



**PORT STEPHENS**  
COUNCIL

# Six-month Progress Report

July to December 2022



# GUUDJI YIIGU

(GOO-JEE IK-KOO)

We welcome you to Port Stephens – part of the Worimi Aboriginal Nation. Port Stephens Council acknowledges the Worimi people as traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waterways on which we all live, learn, work and play.

We value and respect the Worimi people and the legacy 60,000 years of Aboriginal Nation traditions and culture brings with it. As part of Council's culture of acceptance, diversification and harmony we walk alongside the Worimi people on a journey of listening and learning.

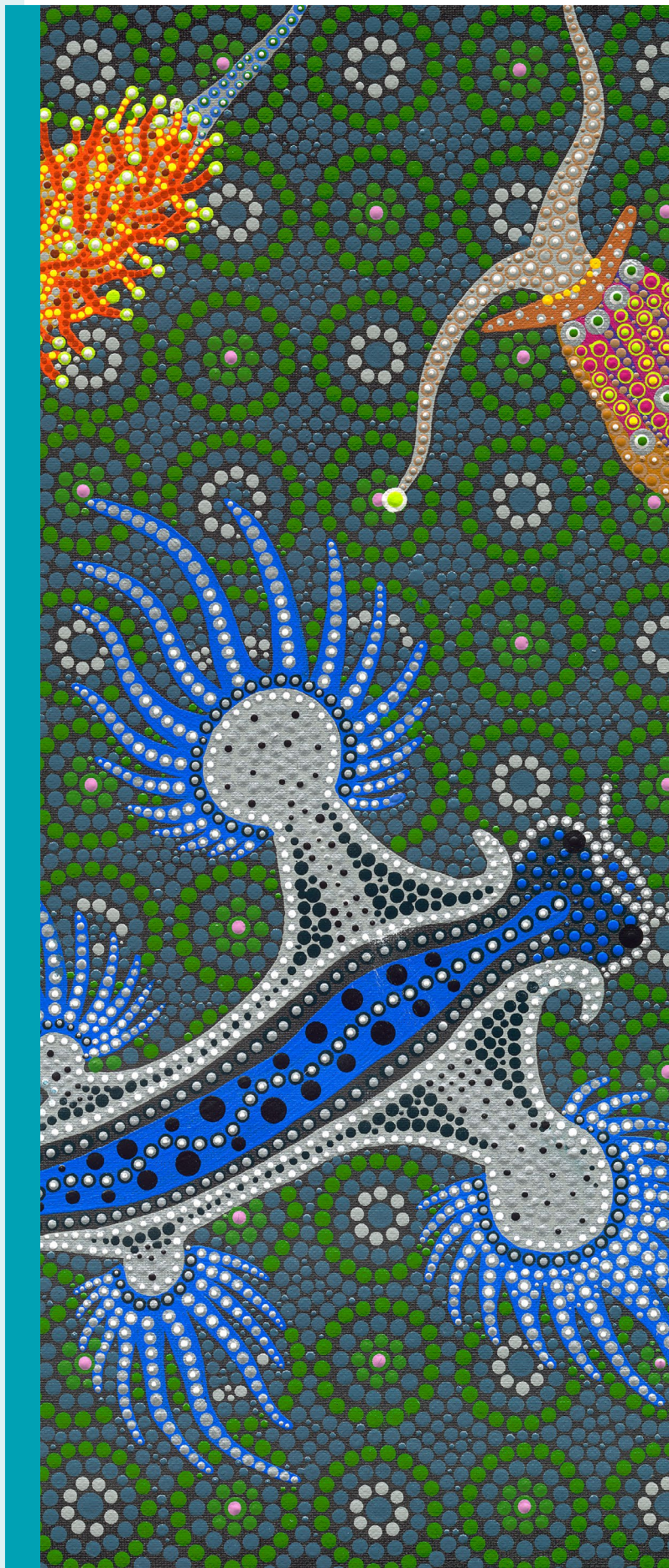
Together we will strive to make this a better place for all people. As guardians of these lands, we ask that you tread lightly to help preserve the biodiversity and respect those who came before as well as those who will follow.

Artwork by Regan Lilley.

## Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Worimi as the original Custodians and inhabitants of Port Stephens. May we walk the road to tomorrow with mutual respect and admiration as we care for the beautiful land and waterways together.

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The Six-month Progress Report from July to December 2022 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines (September 2021) Essential Element 4.9. 'The General Manager must ensure that progress reports are provided to the council, with respect to the principal activities detailed in the **Delivery Program**, at least every six months.'

All financial figures included in this report are preliminary, unaudited and subject to review as part of the audited 2022-2023 financial statements for Council.



# General Manager's message

I'm excited to present my first Six-month Progress Report as General Manager. I'm grateful I've been entrusted to lead this organisation. It's been another eventful 6 months and this progress report is the first that relates to our new **2022 to 2026 Delivery Program**. With lots of projects, priorities and plans on the radar, we've got some exciting things to share via this report.

Unfortunately, we kicked July off with another natural disaster. With over 20 roads closed during the flooding event, Council played a key role in assisting the SES, Police and other emergency services. We supported by helping to close local roads and providing resources where needed and most importantly, maintaining the **Emergency Dashboard**, which is accessible via our website. Our support continued after the flooding subsided, assisting Resilience NSW and other Government agencies to establish 5 Rapid Assistance Points across Raymond Terrace and Hinton.

Ongoing flooding, off the back of previous natural disasters, and increasing prices continued to put a strain on our finances. With our limited

resources we've prioritised projects and sought additional funding for our roads and reviewed our ongoing financial sustainability. Over the last 6 months, we've secured \$6.5M in grant funding and continued to seek further funding from other levels of government as outlined in our **2023 Community Advocacy priorities**.

Of the \$59.6M in capital projects budgeted for 2022-2023, 40% was possible thanks to external grants and contributions. Our LGA wide It's On! activation program, including events such as the New Year's Eve fireworks and Australia Day activities were also made possible through external funding.

Finding a balance between the needs of our community and the Council's long term financial sustainability has been a priority over the last 6 months. We engaged extensively with the community about the options of a Special Rate Variation, with Council resolving in November to apply for a Special Rate Variation of 9.5% per year for three years. Comprehensive and meaningful engagement with our community was a key part of this process. Our approach to community engagement is outlined in our



**Communication and Engagement Strategy**  
adopted by Council in December.

We listened to the community's sentiment about the need to improve roads, taking a deeper dive into the results of the **2022 Community Satisfaction Survey**. We understand the areas for improvement, with the results informing us of the areas to take action. We know there's more work to do, however with the resources we have available, we've already taken several actions. Take a look at the **summary** for a good snapshot of the results.

While a lot of our services and projects are front of mind and easily seen, there's so much more that goes on behind the scenes to support our community. One example is the work our Corporate Systems team has done in moving 50+ forms to an online format. This has received an amazing response from the community with over 6,000 forms being lodged over the period – saving time, money and paper!

I encourage you to take the time to read about the amazing work our teams have carried out with only limited resources available to them. I'm extremely proud of the tireless work our teams have undertaken over the 6 months to support our community where it's needed most.

*Tim Crosdale*

**Tim Crosdale**  
General Manager  
Port Stephens Council

# Our key highlights



## Get up, Stand up, Show up

Celebrating NAIDOC Week



## 35 activations

It's On! program



## 37,000+

potholes fixed



## Emergency

response and recovery



## Green light for

garden organics bin



## 2,838

trees planted



## SRV application

unanimous Council support



## Adopted

Communication and Engagement Strategy

# Scorecard

Our 7 key result measures underpin everything we do at Port Stephens Council.



On track (target achieved or on track to be achieved)



Monitor (<5% off the target)



Off-track (>5% off the target)

# Achievements

## Progress of principal activities

### Key priorities update

Several key priorities were identified in the Delivery Program for 2022 to 2026 based on what we'd heard from the community and the new Council. Read more about these priorities on pages 21 to 34 of the **Delivery Program**.

Over the last 6 months (the period) we've continued to investigate funding sources to resource these initiatives and infrastructure projects, with the progress made on the Key Priorities outlined on pages 8 to 15 below.

### Advocacy Priorities Program

An important part of Council is to act as a voice for our region and its people and to make sure we're prepared to meet the needs of our community in the future. To do this Council has been seeking commitment from the NSW Government to provide funding and support for the delivery of projects across the community – from health and housing to roads, public transport and education.

The **2023 Community advocacy priorities document** lists the key projects for Port Stephens in the years ahead and aims to ensure our community is at the forefront of the NSW Government's future planning and advocacy program.



Road repairs, rehabilitation and upgrades



Creating liveable cities



Housing supply and diversity



The environment



Investment in health services



Protection of Koalas



Tourism, sport and recreation infrastructure



# Critical State funding and policy priorities

1

Fund strategies to unlock housing supply and diversity to support an additional 20,000 residents over the next 20 years

2

Fast track the construction of the Nelson Bay Road upgrade

3

Fund vital upgrades to the Tomaree Hospital

4

Design and construct an alternate link road to Fingal Bay

5

Urgently review and amend the rate peg methodology to improve Council's financial sustainability

6

Deliver a public high school in Medowie

7

Improve public transport connections between Raymond Terrace, Nelson Bay, Maitland and Newcastle

8

Work in partnership with the local community to develop a Masterplan for the Tomaree Lodge site

9

Construct a highway interchange at the Bucketts Way and Medowie Road and M1 intersections

10

Upgrade Cabbage Tree Road and Tomago Road to accommodate traffic growth generated by Newcastle Airport and the Williamtown Special Activation Precinct

## Birubi Information Centre

A sand management plan to minimise ongoing maintenance of the windblown sand was incorporated into the design. Following the Development Approval and Construction Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP), early works commenced late 2022, with final planning for the major works contract progressing to tender early to mid-2023.

## Carbon Neutrality

We continue to plan and implement initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint.

As part of our energy reduction program 14 Council building sites were identified for Solar Photovoltaic Cell (PV) installation. Thirteen sites are now complete with the last at Lakeside Leisure Centre awaiting Development Application approval.

We've also been investigating options to improve the efficiency of our fleet vehicles. This has included the commencement of a hydrogen fuel cell trial on a number of our trucks. The trial results will inform potential changes to Council's fleet portfolio.

The NSW Government has adopted emission

reduction and renewable energy policies that aim to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050. Council aims to do its part by making a commitment to achieve carbon neutral Council operations by 2025. To do this, we're developing a Carbon Neutral Action Plan that defines the necessary initiatives and changes to Council operations. We continue to work closely with our staff and suppliers to influence behavioural change, reduce energy demand and ensure sustainable decision making.

## Coastal Management Program

In collaboration with NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Council is developing two Coastal Management Programs (CMPs). The Port Stephens CMP is currently in Stage 3 of 5 which includes the identification and evaluation of management options. During Stage 2, we completed hazard mapping and modelling, identifying coastal erosion, coastal inundation and wind-blown sand as the key hazards along the coast and estuary.

We're currently working with coastal experts to develop a comprehensive risk assessment for Stage 3 of the **CMP**. This assessment applies to all built and natural assets across Port Stephens and will identify priority management actions for Council and other delivery partners to address as funding and resourcing permit. Extensive consultation with the community and other stakeholders will be carried out in 2023 to help us make decisions about management options and priority areas of action within Port Stephens.

The Hunter Estuary CMP is being developed in collaboration with partner Councils and key organisations. This CMP is currently in Stage 1 of 5, which includes the scoping study.

## Community Engagement

We know that effective communication and engagement are directly linked to the liveability and wellbeing of our community. By listening

**Climate Change** is a significant global threat that directly affects the Port Stephens community. Impacts such as increased sea level rise, intensity and frequency of storms, bushfire and rainfall patterns are challenging the way we manage our environment.

to our community, respecting their values and providing genuine opportunities for engagement, we can create a greater sense of community ownership and ultimately, improve the delivery of Council services to become aligned to community needs.

Our new **Communication and Engagement Strategy** (adopted by Council in December 2022) has been designed to provide the framework for the delivery of transparent and timely communication and meaningful engagement that builds trust and community participation in decision making for our place.

This strategy guides a genuinely integrated and inclusive approach to engagement and communication. Creating a culture where community is front of mind, employees are empowered to engage in open and honest dialogue, where we embrace diverse opinions and values and where we actively work to keep our community informed and connected. Over time, we'll continue to evolve this approach and build a culture that celebrates our stories and informs the future of Port Stephens.

## Community Wellbeing

Wellbeing is something we want for everyone in Port Stephens, so we've been developing a Community Wellbeing Strategy to improve liveability for everyone across the community. Informed by community data and engagement, it focuses on key themes of accessibility and inclusion, housing and homelessness, and neighbourhood safety. We now propose to engage further with the community in 2023 to complete the strategy in mid-2023.

With a number of our social plans and policies currently under review, this strategy will streamline and remove duplication to create one easy to read document. Actions from the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) will also be included as part of our commitment to removing barriers and improving the lives of people with a disability.





## Eastern Groyne, Nelson Bay Precinct

Redevelopment of the Eastern Groyne is dependent on funding for a Business Plan.

### Financial Sustainability

Over the past 3 years Council has been facing its toughest financial challenge to date, with the Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) identifying significant financial challenges.

Following extensive financial investigations and independent reports, continuing austerity measures, increasing non-statutory fees and charges by 10% in the 2022-2023 year and identifying surplus land for potential sale, Council engaged with the community about applying for a Special Rate Variation (SRV). Extensive consultation was carried out to ensure we adequately captured the community's priorities regarding any application to IPART. During the period, Council's LTFP and IP&R documents were revised to incorporate options discussed with the community and reflect the different SRV scenarios.

In November 2022 Council unanimously formally resolved to apply for a SRV of 9.5% per year for three years. Following this, the IPART application was prepared for lodgment in early 2023. IPART is yet to assess and determine the application. Read more about the **Rate Rise investigations** and options.

### Natural Environment

Council is committed to achieving a great lifestyle in a treasured environment, so that current and future generations can enjoy, and benefit from, a healthy natural environment.

As part of our program of work to manage and protect the natural environment, we've secured grant funding for a number of environmental restoration projects to enhance the Port Stephens environment and key Koala habitat. This includes over \$150,000 from the Crown Reserve Improvement Fund, aimed to target priority weeds, feral pests and facilitate biosecurity compliance.

Council implemented My Little Ecosystem workshops across 5 separate community events. The My Little Ecosystem workshops are designed to promote improving habitat for native



species in urban environments and educate our community on the importance of these species. The workshops included frog hotels, native insect hotels, worm farming, composting as well as information on native plants and pollinators.

## Pathways and connections

We have a Pathways Plan that shows the proposed location of future footpaths and cycleways. As the volume of missing links and additional pathways needed is in excess of \$80M, Council is continuing the search for additional income sources to fund these projects.

## Place planning

The status of Council's current Place Plan program is as follows:

- Karuah and surrounds (adopted March 2022)
- Hinterland (underway)
- Medowie and surrounds (underway)
- Shoal Bay (underway)
- Anna Bay and surrounds scoping and investigations (underway)
- Fullerton Cove and surrounds Place Strategy (proponent initiated – underway)
- Nelson Bay East Place Strategy (proponent

initiated – underway)

- Tilligerry (commencing 2023)
- Other centres ie. Tomago, Soldiers Point, Fingal Bay etc. may be subject to future place plans.

**Read more** about our **place plan program** and the placemaking currently happening across Port Stephens.

## Smart Parking rollout

Income generated from the Smart Parking Program is integral to Council's financial modelling outlined in the Long Term Financial Plan.

Council has been reviewing options to continue to roll out the program, which includes the areas of Birubi Headland, Little Beach, Shoal Bay and Fingal Bay. We've been working on the 13 actions as set out in the Council resolution of 26 July 2022, with a dedicated officer assigned to work through these.

## Raymond Terrace Depot project

All work is expected to be completed by mid-2023, with operational staff to return to the new Depot following this.



## Roads

Infrastructure planning and renewal for the period has mostly been funded by NSW Government grants. We're continuing with recovery works and claims associated with the natural disaster in March 2021, February 2022 and July 2022.

### Key road projects

While many other road projects are introduced as funds become available, our planning focus continues on:

- Avenue of the Allies numerous stages – road widening, drainage works including kerb and gutter from Poilus Parade to King Albert.
- Main Road 90, Bucketts Way from No. 125 to 215 – road pavement rehabilitation.
- Sturgeon Street Raymond Terrace – pavement reconstruction from Glenelg Street to Jacaranda Avenue.
- Mustons Road, Karuah – culvert replacement and road widening.
- Brandy Hill shared pathway.
- Fly Point shared pathway upgrade.
- High Pedestrian Activity Area extension – Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay.

### Maintaining local roads

Council continues to repair road surfaces and maintain the local road network on a risk based priority basis – utilising the most effective materials for all conditions, efficient responses and available funding.

The past 6 months have been challenging with poor weather earlier in the year, although recently thanks to drier weather, our teams have caught up on road maintenance, pothole and road repairs as a priority. During this time we've also released a **series of educational videos** to answer some key FAQs and help the community to understand how we build and maintain roads and manage our potholes.

## Waste Management Strategy implementation

Council adopted the **Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031** in October 2021. Since then, we've made progress on the following initiatives:

- The introduction and implementation of the third bin system (garden organics) and the need to undertake consultation and education on the rollout of bins to help the public understand the new services, frequency, makeup and the processing of this waste stream.
- Circular Economy initiatives with involvement through the Hunter Joint Organisation on the journey to carbon neutrality.
- Circular Economy initiatives on the reuse of waste into renewable products and the procurement of these into Local Government purchasing.

These initiatives contribute to improving Port Stephens Council's diversion from landfill and in turn the NSW Government's new target of an 80% reduction in waste by 2030.

## Williamstown management area

Council is continuing to monitor the implementation of the Department of Defence PFAS contamination remediation program and will continue to liaise with relevant agencies, community groups and residents as appropriate.

In June 2022, Council resolved to continue the rate reduction for properties in the Williamstown Management Area for the 2022 to 2023 financial year. A special subcategory of rates applies a discount of 50% for residents in the primary zone, 25% in the secondary zone and 10% in the broader zone. Council continues to consider subcategorization through our normal process of setting the rates each year.

## Williamstown Special Activation Precinct (SAP)

The Williamstown Special Activation Precinct (SAP) was declared by the NSW Government on 28 May 2020. Community consultation on the SAP has been ongoing since December 2020 with the SAP masterplan public exhibition process taking place in 2022.

The NSW Government are planning to re-exhibit a revised SAP masterplan in early 2023 following a review of detailed engineer investigations and updated economic analysis, which has resulted in a smaller development footprint.

# Delivery program update

In this report, we use the icons below to indicate the status of our Operational Plan actions, which form part of the Delivery Program 2022-2026.



## ON TRACK

Operational Plan actions are on track to achieve the target



## MONITOR

Operational Plan actions are within 5% of the target



## OFF TRACK

Operational Plan actions are > 5% off the target





# Our Community

An accessible and welcoming community respecting diversity, heritage and culture.

## C1 Community wellbeing

Improved wellbeing for our diverse community supported by services and facilities.

### **Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) final report**

The last actions to close out the current DIAP were finalised in the period, with priorities and new actions for the next 5 years developed for inclusion as part of the broader Wellbeing Strategy.

### **Visitors return to pools & beaches**

Attendances doubled at our aquatic centres during the period to just over 51,000 (compared to last year) due to swimming school reactivations and no COVID lockdowns. Large crowds also returned to the beaches, especially during the December school holiday period, as families and beachgoers made the most of the ideal weather, following a couple of rainy months.

Operational  
Plan actions



**On track – 4**

## C2 Recognised traditions and lifestyles

Our community supports the richness of its heritage and culture.

### **Delivering Yabang Gumba-Gu**

We've been working with Aboriginal stakeholders to deliver key actions within the Yabung Gumba-Gu roadmap. Native plant giveaways and information together with new banners were produced for NAIDOC week in July.

A workshop with Worimi LALC was held to discuss dual naming of landmarks, places and spaces in Port Stephens.

### **Port Stephens Heritage**

We've been continuing to support heritage in Port Stephens with an organisation wide approach: with local community groups supported in planning for a local heritage event planned for Boomerang Park; providing advice to heritage interest groups on the Community Funding Program, and; providing funding to local heritage groups through the Community Support Fund for heritage interpretation projects.

### **Libraries and community spaces**

We've been working hard to regain library visitation with attendance at programs, activities and events almost at pre-COVID levels.

Operational  
Plan actions



**On track – 4**

## Highlights

### **Community Wellbeing, Yabang Gumba-Gu**

- Yacaaba Art Walk and Terrace Reflections exhibition programs
- Event planning for Australia Day
- Supporting the Community Connect day
- Convening 4 Community Interagency meetings
- Delivering My-Link community sector updates
- Promoting youth involvement in events/ advocacy at Tomaree and Hunter River SRCs
- Administering the Community Support Fund Round 1
- Re-launching the Aboriginal projects fund
- NAIDOC week flag raising ceremony

### **Childcare, Recreation facilities and Libraries**

- Meeting National Quality Standards at Clarence Town and Shoal Bay OOSH
- Installing new heat pumps and solar panels at Tilligerry and Tomaree Pools
- Achieving a safety score of 93% and 5 star score of 95% from the Royal Life Pools Risk Audit at Lakeside
- 5 year contract awarded to Surf Life Saving Services
- Libraries celebrating: Children's Book Week (Dreaming with eyes open); Adult Learner's Week and a raft of programs and events including 'Rite to the Finish'

## Challenges

- Resourcing – staff shortages
- Erosion at One Mile Beach – investigations continuing on long term solutions

## Our Community Snapshot



### **Community Wellbeing**

- key themes developed
- 12 youth actions ongoing
- DIAP final report
- Family & Community Services schedule



### **Yabang Gumbu-Gu**

- actions on track



### **Childcare**

- 99% customer satisfaction
- 8300+ positions filled
- 48 compliance visits



### **Pools**

- 51,337 aquatic centre visits



### **Beaches**

- 292,732 beach visitations
- 20,062 preventative actions
- 26 rescues
- 98 first aid
- 541 law enforcements



### **Our Library services**

- 4,934 internet users
- 5,237 Wi-Fi users
- 4,635 people attended 374 programs
- 780 new library members
- 48 Stories in the Street visits
- 16,406 enquiries
- 313 home deliveries
- 15,377 requests for technology support



# Our Place

A liveable and connected place supporting community wellbeing and local economic growth.

## P1 Strong economy, vibrant local businesses, active investment

Our community has an adaptable, sustainable and diverse economy.

### **Supporting sustainable business development**

We co-hosted events with Business Port Stephens, Destination Port Stephens, the Business Centre and Port Stephens Women in Business to grow business networks and support business growth.

Contact lists have been developed for town centres to strengthen business communications and a renewables cluster continues to gather momentum in Tomago.

### **Attracting and facilitating major events**

We've continued to sponsor major events that attract visitation and vibrancy. We've secured grants for twilight events at Birubi, Raymond Terrace and Karuah, as well as an expanded activation program across the LGA.

Operational  
Plan actions



**On track – 4**

## P2 Infrastructure and facilities

Our community's infrastructure and facilities are safe, convenient, reliable and environmentally sustainable.

### **Managing, providing and maintaining infrastructure**

As well as undertaking normal programs of works, the infrastructure teams submitted a number of additional grant applications and completed works to assist with the recent natural disasters. More detail is provided in the Key Priorities on page 14 and Our Highlights on page 6.

### **Drainage and floodplain work**

Drainage improvement works have been completed at Boat Harbour, Hinton, Karuah, Medowie, Raymond Terrace and Williamstown. Investigations into catchment drainage issues at Salamander Bay and Little Beach are continuing, along with reviewing and updating the Shoal Bay drainage model. Work continues on the Anna Bay and Tilligerry Creek Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan and the Lower Hunter Floodplain Cumulative Development Impact Study and Plan.

Operational  
Plan actions



**On track – 4**

## P3 Thriving and safe place to live

Our community supports a healthy, happy and safe place.

### **Development assessments (DAs)**

We've continued to focus on improving processing timeframes and resolving long-standing legacy DA's, which has resulted in positive results for customers and the community.

Numerous pre-lodgement, Regional Planning Panel and Urban Design Review Panel meetings have been held for major developments in the LGA. Interest remains from the private market in the area, with the pipeline of large projects expected to continue.

During October, we initiated the subdivision fast track program to improve processing timeframes for small scale residential subdivision developments.

### **Emergency Management and Response**

More information about the July natural disaster is in the General Manager's message on page 4.

In October 2022, the scheduled review of the Port Stephens Local Emergency Management Plan was completed and signed off by both the Chair of the Port Stephens Local Emergency Management Committee and the Chair of the Regional Emergency Management Committee.

The management plan is a key document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of emergency services and supporting organisations before, during and after an emergency.

After the flooding event in July 2022, Council developed and implemented the Port Stephens Post Event Recovery Plan to capture the impacts from across the Local Government Area. The Post Event Recovery Plan focuses on the National Principals for Disaster Recovery being Social Environment, Build Environment, Economic Environment and Natural Environment. In addition to this plan, Council continued to provide information to the community via Local Rapid Assistance Points and social media. This information centred around where community members and businesses could seek financial or cleanup assistance as well as where they could seek emotional support.

Operational  
Plan actions



**On track – 7**

### **Economy and Business**

- Growing the Business Concierge – connecting new and growing businesses with relevant information, support and assistance, including distributing the monthly business e-newsletter to 825 subscribers
- Destination Port Stephens (DPS) creating online itineraries of Tilligerry Peninsula, Port Stephens Hinterland and Karuah riverside village
- DPS working with Micenet to promote Port Stephens as a conference and incentive destination
- Distributing major event sponsorship to 17 events.

### **Strategic planning and Development assessments**

- Amendment to the Local Infrastructure Contributions Plan
- Completing a brochure on the Housing Opportunities in Raymond Terrace
- DA 100 day list at 38 as at December (average processing time is 26 net median days)
- 430 Construction Certificates (CCs) approved, 187 by Council
- Steady increase in commercial/industrial and residential flat building CC applications and enquiries
- Implementing targeted ranger campaigns relating to Restricted, Dangerous and Menacing Dogs and Disability Parking Enforcement.

### **Compliance, Ranger and Environment Services**

- Continuing response to requests in relation to alleged unauthorised land uses, construction and other works
- Completing inspection programs for food, public swimming pools, skin penetration and underground petroleum storage systems.

### **Infrastructure planning and renewal**

- 37,284 potholes fixed
- Engineering Services processing:
  - 141 Flood Certificate requests
  - 91 DA referrals
  - 217 DAs that required engineering assessment
- 2022-2023 Road Safety Projects (funded by TfNSW) are on track.
- Joe Rider, Holiday Time Road Safety and Towards Zero campaigns launched
- Approving subdivision certificates, creating 100+ lots
- Nelson Bay and Raymond Terrace CCTV upgraded
- Completed Capital works
  - Road rehabilitation – Gan Gan Rd Seg 160 at One Mile, Six Mile Rd Seg 10-20, Cabbage Tree Rd (TfNSW), Swan Bay Rd Seg 50-60 road widening, Victoria Parade pedestrian bridge (Stage 1) north side demolition works, Newline Rd Seg 290-300 pavement rehabilitation, shared paths – Medowie Rd, Lemon Tree Passage Rd (missing link) and Raymond Terrace, Elizabeth Waring function room upgrade, Fly point amphitheatre metal treatment, Little Beach playground update, Kittyhawk Park furniture and playground replacement, Raymond Terrace Activity Van Building roof replacement, Henderson Park shade sail installation, Sturgeon St Raymond Terrace drainage improvements, East Seaham Rd rock wall repairs
- Winning the Small Project Architecture Commendation for Stuart Park Amenities Building, 2023 Newcastle Architecture Awards.

### **Place Planning (refer page 13)**

- It's On! Activation Program included Tastes Like Summer, Sunset Cinema, Friday Flavours, This Season Christmas activations, Kids Zone holiday program, Snak & Rap

## Challenges

- Businesses across all sectors have been experiencing issues attracting workforce, and staff being able to secure housing within a reasonable distance from the workplace
- July 2022 natural disaster event created a significant increase in workload for our infrastructure teams in responding to and investigating drainage and flooding related enquiries
- Staff resourcing was stretched when responding to the natural disaster event and delivering large scale projects
- Ongoing wet weather impacted events, capital works, maintenance and compliance inspection programs
- Managing limited road funding to a road network that has shown rapid decline in condition due to sustained periods of severe wet weather
- Declining community satisfaction with roads – refer to the Roads Deep Dive in the **CSS report**
- DA team involved in a number of Land and Environment Court proceedings.



## Our Place Snapshot



### **Our Incredible Place Strategy**

- actions on track



### **VIC**

- 2700 walk-ins
- 850 phone calls



### **Economic Development Strategy**

- actions on track



### **Asset condition inspections**

- on track



### **Engineering, flooding and drainage development referrals**

- on track and processed within required timeframes



### **Public Infrastructure Program**

- on track



### **Maintenance defects**

- high priority defects (Roads, Roadside, Building Trades and Parks) fixed on time



### **Community Financial Assistance**

- nearly \$28K from Mayoral Funds and \$5K from Ward funds



### **Development Services**

- meeting DA determination target of 40 days
- 582 DA's approved at value of \$212M



### **Place Plan delivery**

- on track



### **Emergency management**

- strategic objective actions on track

# Our Environment

Port Stephens environment is clean, green, protected and enhanced.

## E1 Ecosystem function

Our community has healthy and dynamic environmental systems that support biodiversity and conservation.

### **Environmental Strategies and Policies**

A Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) Steering Committee 2023 Action Plan has been developed in consultation with the committee membership. The action plan will focus on key actions to protect the Port Stephens Koala population and enhance their environment over the next 12 months.

The Environment Policy, Climate Change Policy and Tree Vandalism Policy were revised for public exhibition in late 2022 and proposed for Council's consideration in early 2023. Refer to Natural Environment as part of the Key Priorities on page 12 for more information.

A number of grants have been secured for environmental education and environmental restoration programs to target priority weeds, feral pests and facilitate Crown Land compliance.

Operational  
Plan Actions



**On track – 2**

## E2 Environmental sustainability

Our community uses resources sustainably, efficiently and equitably.

### **Developing a Sustainability Strategy**

To ensure a holistic approach to development of sustainability across Council, a PCG and Project Technical Group were established.

Refer to Carbon neutrality under Key Priorities on page 10 for more information.

### **Implementing the Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031**

Refer to Key Priorities on page 15 for more information.

Operational  
Plan Actions



**On track – 2**





## E3 Environmental resilience

Our community is resilient to environmental risks, natural hazards and climate change.

### **Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan**

We continue to deliver on these recommendations through integration into operations and regulations. Meetings with key internal and external stakeholders are being held to implement and track the recommendations. The recommendations are being reviewed for alignment and integration with the preparation of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan and part of the broader Sustainability Strategy. Refer to Key Priorities page 10 for more information.

### **Coastal Management Program update**

Refer to Key Priorities on page 10.

Operational  
Plan Actions



**On track - 2**

## ☆ Highlights

### Environmental Rehabilitation and Education

- 502 sites inspected for biosecurity compliance regarding priority weeds: 15 compliance and enforcement actions undertaken for breaches of the Biosecurity Act, 144 sites were treated to control priority weeds
- 99.2 ha across 133 sites of environmental significance was regenerated and restored. 621 volunteers were engaged to help undertake this work
- 2,838 trees were planted
- 18 public events attracted 454 participants
- 239 stakeholders received Invasive Species face to face engagement
- Tree Permits: 47 received, 49 determined, 69% approved
- Tree Notifications: 74 received, 59 determined 14% approved
- My Little Ecosystem workshops were held across 5 community events
- Distributed the 'Your Environment' electronic newsletter

### Waste management

- Garden organics bin endorsed by Council
- 2,905 tonnes of kerbside recycling collected
- 1,715 mattresses, 631 tyres, 267 tonnes of steel diverted
- Timber recycling commenced (Salamander Waste Transfer), 19 tonnes diverted
- Workshops held – less mess, reusable nappies, composting and recycling, along with community and school group talks

## ▲ Challenges

- Resourcing
- Waste staff continue investigations into viable alternatives to landfill for residential bin waste

## Our Environment Snapshot



### Environmental Strategies and policies

- in progress



### Sustainability Strategy

- holistic approach



### Waste Management Strategy actions

- on track



### Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan

- actions underway



### Coastal Management Plan

- Stage 3 underway



# Our Council

Port Stephens Council leads, manages and delivers valued community services in a responsible way.

## L1 Governance

Our Council's leadership is based on trust and value of Respect, Integrity, Teamwork, Excellence and Safety (RITES).

### **Advocacy, Newcastle Airport, Hunter Councils**

We're continuing with advocacy priorities, refer to Key Priorities on page 9. In consultation with Councillors, the revised Community Advocacy Priorities were developed to target key issues for the upcoming NSW Government election. This is supported by a targeted engagement program.

Our General Manager (GM) attended bi-monthly meetings of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils (HJO), with the HJO continuing to advocate on key issues around economic transition, funding and support for significant infrastructure projects to support ongoing growth of our region. The HJO has progressed and completed capacity building projects relating to waste management / circular economy, disaster recovery and regionally significant events.

The Mayor and GM sit on relevant based boards to direct and govern the operations of the Newcastle Airport, in addition to attending bi-monthly meetings. Runway upgrade works are being completed by Department of Defence while design works for terminal expansion have progressed, with construction works to commence in 2023. Astra Aerolab Stage 1 is complete with development of commercial buildings progressing to planning approval stage in late 2022.

### **Service Review Program**

Council has been undertaking indepth service reviews since 2011. Our 4 year rolling program includes full Service Reviews, condensed Mid-point Reviews and Structural Reviews for all 60 services. The recommendations arising from these reviews during the past 6 months have commenced implementation and been programmed into each relevant section's work plans.

Operational  
Plan actions



**On track – 12**

## L2 Financial Management

Our Council is financially sustainable to meet community needs.

### Managing our financial resources

Outlined further under Financial Sustainability in Key Priorities on page 12. The Finance team, in collaboration with key internal stakeholders has undertaken a significant amount of work to investigate, review and present options for our future financial sustainability. Due to austerity measures, a small underlying surplus has been maintained as outlined in the December 2022 Quarterly Budget Review.

### Beachside Holiday Parks (HP) & Koala Sanctuary (Sanctuary)

Major refurbishments have taken place: onsite accommodation rooms upgraded to 4 stars at the Sanctuary; new boom gates at Fingal, Shoal and Halifax and an upgraded power grid at Halifax. Refurbishments at the Sanctuary have received good feedback with an increase in occupancy since completion.

Operational  
Plan actions



On track – 3

## L3 Communication and engagement

Our Council is committed to enabling an engaged and informed community.

### Customer Experience

Council's website continues to grow as an important source of information and news for the community. Over the past six months, more than 390,000 visitors have accessed the website.

A new digital voice solution has been added to the website which converts text to speech. This program delivers an improved experience for website visitors and increases accessibility. Face to face and phone interactions remain an important service for our community with more than 3,200 customers accessing face to face services and 26,900 accessing services via phone.

### Communications and Community Engagement

As part of Council's financial sustainability we undertook the largest community engagement program seeking feedback for a rate increase. **Read more** information on our communications, engagement plans and reports during this process. Council also adopted the new **Communication and Engagement Strategy** in December. This new plan provides a framework for the delivery of transparent and timely communications and community engagement programs to build trust and community participation in Council decision making. Refer to Key Priorities on page 10 for more on our overall community engagement approach.

Operational  
Plan actions



On track – 2

### **Newcastle Airport, Hunter Councils**

- Newcastle Airport secured \$121M in Federal grants to enable runway upgrades and expansion of the terminal for future long range international flights.
- Revised **Community Advocacy Priorities document**

### **Workforce and Citizenship**

- Delivering Workforce Management Strategy initiatives – Employee experience mapping, developing and delivering internally led leadership programs and the employee engagement survey
- 34 conferees at our Citizenship Ceremony
- Winning the Employer of Choice by the Local Government Engineers Association

### **Corporate Systems**

- Delivering improvement initiatives such as:
  - Building an Information Asset Register
  - 50+ forms gone online with 6,000+ forms lodged
  - Customer Request Management (CRM) system reporting and online promotion
  - Moving the Depot datacentre into a temporary facility
  - Implementing hardware upgrades, firewalls, core switches and Library equipment

### **Governance, legal, internal audit and risk management**

- 3 formal, 41 informal and 86 property access information requests
- 9 legal advices
- Statewide Mutual assessed numerous Council assets to conduct valuations
- 2022-2023 Internal Audit plan adopted by the Audit Committee

### **Integrated Planning and Excellence**

- Annual 2022 Community Satisfaction Survey conducted – a **summarised 2 page flyer** was provided to Councillors
- June 2022 Six-month Progress Report and 2021-2022 Annual Report adopted
- Completed 6 Service Reviews, 5 condensed Mid-point Reviews and 1 Structural Review (unscheduled)
- Winning a gold award from the Australasian Reporting Awards for the 2020-2021 Annual Report

### **Managing Finances, Property and HP**

- Unqualified **2021-2022 Annual Financial Statements**
- Commercial portfolio vacancy rates at all-time low of 2.4%
- 58 native title referrals completed
- Plans of Management for Birubi Transport Interchange and Shoal Bay HP submitted to Crown for approval to exhibit
- World class Sanctuary – average NPS 90%\* 14,957 day visitors
- World class HP survey results – NPS 74.9%\*
- The Sanctuary winning a Silver award at the 2022 NSW Tourism Awards

\*70% is world class

### **Customer Experience, Communication and Engagement**

- Customer experience interactions:
  - 26,944 by phone
  - 13,516 by email
  - 3,272 front counter
- **Communication and Engagement Strategy** adopted
- Increase in followers across social media (FB, Instagram and LinkedIn); and those engaged with our FB posts

## Challenges

- Strengthening our value and brand in and employee focused labour market
- Advocacy focused on financial sustainability of Council, grant funding opportunities, funding for road maintenance and responses to natural disasters
- Maintaining financial sustainability now and in the future
- Insurance claims continuing regarding potholes
- Drop in community satisfaction
- Cybersecurity

## Our Council Snapshot



### **Workforce Management Strategy (WMS)**

- delivering on 4 strategic objectives



### **Corporate Systems and Data Management Strategy**

- delivering on 5 strategic objectives



### **Governance and Internal Audit program**

- on track



### **IP&R and Service Review program**

- on track



### **Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP)**

- on track



### **Property Portfolio**

- in accordance with Property Investment Strategy



### **Holiday Parks and Koala Sanctuary**

- delivery plans on track



### **Customer Experience Roadmap**

- actions on track



### **Communication and Engagement Strategy**

- program on track





**PORT STEPHENS**  
COUNCIL