identity. Some are quite parochial. Each also appears to have a strong sense of community and a willingness to participate in community activities.

Council's key role is to support and empower community representatives to increase their community participation, build relationships and create an environment that support these objectives

Council facilitates and supports a strong network of volunteers across the LGA. These relationships have been strengthened through the recent (2008) formation of Council's volunteer strategy.

The formation in 2008 of the Port Stephens Residents Panel has also provided an opportunity for Council to provide local residents with a higher degree of participation in Council matters

Interestingly, feedback from the Port Stephens Futures Forum and community workshops suggests that future population growth presents a challenge in terms of maintaining 'community spirit.'

## Addressing State Plan priorities

- E8 More people using parks, sporting fields and recreation facilities; and participating in the arts and cultural activity
- R4 Increased participation and integration in community activity
- P4 More people participating in education and training throughout their life

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

The importance and strength of the Lower Hunter community is recognised in the strategy. Retaining this is a desired outcome.

### Links to other themes

- Culture
- Tourism / Commercial / Industry
- Education / training
- Community safety
- Youth
- Health and Community Services

## Proposed Actions For Inclusion In Council's Community Strategic Plan

Action	When	Council/Stakeholders
Identify all relevant community groups – create a database	Short term	Council / community
Discover the best ways to engage different levels of the community – go to the hard to reach	Short term	Council
Develop a Council community newsletter	Immediate	Council
Develop a community directory & distribute to all residents	Short term	Council
Provide incentives for Volunteers to participate	Short term - ongoing	Council
'Market' the concept of volunteering to the local community	Short term	
More face to face time for the community with Councillors and Council staff	Immediate	Council
Increase awareness of Council's roles / responsibilities	Short term - ongoing	Council
Consider advertising outside the Port Stephens Examiner	Short term	Council
Encourage community groups to be proactive	Short term -Ongoing	Council
Expand the size and role of the Port Stephens Residents Panel.	Short term	Council
Audit current community facilities. Prioritise gaps	Medium term	Council
Seek grants from other tiers of government	Medium term - ongoing	Council / State and Fed government
Develop an "A to Z Guide" for residents and distribute annually	Medium term	Council
Create demand for community space by holding festivals / events on a regular basis	Medium term - ongoing	Council / community
Create an appropriate 'brand' for each township and village. Use this foster community pride and attract visitors	Medium term	Council / community
Create a 'welcome kit' for new residents	Short term	Council
Hold a quarterly 'party' for new residents. Hosted by Council	Medium term	Council



# Economic Futures

## Strategic Directions

Promote more local employment opportunities;

- Building on advantages – identifying and capitalising on the existing infrastructure and assets of Port Stephens in planning and promoting economic growth;
- Infrastructure for the future – ensuring infrastructure is coordinated with new employment growth areas, particularly the airport zone and Tomago and Heatherbrae industrial areas;
- Growing community: business
- growth, new businesses, employment base and increased skilled jobs, and
- Improving place/living community: town development, town improvement, infrastructure and industrial zones.

Vision:

*'A sustainable and viable economy growing through quality infrastructure, appropriate development and employment.'*

## Background

37% of the workforce commutes daily out of the LGA for work. This indicates that there is a lack of sufficient local employment opportunities. However, it also indicates that people are prepared to live in the LGA for lifestyle reasons and commute outside of the LGA for employment to support their lifestyle.

This has significant implications through the loss of escape spending, increased transport costs for workers, impacts of commuting upon individuals and their families, traffic congestion, pollution including greenhouse gas emissions.

The importance of local jobs is also highlighted by 34% of the current LGA population being aged <25 years (14% 10 to 19 years). There is a need to provide 'Entry Level' jobs for these age cohorts.

59% of the current population has no trade qualification or tertiary education and 62% attending school leave by year 10. There is a need to provide a balance of 'Lower Skilled' Jobs. Entry level and lower skilled jobs generally pay less and therefore transport costs and employment location are crucial in allowing people to access these jobs.

Other factors that underline the importance of providing jobs close to home include:

- Growth in 'Part-time' Employment (38%);
- High Levels of 'Casual Employment' (> 1:5, 26%);
- High Proportion of 'Low Income Jobs' (68%);
- Most jobs going to 'Women in Workforce' (82%);
- 'Sole Parents' & 'Carers Working' (15% households one parent, 2,400 up 26% in 5 years); and
- Work Outside 'Normal Working Hours'.

The seasonal nature of the tourism industry in the LGA is another factor that influences employment activities and wealth generation.

The Port Stephens Economic Development Strategy (2007) is the guiding document for Council in its efforts to shape the economic future of the area. The emphasis of this Strategy is on practical ways of shaping the future of Port Stephens and ensuring that it achieves its full potential as a place to live, to work, to operate a business and to visit.

The key strategic projects that were been identified in the Economic Development Strategy as having the largest potential impact on economic growth and jobs are:

- Development of **Raymond Terrace** as the LGA's primary services centre, with improvements in retail and higher level services and reshaping the town's structure;
- Development of the **new towns and town centres** at Medowie and North Raymond Terrace (residential and local services), and the planning and linkage of the town centres in the tourist areas, especially Nelson Bay; and
- Development of the airport (passenger and freight) and development of associated lands into the Defence/Aviation Zone.



Continue to develop high value manufacturing in the Tomago area and in Heatherbrae. Development of Tomago as the major industrial area by providing additional industrial zoned land.

Development of the industrial lands including action on constraints including road networks, services (water, sewer, power) and the securing of funding for these requirements.

Boosting Port Stephens tourism industries, through broadening markets (including events), and improving tourism areas.

## State Plan

- P1: Increased business investment
- P2: Maintain and invest in Infrastructure
- P4: More people participating in education and training throughout their life
- P6: Increased business investment in regional and rural NSW
- P7: Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies
- E5: Jobs closer to home

## Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

Relevant Lower Hunter Regional Strategy directions are:

- Maximise the economic opportunities associated with the Region's competitive advantages, in particular its economic infrastructure and specialised centres;
- Ensure sufficient employment lands are available in appropriate locations, to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate growth in existing and emerging industries and businesses;
- Maintain or improve the employment self sufficiency of the region; and
- Ensure activity within the Lower Hunter complements rather than competes with economies and communities of adjoining regions.

## Links to other themes

- Culture
- Education & Training
- Urban Growth
- Heritage
- Primary Industries (Natural Res.)
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Built Environment & Character

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Expanding tourism – prepare a comprehensive, long term tourism strategy and by having policies that enhance the built and natural infrastructure that support tourism;	Short		Department of Tourism
Marketing and business attraction by: active promotion of Port Stephens as a business location; and, maintaining marketing material – notably the business prospects and website and targeting business in key sectors	Short	Lead/Partner	Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD)
Developing skills and building knowledge industries – attracting knowledge based jobs through encouragement of growth linked to key sectors as well as defence, aerospace and engineering;	Short	Lead/Partner	DSRD
Developing small businesses by Council supporting local business chambers to develop and implement local business programs and assessing the feasibility of a small business incubator.	Short	Partner	DSRD
Plan for sufficient local employment within urban release areas so as to make future employment provision match population growth			
Council planning to be focussed on securing sustainable economic growth while maintaining the quality of life for residents	Short	Lead/Partner	NSW Government
Planning for economic growth and job creation should underpin major planning strategies	Short-term	Lead/Partner	NSW Government
Retail/services hierarchy to ensure that Raymond Terrace develops as the primary regional services centre with local services in other town centres	Short	Lead	NSW Government
Industrial hierarchy to support existing major industrial centres at Tomago and Heatherbrae, and the development of the airport zone and local industrial parks on the peninsulas	Short	Lead	NSW Government



Facilitate and advocate Newcastle Airport and environs becoming the centre of a major defence, aviation and related services zone	Short	Lead/Partner/Advocate	Newcastle Airport NSW Government Dept Defence
Develop a plan for longer term development of tourism infrastructure and provide on-going support to expand the tourism sector	Short	Lead	NSW Government Port Stephens Tourism
Plan for, and promote, infrastructure requirements for the airport zone and Tomago Industrial area are given priority by government agencies and utilities	Short	Partner/Advocate	NSW Government
Prepare a full costing of the infrastructure needed to meet future development and regional employment targets	Medium	Partner/Advocate	NSW Government
Prepare a comprehensive long term strategy for the development of the tourism sector	Short	Lead	Port Stephens Tourism NSW Government Business community
Support the implementation of the Events Strategy	Short	Lead	
Set a framework for tourism marketing initiatives and market development	Short	Partner	
Plan for tourism infrastructure development	Medium	Lead	
Council to actively promote Port Stephens as a business location	Short	Lead	
Maintain a suite of marketing material including Business Prospectus and website	Short	Lead	
Council to target businesses in key sectors	Medium	Lead	NSW Government Business community
Council seek to facilitate knowledge based jobs through encouragement of growth linked to key sectors (including defence, aerospace and engineering) Council to facilitate the integration of education and training providers to cater for skills required for current and emerging industries	Medium	Lead	Business community NSW Government
Council to identify research and innovation linkages that can be established with local businesses	Short	Partner	University of Newcastle HunterNet Business community
Encourage a skills audit and training needs assessment to be undertaken	Medium	Partner	TAFE Hunter Business Chamber
Council to support local business chambers to develop and implement local business programs	Short	Partner	Business community NSW Government
Council to facilitate local delivery of existing small business services	Short	Partner	NSW Government Business Community
Assess the feasibility of a small business incubator	Medium	Lead	NSW Government

*'An environment that maintains high levels of biodiversity, with viable wildlife corridors and has a community that is engaged in further improvement activities.'*

### Background

Port Stephens local government area gains much of its identity from its natural environment. This includes the Port and associated waterways, beaches, wetlands and large areas of natural vegetation and biodiversity in reserves and on private land. Historically, the protection of the natural environment of Port Stephens has been primarily through the restriction of urban and agricultural development on publicly owned land for defence, forestry and water catchment purposes.

The table below indicates that some 63% or 2/3rds of the LGA is restricted or classified as a protected area by Council, State and Commonwealth government land ownership or policy. This is supplemented by flood affected land and planning controls protecting biodiversity on private lands including impacts on threatened species.

Protected Areas	Area (Ha)	% of LGA*
National Parks	8153.87	9.79
Water Reserves (Hunter Water)	10954.50	13.15
State Forests	4784.46	5.74
Defence Lands	3445.94	4.14
Crown Land	12188.60	14.63
Council Reserves	893.53	1.07
SEPP 14 wetlands	11935.41	14.33
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>52356.3</b>	<b>62.85</b>
<b>Development Restricted Areas</b>		
Flood affected land	26177.18	31.43
Koala Plan of Mgmt (Preferred and Supplementary habitat)	15696.76	18.85
<b>*Total Land Area of LGA (excluding Port and Grahamstown Dam)</b>	<b>3292.00</b>	<b>Areas overlap % total &gt;100%</b>

Note: As some protected areas overlap, the total area can be higher than 100%.

As population increases and land use and resource extraction intensifies care needs to be taken to ensure that these activities do not undermine community identity, tourism and our local economy.

### State Plan Priorities

- E1 – A secure and sustainable water supply
- E2 – A reliable electricity supply with an increased use of renewable energy
- E3 – Cleaner Air and progress on Greenhouse Gas reductions
- E4 – Better Outcomes for Native Vegetation, Biodiversity, Land, Rivers and Coastal Waterways

# Environmental Futures

## Strategic Directions

1. Maintain and improve upon existing biodiversity levels;
2. Bushfire protection work considers vegetation conservation;
3. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the effects of climate change;
4. Increase the protection of marine and estuarine areas;
5. Plan and manage development and growth so that it is undertaken in a truly sustainable manner;
6. Achieve greater energy and resource management efficiencies;
7. Rural landscapes are protected and valued for their visual amenity, diversification and subsequent economic benefits; and
8. Provide access to affordable, quality waste management and recycling services and promote high participation in recycling systems.



## The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan

- The Conservation Plan establishes how, in light of the planned urban development identified in the Regional Strategy, the Region's biodiversity value will be maintained or improved. The plan:
  - identifies key conservation values of the Region and regionally significant corridors;
  - outlines how the Plan relates to the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and the Hunter–Central Rivers Catchment Action Plan;
  - establishes a biodiversity investment guide that identifies which landscapes and habitats are to be targeted for investment to achieve improved conservation outcomes;
  - identifies mechanisms that will be used to fund biodiversity investment; and
  - establishes monitoring and review mechanisms;
- Local environmental plans in the Watagan to Stockton Corridor (including the foreshores of Port Stephens) are to

provide for the ongoing role of biodiversity corridor and interurban breaks;

- The Sustainability Criteria will not apply in the Watagan to Stockton green corridor to protect the significant biodiversity and natural resource values of these areas; and
- Supports biocertification of local environmental plan amendments using the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 where adequate arrangements have been made to ensure biodiversity values will be maintained or improved in the Region.

### Links to other themes

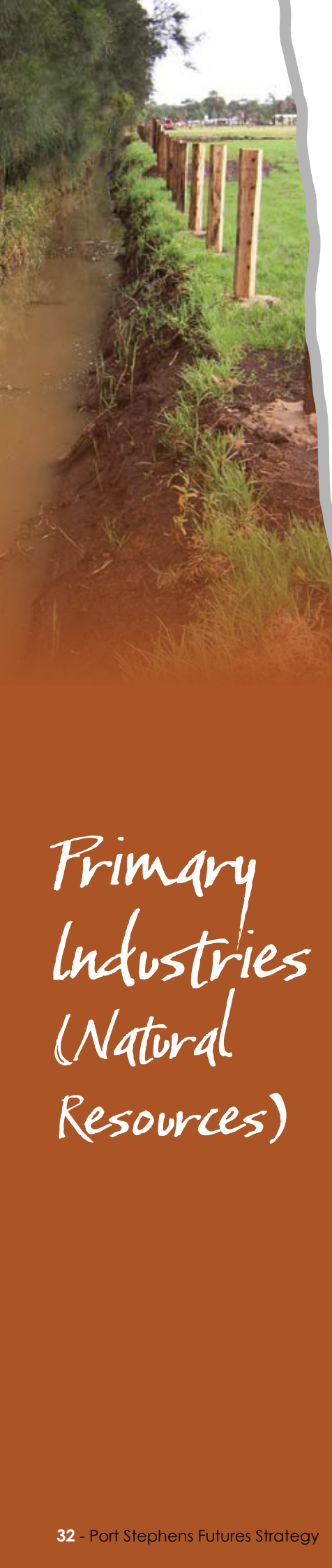
- Primary Industry and Resources
- Waste Management
- Transport
- Recreation
- Economic Futures

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Action	When	Council	Stakeholders
Improve water quality standards, especially in relation to drainage	Short	Partner	
Improve current onsite sewage management systems	Medium	Lead	DECCW Land owners
Increase the protection of SEPP 14 wetlands	Short	Lead	DOP
Manage and reduce the impact of weeds on natural assets	Medium	Lead	Government agency
Increase the protection of Flora and Fauna and maintain and improve upon our current levels of biodiversity	Short	Lead	DOP DECCW
Increase the protection for biodiversity on private land while balancing the impacts on landholders	Medium	Partner	Relevant government agency
Explore ways to involve more people, especially youth, in relevant volunteering programs	Medium	Partner	Landcare Tidy Towns
Increase the participation of community and businesses in the management of environmental assets	Medium		
Ensure that bush fire management is in line with best practice ecological standards	Short	Partner	Rural Fire Service
Ensure a high standard of air quality and reduce the impacts of industry and vehicles	Medium	Partner with DECCW	DECCW
Increase Environmental Education in schools and the community including areas such as climate change mitigation	Short	Lead	Schools Department of Education
Use planning controls to protect and enhance areas and corridors of high biodiversity on public and private land	Short	Lead	DECCW, DoP
Continue enforcement and implementation of the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management	Long	Lead	DECCW, DoP
Plan for managing the effects of Sea Level Rise and Climate Change in biodiversity planning	Long	Lead	DECCW, DoP
Undertake mapping program to identify and protect local wildlife corridors	Short	Lead	DECCW
Consider using planning controls to protect corridors in the LEP	Short	Lead	DECCW, DoP
Use planning controls to provide greater protection of wetlands	Short	Lead	DECCW, DOP
Continue to implement and enforce Tree Preservation Mechanisms	Short	Lead	DECCW
Continue to facilitate regional pest animal control through the Feral animal committee	Short	Lead	DECCW, HWC

Investigate a new Environmental Levy to undertake biodiversity, water quality and sustainability improvement projects.	Short	Lead	
Continue to undertake regeneration activities on Council owned/managed land	Short	Lead	DECCW
Continue to assist private land holders wanting to undertake biodiversity projects on private land	Short	Lead	DECCW, HCRCMA
Advocate stormwater reuse for new developments (such as rainwater tanks, greywater reuse etc.)	Short	Lead	DECCW
Work with State Government for improved energy and water efficiency programs for residential and industrial areas	Short	Advocate	DECCW
Lobby State Govt regarding end of life planning for environmentally hazardous industry projects	Medium	Advocate	DECCW
Support work undertaken by environmental community groups	Short	Lead	
Promote diversification and innovation in agricultural pursuits	Medium Long	Lead	Primary Industries
Develop and implement as WSUD policy for urban areas (new and old)	Medium	Lead/Partner	Development Industry
Establish an industrial sites inspection program to detect unlawful environmental discharges	Short	Lead/Partner	DECCW
Work with Rural Fire Services to ensure environmental standards are adhered to	Short	Partner	RFS
Lobby State Govt to update the Bushfire Assessment Code so that its in line with the Threatened Species Conservation Act	Short	Advocate	RFS
Continue to implement relevant policies, i.e. backyard burning policy	Short	Lead	DECCW
Reduce energy consumption at Councils largest energy using facilities	Short	Lead	DECCW
Support State Govt in creating a pro-active educational approach to maximising community, business/corporate, and manufacturer's participation in minimising environmental impacts	Long	Collaborative	DECCW
Lobby State gov't to improve legislation regarding energy and water efficiency at the household level, i.e. improved BASIX	Short	Advocate	DECCW
Lobby Hunter Water Corp regarding improved sewage management	Short	Advocate	HWC
Create a Peak Oil Policy and Action Plan	Medium	Lead	DECCW
Continue to implement environment education activities	Short	Lead	DECCW
Undertake education activities relating to energy and water efficiency and climate change	Short	Lead/Partner	DECCW
Implement boating management plan that would include restrictions on boating activities / behaviour	Long	Advocate	Maritime MPA
Commence a program of due diligence and auditing of councils construction and maintenance operations	Short	Lead	
Progressively implement key actions in the Foreshore Management Plan	Long	Lead/Partner	DECCW, MPA, GLC, DII, Crown Lands
Protect environmental qualities from over development and enjoy and respect the built and natural environment	Medium	Lead/Partner	DECCW





## Vision

*"A rural community that contributes to sustainable food production, water harvesting, extractive industries, visual amenity, tourism and an excellent lifestyle."*

## Background

The Port Stephens area is renowned for its natural resources - the drinking water catchment of Grahamstown Dam and associated aquifers, the dunal sand systems of Stockton Bight and Windeyer's Creek and the waterways that sustain important fishing and oyster industries.

The area is predominantly rural with a history of agricultural production that has decreased over recent years. This is mainly due to a combination of the economics of modern farming practices, land fragmentation and demand for urban release land.

Primary industry is not a major component of the local economy but its importance should not be disregarded. Port Stephens is well positioned to provide a niche market for the Region. The physical impacts of climate change in other areas makes the climate of Port Stephens more attractive for a range of agricultural pursuits. In addition to this, the improvements in technology and consequently production options, increases in transport costs and community concern for food security, provides long term opportunities for the production of produce in this area.

Primary industry lands have many purposes beyond primary production and need to be considered in the mix of issues in setting a clear vision for the future of the area. These purposes can be built (eco tourism) or natural (water catchment and environmental significance). This land also provides a significant element in creating the visual character of the area.

Like the agricultural lands, aquaculture and in particular the oyster industry, is small but important to the area with an annual production value from oyster operations of more than \$3 million. This is comprised mainly of oyster spat production and oyster harvesting for consumption.

Managing the natural resources offered by these lands in a sustainable manner is a significant challenge for the area particularly when they may appear abundant or limitless

## State Plan priorities

- P6: Increased business investment in rural & regional NSW
- P7: Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies
- E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users
- E4: Better environmental outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways

## Directions from Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

- Land use change in the vicinity of mineral resources should be compatible with continued access to the resource.
- The scale of new development within and adjacent to existing villages and rural towns must respect and preserve their character, scale, cultural heritage and social values.
- Local Environmental Plans are to maintain rural zoning for regionally significant agricultural land
- Provide a consistent approach to the zoning system in rural lands through the Standard LEP Instrument and ensure that access to resource lands (including mineral resources) are maintained and protected from incompatible and inappropriate uses.
- Recognise that mining is a transitional land use and that former mining land offers opportunities for both conservation and development outcomes when activities are completed.
- Any future rezoning proposal for rural residential development, beyond areas already available or identified, should be:
  1. consistent with the Sustainability Criteria (Appendix 1)

# Primary Industries (Natural Resources)

12. consistent with an endorsed local council strategy

13. maintain the character and role of the existing village centre.

Local Environmental Plans and other relevant planning provisions will be required to align with the strategic intentions contained in the Regional Strategy by:

1. limiting further dwelling entitlements in rural areas
2. maintaining or increasing minimum lot sizes for rural subdivisions that confer a new dwelling entitlement (where established by an appropriate methodology as agreed by the Department of Primary Industries).

## Links to other themes

- Natural Environment
- Tourism / economy
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Health & Community Services
- Urban Growth

## Proposed inclusions for the Port Stephens Community Strategic Plan, Council Operational Plan and Delivery Programs

Proposed Actions	When*	Council	Stakeholders
Investigate the reuse of sewage effluent in primary industry production;	Medium	Partner	Dept Ag other Dept Ag DOP
Ensure Council's planning controls/policies facilitate appropriate and well defined pursuits on rural lands (e.g. eco-tourism, Farm Gate, equine industry/ Extractive activities (water/sand/aquaculture/ fishing etc);	Short	Lead/Partner	
Create linkages to the Economic Development Strategy and tourism to highlight the importance of rural production;	Short	Lead	
Lobbying the State government to improve rehabilitation requirements for sand and mineral mining and extraction	Medium	Advocate	DO Planning
Ensure Council's land use policy framework protects the visual amenity offered by the rural landscape.	Short Term	Lead	DII, DoP Dev. industry
Promote, and recognise in policy formulation, the economic benefits of the protection of the rural landscape and its future productivity opportunities.	Short Term	Lead	DII, DoP Dev. industry
Reconcile the strategic directions of the Rural Lands Study with the State Government's Standard LEP template.	Short Term	Lead	DII, DoP Dev. industry
Define and preserve the rural character of the area.	Short Term	Lead	DII, DoP Dev. industry
Plan for and manage rural/residential development so as to ensure that valuable rural land is not lost or compromised and that public services are not demanded in non cost-effective and inequitable ways.	Short Term	Lead	DII, DoP Dev. industry
Work with agricultural landholders to improve land management practices	Short Term	Lead/Partner	DII
Continue to implement weed management programs	Ongoing	Lead	DII, HCCREMS
Continue to facilitate regional pest animal control through the Feral animal committee.	Short Term	Lead/Partner	DECCW, HWC
Lobby HWC regarding improved sewerage treatment (min. tertiary) including septic tanks, extension of sewer system to sensitive areas.	Short Term	Advocate	HWC
Lobby State Government to improved rehabilitation of sand mining areas	Short Term	Advocate	DII
Investigate the potential and costs of developing and promoting a local produce collective and developing local food sources	Short-Term	Lead/Partner	DII
Work with the State Government to improve Acid Sulphate Soils management in agricultural drains and agricultural lands	Short Term	Partner	DII
Work with the State Government to undertake education activities with rural landholders to improve the quality of water runoff from agricultural areas in order to protect aquaculture industries	Short Term	Lead/Partner	DII
Establish basis for continued support for the oyster industry	Short Term	Lead/Partner	DPI
Ensure that important agricultural land is identified and protected in the new LEP	Short	Lead	DPI



## Waste Management and Recycling

### Vision

*"Port Stephens has a well used, affordable, convenient and results driven waste and recycling system that does not harm the environment"*

### Background

The Port Stephens community and Council have shown a high level of leadership and innovation in the area of waste management and resource recovery from recycling. For example:

- Port Stephens Council was one of the first in Australia to commence domestic kerbside recycling (1996);
- It was the first Council to introduce advanced waste technologies (2000) to recover compost from the mixed waste stream; and
- It is one of few Councils to use single pass garbage trucks for a two bin garbage and recycling system thus reducing traffic movements and fossil fuel consumption.

The Council's early adoption of innovations in waste collection and processing has resulted in a resource recovery rate for

domestic waste of more than 58% in 2008-09. This high result is in spite of its highly variable domestic waste stream volumes caused by tourism related population increases and a waste generation rate of 478 kg/per/year.

### State Plan Priorities

- E4 – Better outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways
- NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2007

### The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

There are not provisions directly related to waste management and recycling in the strategy.

### Links to other themes

- Urban Growth
- Natural Environment
- Transport
- Recreation
- Economic Development Tourism/Commercial/Industrial

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Develop a plan to deliver centralised drop off points for recyclable products	Medium Term	Lead	Industry, DECCW
Review domestic waste clean up services with focus on greater convenience eg: On call bulky waste pick ups	Long Term	Lead	Industry, DECCW
Encourage recycling at mobile home facilities	Medium Term	Collaborative	Mobile home operators
Develop a strategy for improvements to recycling services including planning policies that promote increasing recycling by residents in new developments.	Long Term	Lead	Industry, DECCW
Increase tourist and visitor recycling education	Short term	Collaborative	Industry
Introduce an illegal dumping / littering reporting program	Short term	Collaborative	DECCW
Lobby for consistency in recycling standards and symbols	Medium Term	Advocate	Industry, DECCW
Develop recycling education programs for diverse user groups	Short term	Lead	DECCW
Introduce illegal dumping / littering prevention programs	Short term	Collaborative	DECCW, DoL, LALC
Introduce illegal dumping / littering clean up programs	Short term	Collaborative	DECCW, DoL, LALC
Increase the use of alternative fuels to diesel and unleaded petrol in Council vehicles	Long Term	Collaborative	Industry, DECCW
Investigate using landfill gas for energy production	Long Term	Lead	Industry, DECCW
Lobby for refunds on returned recycled products. For example: Container Deposit Legislation Extended Producer Responsibility schemes for electronic waste and motor oil	Long Term	Advocate	DECCW
Introduce differential tip fees for separated recycling	Short term	Collaborative	Industry
Develop an incentives scheme that rewards excellence in recycling	Medium Term	Lead	DECCW
Increase revenue streams from recycled products/compost	Medium Term	Lead	Industry
Council initiate programs to show leadership in recycling	Short Term	Lead	

## Background

The population of Port Stephens LGA in 2009 is 64,885 people and is projected to grow to 92,371 people by 2031 – an average annual growth rate of 1.6%.

The following are crucial issues that must drive the integrated planning of development, infrastructure delivery and environmental outcomes:

- The cost implications of providing infrastructure with development and how that is to be managed and apportioned between developers, State agencies and Council;
- The increasing ecological footprint of development in the Shire and related increase in greenhouse gas emissions and how Council shows responsibility by 'thinking globally and acting locally';
- The need to increase the provision of local jobs and reduce the high out commuting of the current workforce; and
- Responding to the transport needs of the airport precinct and of the Shire's diverse settlement pattern.

## State Plan Priorities

Relevant State Plan priorities are:

- R1: Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime
- R3: Reduced levels of antisocial behaviour
- R4: Increased participation and integration in community activities
- S6: Increasing share of peak hour journeys on a safe and reliable public transport system
- P1: Increased business investment
- P2: Maintain & invest in infrastructure
- P6: Increased business investment in rural & regional NSW
- E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users
- E2: A reliable electricity supply with increased use of renewable energy
- E4: Better environmental outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways
- E5: Jobs closer to home
- E6: Housing affordability
- E7: Improve the efficiency of the road network
- E8: More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities and participating in the arts and cultural activity

## Lower Hunter Regional Strategy Directions

Relevant Lower Hunter Regional Strategy Directions are:

- The centres hierarchy, and role and function of the nominated centres will be embodied in the planning of local councils by ensuring that local strategies, local environmental plans and other statutory planning controls:
  - contain appropriate provisions that reflect the nominated role of particular centres;
  - do not permit retail and commercial offices outside commercial centres other than where consistent with adopted State policies such as 'The Right Place for Business'; and
  - facilitate the concentration of activities along transport routes and within and adjacent to centres;

# Achieving Sustainable Development & Infrastructure

The purposes of this section are to synthesise strategic directions for the social, cultural, economic and environmental pillars and to set clear directions for future development and infrastructure planning.



- Maximise redevelopment and infill opportunities for medium and high density housing within walking distance of centres;
- The Department of Planning will work with local councils to ensure that local strategies, local environmental plans and other statutory planning controls:
  - adopt the employment and dwelling projections for the centres nominated in table below;
  - establish employment and dwelling projections for other lower order centres, consistent with local strategies that address urban consolidation and intensification in urban areas;
- The Department of Planning will work with local councils, where necessary, to ensure that planning for dwelling projections within centres does not impede the ability to achieve employment capacity projections; and
- The Department of Planning will work with local councils to facilitate the revitalisation and renewal of these centres through structure planning, masterplanning, urban design and other relevant studies.

Centre	Jobs	Dwellings
Major Regional Centre - Raymond Terrace	1600	300
Specialised Centre – Airport precinct	3000	0
Specialised centre – Nelson Bay	1500	1200

- Sufficient land and development capacity will be identified and rezoned to provide for an additional 69 000 dwellings in new release areas and 46 000 dwellings in existing urban areas and centres to meet forecasted demands for an additional 115 000 dwellings over the next 25 years;
- Councils will revise their local environmental plans to be consistent with the identified urban footprint within the Regional Strategy (unless growth rates exceed expectations and dictate an earlier release of additional land);
- Promote consolidation in the larger and specifically nominated centres - Raymond Terrace;
- Councils will revise their local environmental plans to be consistent with the dwelling capacity projections for their local government area identified in the table below;
- Implement an Urban Development Program to monitor housing supply and demand, including the quality of planning and development, and coordinate the staged release of new release areas, infrastructure and human services. The Urban Development Program will monitor:
  - progress made through the planning/rezoning process;
  - the capacity of local government and other public authorities to provide the required services to land in the short or long term;
  - the State Government's road and transport infrastructure plans; and
  - market demand, including contribution to the geographic market spread of housing supply;
- Ensure that planning and design of new release areas is based on the Neighbourhood Planning Principles;
- Innovative land use proposals, outside of the areas identified as future urban, may be considered where it can be shown that the proposal meets the Sustainability

Criteria. This consideration will not apply to proposals for development in the area identified as a green corridor on the Strategy Map;

- Where development or rezoning increases the need for State infrastructure, the Minister for Planning may require a contribution to the provision of the infrastructure having regard to the State Infrastructure Strategy and equity considerations;
- Councils will plan for a range of housing types of appropriate densities, location and suitability that are capable of adapting and responding to the ageing of the population; and
- The Department of Planning and the Department of Housing in cooperation with councils will investigate options for affordable housing within the Region consistent with the outcomes of the NSW Affordable Housing Strategy.

Centres and corridors	Urban infill	Total infill	New release	Total dwellings
3,300	2,000	5,300	7,200	12,500

## Community Settlement and Infrastructure Strategy

Council's Community Settlement & Infrastructure Strategy was adopted in July 2007 and essentially implements directions of the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy by more detailed planning and establishment of data and criteria for future development areas.

## Links to other themes

Links to other themes are:

- Tourism/economy
- Transport & Getting Around
- Health & Community Services
- Economic development

## Strategic Directions

### i). Sustainability

Sustainability will be:

- Increasingly the foundation for Council policies and operations
- Increasingly the basis for Council promotion and advocacy of energy and water conservation and carbon neutral operations of public and private sector agencies operating in the Shire
- The basis for planning the overall design of the new urban release areas
- The basis for planning a balance between development and environment in the Shire
- Achieving inter-generational equity in terms of environmental conservation and service provision and the basis of financial management of Council

### ii). Good Development

Port Stephens Council stands for "good development", i.e. supporting development that:

- Fulfills the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy directions;
- Respects the coastal and environmental attributes and heritage of the Shire;

- Establishes reasonable clarity about the long term development pattern and capacity of the Shire for the development industry, investors and the community; and
- Is consistent with the State and local legal and policy framework.

### iii). Infrastructure

Planning and delivery of infrastructure (social and physical infrastructure for public services and facilities) is improved in terms of integration with development pattern and timing and is based upon a clear framework of public sector and private sector funding commitments.

### iv). Urban Design

The quality of the built environment is continuously improved by:

- Rolling out a program of locality planning which reflects distinctive characteristics of towns and villages in the Shire; and
- By placing more emphasis on policy making and development assessment on urban design and architectural design – particularly in Nelson Bay and Raymond Terrace as the specialist and subregional centres.

### v) Implement the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

by the Community Settlement and Infrastructure Strategy and by implementation of the planning strategies for Kings Hill, Medowie, Anna Bay, Tanilba Bay and Karuah.

### vi) Integrate the planning of development and infrastructure

by assigning: capacities of existing infrastructure, life cycle costs of upgrading existing infrastructure and providing new infrastructure and apportioning the responsibilities to deliver and the costs between stakeholders.

**vii) Initiate a forum of Council and State agencies** to achieve a more coordinated approach to policy making and infrastructure delivery between Council, State agencies and the development industry.

**viii) To integrated the data and recommendations of social futures, cultural futures, economic futures and environmental futures** in planning the urban release areas and growth of centres.

**ix) In planning for the urban release areas and other rezonings and appropriate developments**, ensure consideration of opportunities for environmental enhancement, rehabilitation and connection of wildlife corridors.

**x) In planning for urban release areas and other urban development**, ensure opportunities are taken to provide for walking trails and cycleways.

**xi) To promote infill development and higher densities** in relevant locations to provide more support for public transport, facilities and services, walking trails and cycleways.

**xii) To plan for growth of the tourism industry** by increasing clarity of preferred locations for tourism developments to be supported.

**xiii) To evaluate more innovative solutions to traffic and parking management at Nelson Bay**

**xiv) To evaluate options for improved public transport** between Newcastle centres in Port Stephens and Newcastle Airport – resolving issues about taxis, bus transport and also evaluating light rail

**xv) Ensuring that plans for any further rezoning for rural subdivision are based on rigorous assessment** including costs of any additional services, visual impact, impact on agricultural land viability and potential mineral resources extraction.

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed inclusion	When	Council	Stakeholders
Implement planning strategies for Medowie, Kings Hill and Anna Bay	Short term (ongoing)	Partner	State Government agencies, development industry, community representative groups
Prepare Planning Strategies for Nelson Bay, Raymond Terrace and Karuah	Short term	Lead	State Government agencies, community interest groups
To recommend Council's endorsement of a longer term planning framework that encompasses the new Comprehensive LEP, new DCP, new Development Contributions Plan and Locality Plans covering the Shire	Short term	Lead	State Government agencies, community interest groups
To plan for inclusion of a conference centre at Nelson Bay to implement Council's Economic Development Strategy	Short term	Lead	State Government agencies, community interest groups, tourism industry
Integrate planning and management of public lands along Nelson Bay foreshore (Corlette to Shoal Bay)	Short	Lead/Partner	Department of Lands
To complete the Industrial Lands Strategy for Tomago/Williamstown that enables significant rezoning to proceed for industrial development	Short term	Lead	State Government agencies, community interest groups
To review the aircraft noise impacts and related controls consequent upon the Joint Strike Fighter	Short term	Lead and partner	Department of Defence, State Government agencies
Nelson Bay Bypass			
Introduce a Design Review Panel under SEPP 65 or for buildings equal to or more than \$10million.			



## Transport and Infrastructure

### Background

The dispersed nature of urban development in Port Stephens makes it very dependent on an efficient transport network. There is strong seasonality in traffic movement due to the tourist industry and the area is heavily dependent on motor vehicles for day-to-day transport despite being relatively flat and suitable for walking and cycling.

In the foreseeable future, medium and long trips in Port Stephens will remain predominantly road based due to the dispersed nature of urban development however a shift in transport modes combined with better employment self sufficiency will be needed to ensure traffic capacities are sustainable.

Other transport modes such as Ferry, public buses and the rail system are underutilised, possibly due to the need for better connectivity, frequency of services and improved supporting infrastructure.

The employment lands of Tomago and Williamtown combined with the airport will bring freight and airport passenger from the region and further afield and generate the need for regional planning of transport routes.

There is past and present evidence of infrastructure struggling to keep up with the pressures of growth and development. This is true for council, utility providers and government agencies such as the RTA. Council's Community Settlement and infrastructure Strategy along with other supporting initiatives has established directions to better manage the situation.

### State Plan Priorities

- S6 Increasing share of peak hour journeys on a safe and reliable public transport system
- S7 Safer roads
- P2: Maintain & invest in infrastructure.
- E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users.
- E2: A reliable electricity supply with increased use of renewable energy
- E7: Improve the efficiency of the road network

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy Directions

- Investigate the need for improved transport links connecting the Port of Newcastle and the RAAF Base Williamtown–Newcastle Airport to the national highway network and identify the preferred linkages.
- Continue improvements to the north–south access through the Region, including planning the linkage of the F3 to the Pacific Highway at Raymond Terrace and planning and construction of upgrades to the Pacific Highway.
- Support, subject to federal funding, the extension of the F3 Freeway to New England Highway west of Branxton, to facilitate freight movements from north-west of the State and the movement of people to and from the Upper Hunter.
- Construct a third crossing of the Hunter River at Maitland.
- Improve the interchange on the New England Highway at Weakleys Drive, Beresfield.

- Complete Newcastle inner-city bypass between Shortland and Sandgate.
- Support Commonwealth investigation into streamlining freight movements along the north – south rail corridor between Sydney and Brisbane. In particular assessment of the option to construct a freight rail bypass of Newcastle which, if implemented, would remove some freight movements from suburban Newcastle rail lines and reduce the freight– passenger conflict within the Newcastle rail network.
- Concentrate employment and residential development in proximity to public transport to maximise transport access.

### Links to other themes

- Climate Change
- Tourism/economy
- Built environment/character
- Education and Training
- Governance
- Growth and Density
- Health & Community Services
- Primary Industry
- Waste and Recycling

### Strategic Directions for Transport and Infrastructure are:

- **Council and LHCTWG lobby for better transport services and infrastructure** (e.g. links between residential, employment service nodes etc);
- **Maintain and improve the quality of transport infrastructure throughout Port Stephens**, and advocate to state/federal infrastructure agencies and airport;
- **Develop Council policies on; regional linkages** to Newcastle, to alternative transport modes, airport as a transport hub, linkage to rail, etc;
- **Develop better relationships and information sharing between Council and utility providers** to coordinate provision of infrastructure to growth areas;
- **Ensure development** occurs in areas that can economically be provided and maintained with infrastructure, services and facilities; and
- **Plan and advocate for expeditious provision of availability of Broadband** to all parts of the Shire.

## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Action	When	Council	Stakeholders
Develop a footpath and cycleway strategy including end of trip facilities and adopt a funding strategy	Short	Lead	Landowners RTA
Development and construction of the Fingal Bay link road	Long	Lead	Government Agencies, Utility providers
Assist in the provision of reticulated sewer to Tomago/ Williamstown employment areas	Short	Advocate	Hunter Water DoP
Develop 'Park and Ride' facilities	Medium	Lead/Partner	RTA Government agencies
Advocate that Hunter Councils develop a Regional Transport Strategy including the identification of key transport hubs	Medium	Partner	Hunter Councils
Advocate improved transport connection from Newcastle to Tomago, Williamstown and the Airport precinct	Short	Advocate	Bus companies NAL
Promote alternative means of transport modes to private vehicle usage through planning documents and Council policies	Short	Lead	Development industry



# Governance

## Strategic Directions

### To provide:

- better access to legislation for public understanding;
- community-based networking to contribute to Council decision making;
- Greater Councillor accountability;
- Openness and transparency of decision making;
- Consistent decision making;
- certainty of development opportunities; and
- respect for all landowners especially small landowners.

### Vision:

*"We have open communication between Council and its communities, with accountability and trust."*

### Background

Local government is not recognized under the Australian Constitution but is under the auspices of the State government under the Local Government Act 1993. This Act governs the roles and responsibilities of Council. Council's capacity to raise revenue to exercise its roles and responsibilities is limited to rates (x%) and grants from State and Commonwealth governments (x%). The ability for Council to levy rates is controlled by the State government's "rate capping".

The responsibilities of "roads, rates and rubbish" of local government have evolved into a broader planning authority and infrastructure and community service provider role. This has occurred through; increasing State Government legislation; requirement of Council to implement increasingly complex legislation; cost shifting from state government to Council of legislative based decision making and implementation; and, increasing expectations of the community.

Under the Local Government Act, Councillors direct and control the affairs of Council, allocate Council's resources for the benefit of the area; review policies, objectives and criteria relating to the exercise of Council's regulatory functions; review the performance of the Council and its delivery of services and the management plans and revenue policies of Council; represent the interests of residents and ratepayers and provide leadership and guidance to the community.

Councillors normally meet three times a month – Strategic Committee, Operations Committee and Ordinary Council (in that order).

Port Stephens Council, like many local government areas, is faced with the challenges of providing good governance and leadership to the community through opportunities to move with the changing world we all live in. However, there are major resource constraints in meeting this challenge.

Port Stephens Council's commitment to good governance is reflected in its adoption of the Business Excellence Framework that builds relationships and defines key processes in governance. Council has played an important role in establishing the NSW Network for Business Excellence for NSW Councils and has taken a lead role in Business Excellence nationally.

### State Plan Priorities

- P3 Cutting red tape
- S8 Increased customer satisfaction with Government Services

### Directions from Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

There are no provisions that are directly attributable in the Strategy to governance.

### Links to Other Themes

All of the other themes are linked to governance.



## Proposed Actions for Inclusion in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Council's Delivery Program and Council's Operational Plans

Proposed Actions	When	Council	Stakeholders
Develop good web-page design that links to governance	Medium	Lead	
Apply nominated time for responses to community enquiries	Short	Lead	
Council to review all communication channels with the community	Short	Lead	
Council to investigate establishing an office on the Tomaree Peninsula	Short	Lead	
Council to consider holding some of its formal meetings across the local government area	Short	Lead	
Investigate a mobile office van to travel around LGA	Short	Lead	
Develop public education program of how Government and Council works	Medium	Partner	NSW Department of Local Government
Endeavour to create more certainty of land use outcomes	Medium	Partner	Dept Planning
Regular formal interaction with State/Federal government agencies	Short	Partner	State & Federal Governments
Council approach the Department of Local Government for an improved plain English Code of Conduct	Short	Advocate	NSW Department of Local Government
Increase public awareness of Council's Code of Conduct - how it is administered and the follow up process	Short	Council	
Council to report on performance of Council term	Short	Partner	NSW Department of Local Government
Council consider 360 degree annual review of performance	Short	Partner	NSW Department of Local Government
Training for intending Councillors pre-election	Medium	Advocate	NSW Department of Local Government
Improved recording of voting on all Council decisions	Medium	Advocate	NSW Department of Local Government
Consider a Referendum to abolish Wards	Short	Lead	NSW Department of Local Government
Consider a review local government boundaries	Medium	Advocate	NSW Department of Local Government
Stage replacement of Councillors (ie. Half each 2 years, not all at once so knowledge and history is retained)	Medium	Advocate	NSW Department of Local Government
Create a community network with Council e.g. Sports Council	Medium	Partner	NSW Department of Local Government
Local government has more input into State/Federal Government legislation	Medium	Advocate	Council Government
Lobby through associations for constitutional recognition	Medium	Advocate	Local Govt & Shires Assoc
Identify all relevant community groups – create a database/directory.	Short	Lead	Council / Community groups
Develop Governance Framework to ensure openness and transparency for all Council decision-making for non-confidential matters	Short	Lead	NSW Department of Local Government
Discover the best ways to engage different levels of the community – go to the hard to reach	Short	Lead	Council
Develop Council newsletter	Immediate	Lead	Council
Provide incentives for Volunteers and 'market' the concept of volunteering	Short	Lead	Council
More face to face opportunities for the community in terms of time with Councillors and Council staff	Immediate	Lead	Council
Increase awareness of Council's roles / responsibilities	Short (ongoing)	Lead	Council
Consider advertising outside the Port Stephens Examiner	Short (ongoing)	Lead	Council
Encourage community groups to be proactive	Short (ongoing)	Lead	Council
Seek to expand Residents' Panel	Short	Lead	Council
Seek grants from other tiers of Government	Medium (ongoing)	Lead	Council / State and Fed Government
Develop an "A to Z Guide" for residents	Medium	Lead	Council
Create a need for community space by holding festivals / events	Medium	Lead	Council / community groups
Create a 'welcome kit' for new residents	Short	Lead	Council
Hold a quarterly 'party' for new residents hosted by Council	Medium	Lead	Council
Clear Council values			
Educate community about Council business to develop realistic expectations			
Improved partnerships with government agencies and the community			
Acceptance that community can come up with ideas and take actions to resolve/improve issues that are important to them			
Emphasise quality customer service for Council operations			







