

# Community Strategic Plan

2025 to 2035



The Community Strategic Plan identifies the community's priorities and aspirations for the future, outlining actions to achieve these key directions and goals.



**PORT STEPHENS**  
COUNCIL

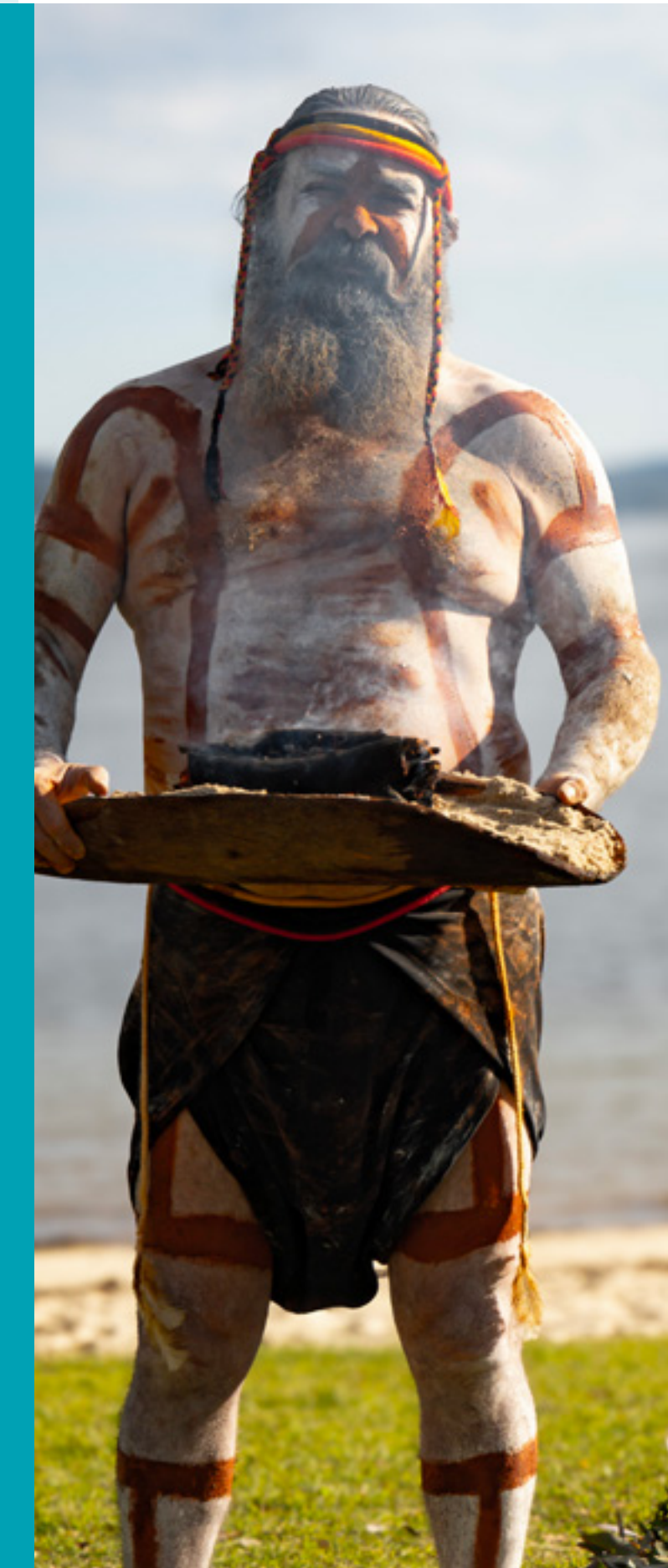


GUUDJI YIGU  
(GOO-JEE IK-KOO)

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.



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## Mayor's message

Port Stephens is an incredible place, and we're lucky to call it home. From our stunning beaches to our strong and diverse community – it's a fantastic place to live, work, visit and invest.

To make sure we're building the best future for our community, we've worked on a shared vision for a vibrant and liveable Port Stephens. Council plays an important role in making this happen, but we know we can't do it alone. We're working with government agencies, local business, community groups and other partners to tackle the big priorities that matter most to you.

The Community Strategic Plan (the Plan) is shaped by feedback from the past two years. In November 2024, more than 2300 members of the Port Stephens community shared their thoughts in our Liveability Survey, telling us what they valued most and how they felt about their place. We also had lots of conversations with our community on some big strategies and projects like the Community Wellbeing Strategy, Local Housing Strategy, Coastal Management Program and more.

This Plan reflects what you told us is most important – wellbeing, improved housing options, investment in better roads and pathways, protecting our natural environment, financial sustainability and making sure you have a say in the decisions that affect your life.

We know the community care about our roads

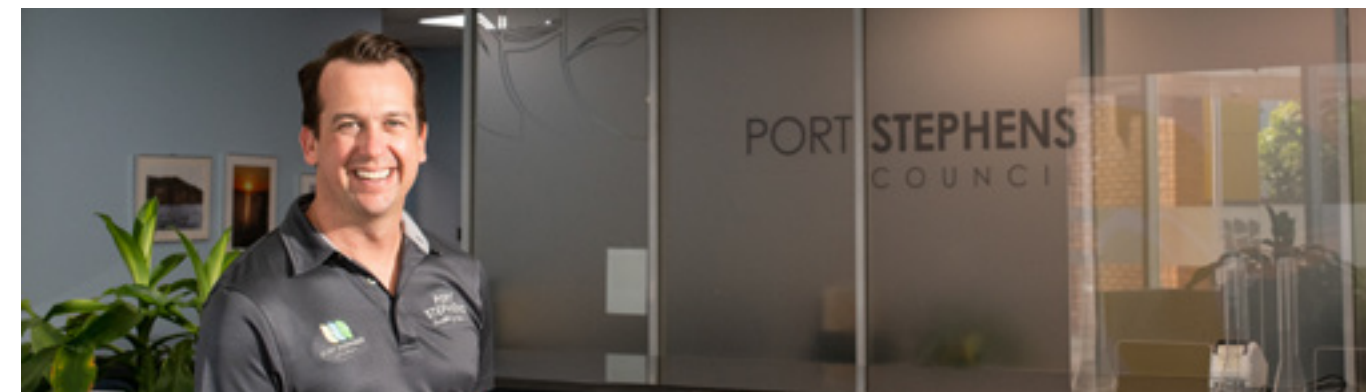
and connections. Whilst as a Council we have never spent more on our roads and footpaths, the Council will continue to look at ways we can be smart with our resources to increase this investment into the future. We know in the first years of this Plan we will benefit from an additional \$7.1m generated from the Special Rate Variation (SRV) for roads. We will continue to look at ways to increase this funding in a sustainable and responsible way.

The Plan is built around themes – Our Community, Our Place, Our Environment and Our Council. Each theme has clear goals and steps to achieve them, helping us stay on track and measure our progress as we work together for a vibrant future for Port Stephens.

This Plan was on public exhibition to hear your thoughts and to shape the future of our community and make sure the work we do reflects your priorities.

Let's keep working together to make Port Stephens the best it can be – now and for the future.

**Leah Anderson**  
Mayor of Port Stephens



## General Manager's message

The Community Strategic Plan is the most important strategic document we prepare on behalf of the community. It's shaped around your priorities and aspirations for Port Stephens, creating a clear blueprint for what we aim to achieve as we look ahead to 2035.

Delivering on this plan is our top priority. We're committed to the smart use of our resources, making sure we allocate our budget and effort in a way that supports delivery of key plans, projects and services, all while maintaining financial sustainability for the future.

We're prioritising the areas we've heard are most important to the Port Stephens community. These include investing in our roads and pathways, facilitating diverse and affordable housing options, balancing development with protecting our environment, being financially sustainable, managing our precious coastal areas and genuinely listening to your feedback.

We take responsibility for the decisions we make. However, we recognise that we can't achieve everything in the Community Strategic Plan on our own. Many of the priorities outlined in the Plan extend beyond Council's direct control. That's why strong partnerships and effective advocacy with government departments, businesses, agencies and the wider community are essential to bring this plan to life.

We will also report regularly on the actions taken towards achieving the community's goals outlined in the Plan, ensuring transparency and accountability along the way. These reports will highlight our progress, the challenges we've faced and the outcomes we've achieved. By sharing this information year to year, we can celebrate our success together, identify areas needing more focus and adapt to changing needs and priorities.

During the public exhibition we encouraged everyone to take time to read the plan. It provides further insight in understanding Council's direction and how we're working together to build a bright and prosperous future for Port Stephens.

**Tim Crosdale**  
General Manager of Port Stephens Council



# Port Stephens snapshot



## Our location

Located on the east coast of Australia about 2 hours north of Sydney, Port Stephens is known for its incredible natural beauty and vibrant community. These characteristics make our place an ideal tourist destination as well as a great place to live, work and play.



**Region**  
Hunter



**Population density**  
90 persons/km2



**Area**  
858.5 km2

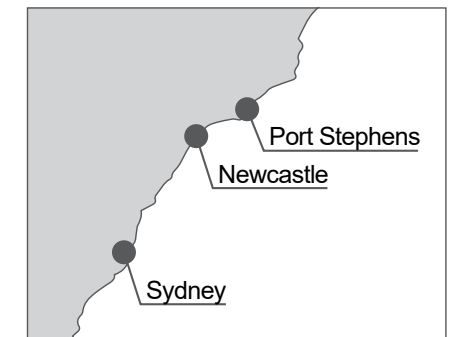
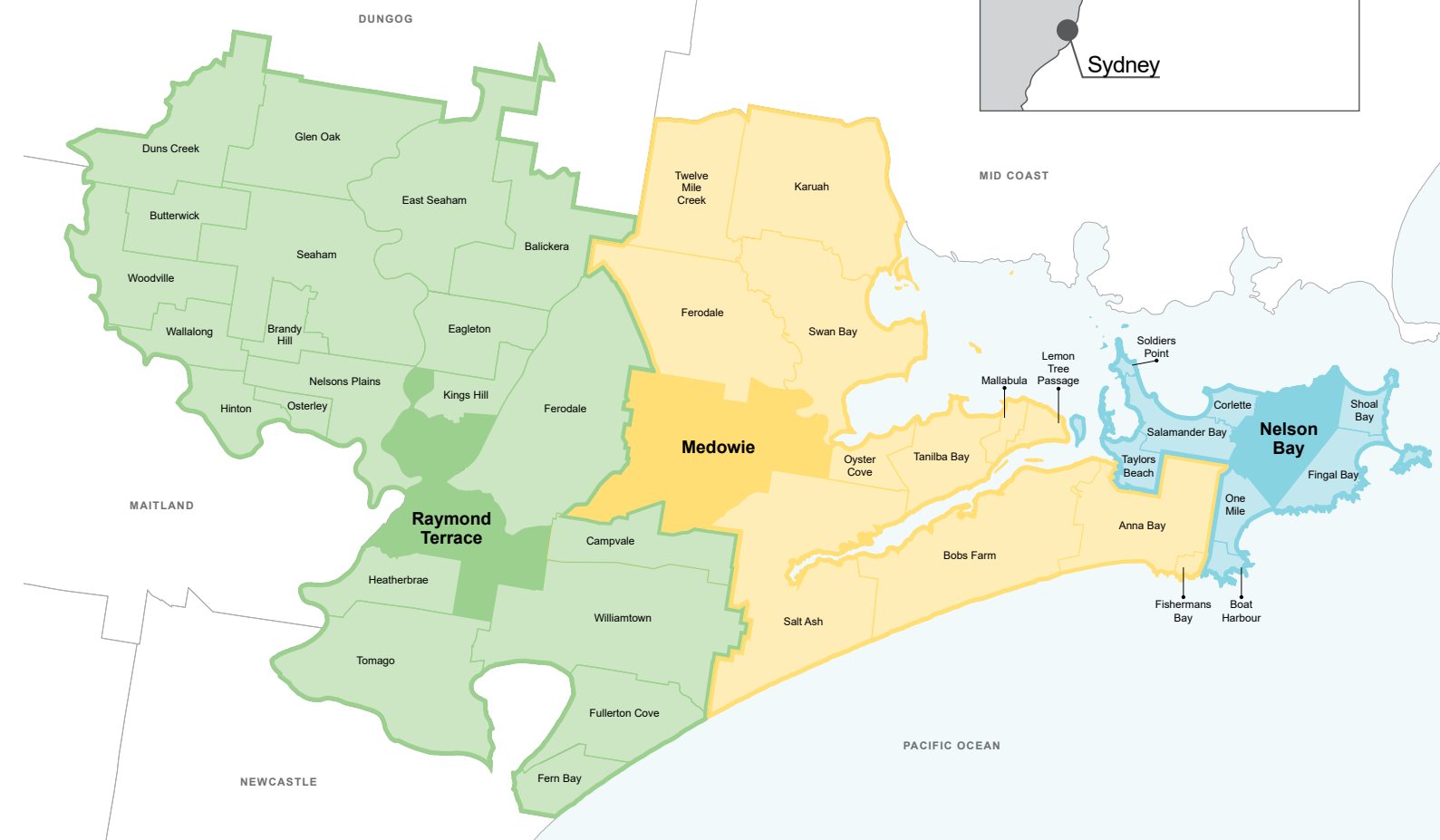


**Major centres**  
Raymond Terrace  
Medowie  
Nelson Bay

## Our ward map

### Ward

West Central East




You can read more about Port Stephens in our economic and community profiles:


[portstephens.nsw.gov.au/community/our-profile](http://portstephens.nsw.gov.au/community/our-profile)

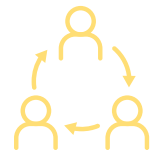


## Our people

### POPULATION

**77,748**   
(ABS 2023 Estimated Resident Population)

**1.2%**  (REMPAN December 2024)  
COMPOUND ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH



### MEDIAN AGE

**47 years**

### OLDER THAN NSW MEDIAN AGE OF

**39 years**

(2021 ABS)

## Our economy



**31,070**

Number of jobs in  
Port Stephens

(as at December 2024, Remplan)



**6,139**

businesses trading  
in Port Stephens

(as at December 2024, Remplan)



**3.9%**

Unemployment

(2023, Remplan)



**\$7.338** BILLION

Gross Regional Product

(as at December 2024, Remplan)

### MAIN EMPLOYING INDUSTRIES



**13.9%**

Public  
Administration  
and Safety

(as at December 2024, Remplan)



**11.3%**

Manufacturing



**11.2%**

Construction

## Our Council



**Mayor**  
Leah Anderson

### East Ward



**Councillor**  
Roz Armstrong



**Councillor**  
Nathan Errington



**Councillor**  
Mark Watson

### Central Ward



**Councillor**  
Jason Wells



**Councillor**  
Chris Doohan



**Councillor**  
Ben Niland

### West Ward



**Councillor**  
Giacomo Arnott



**Councillor**  
Peter Francis



**Councillor**  
Paul Le Mottee



# Developing our plan



## Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework guides the planning and reporting activities of local councils. The requirements for IP&R are set out in the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act) and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 (the Regulation) and the NSW Government's IP&R Guidelines and Handbook 2021. The IP&R cycle is aligned with the NSW local government election cycle, with each newly elected Council required to review the Community Strategic Plan and develop a Delivery Program and Operational Plan outlining how Council will respond to the community's priorities.

It helps Council bring its various plans together, understand how they interact and inform each other, ensuring alignment with state and regional priorities. IP&R is at the centre of all council plans, activities, projects, resourcing decisions and improvement strategies. At Port Stephens Council, the Integrated Plans are the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan.





# Community Strategic Plan

At the heart of the IP&R framework is the Community Strategic Plan. The Community Strategic Plan is the highest level strategic plan that a council will prepare on behalf of the community. It identifies the community's priorities and aspirations for the future, outlining actions to achieve these key directions and goals.

The Community Strategic Plan for 2025-2035 focuses on four Focus Areas: Our Community, Our Place, Our Environment and Our Council and is based on social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights.

The purpose of this Plan is to:

- Identify the community's main priorities and aspirations over the next 10 years
- Support community and stakeholders to play an active role in shaping their future
- Work with other governments and agencies to achieve community priorities
- Outline Council's role in delivering these priorities and assigning resourcing to support delivery while balancing affordability
- Maintain accountability and transparency in reporting on progress.

## Monitoring and reporting

We use the following types of indicators to measure our progress in achieving the community's priorities over time:



### Community indicators

We use these indicators to track trends within our community.



### Service indicators

We use these indicators to track progress and performance of our service delivery for our community.



### Other

In some areas of Council, additional performance measures may be required by legislation.

We regularly report on Council's performance to ensure the community is informed of how we are tracking towards meeting the community's priorities. We report through:

- Our Port Stephens Report (replaces the End of Term Report)
- Annual Report
- Six-month Progress Reports
- Quarterly Financial Budget Review Statement

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Council funds are used to seed or match a range of other funding sources such as developer contributions, commercial profits and government grants which are not always guaranteed.

## Delivery Program

The Delivery Program is a 4-year program showing how Council will deliver on its business within the resources available. It translates the Plan's key directions into clear actions. Progress on the Delivery Program is reported every six months.

## Operational Plan

The Operational Plan is an annual plan that outlines the activities and actions to be undertaken during the year to support the 4-year Delivery Program. It includes the annual budget and the work to be undertaken. Achievements of the Operational Plan are reported in the Annual Report.

## Resourcing Strategy

The Resourcing Strategy shows how Council will resource the community's long term vision and aspirations in the Community Strategic Plan in terms of finances, assets and workforce. It includes:

- Long Term Financial Plan
- Workforce Management Strategy
- Strategic Asset Management Plan

Council's role in delivering what it can in this Plan is outlined in the Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Resourcing Strategy. Council lists in its Delivery Program and Operational Plan the actions to support the delivery of the Community Strategic Plan.

State and regional plans

This Plan has been informed by various State and Regional plans, strategies and priorities.



State level

- NSW State Plan – NSW 2021
- Housing 2041: NSW Housing Strategy
- NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2020-2025)
- NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2042
- NSW Net Zero Plan
- NSW Water Strategy
- NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy
- Movement and Place Framework



Regional level

- Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036
- Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy
- Hunter Joint Organisation Strategic Plan
- Future Transport Strategy 2056



Local level

- Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035
- Local Strategic Planning Statement



What we have heard

In 2020 and 2024 we partnered with independent research company Place Score to conduct our Liveability Survey. This helps us to understand what people value and how they rate their neighbourhood. The results allow us to focus on the things most valuable to our community, to plan and make decisions that will have the biggest impact on wellbeing. 2,300 people shared their values and rated their neighbourhood in 2024.

Our top community values

These are the things most important to you in your ideal neighbourhood.

- Elements of natural environment
- Sense of neighbourhood safety
- Local businesses that provide for daily needs
- General condition of public open space
- Locally owned and operated businesses

Our top strengths

These are the things you care about most and say are performing well. We must continue to celebrate and protect these.

- Elements of natural environment
- Sense of personal safety
- Sense of belonging in the community

Our liveability priorities

These are the things most important to you and are areas for us to focus on improving.

- General condition of public space
- Walking/jogging/bike paths that connect housing to communal amenity
- Access and safety of walking, cycling and/or public transport
- Evidence of recent public investment
- Quality of public space





Challenges, opportunities and priorities

Throughout 2023 and 2024 we've had big conversations with our community about the following key strategies, projects and plans. This feedback informed the Community Strategic Plan.

- Communication and Engagement Strategy
  - Local Housing Strategy
  - Community Wellbeing Strategy
  - Smart Parking
- Port Stephens Coastal Management Program
  - Business Health Check In
  - Financial sustainability (Special Rate Variation)
  - Community Satisfaction Survey

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving <b>wellbeing, inclusivity and accessibility</b> across our community.</li><li>• Ensuring equitable and safe access to <b>sports, recreation, cultural and leisure activities</b>.</li><li>• Recognising and prioritising the values and priorities of local <b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People</b>.</li></ul>	Our community
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning, investing and advocating for improved connections between our communities (<b>transport, roads and footpaths</b>).</li><li>• Improving community resilience through <b>emergency services and disaster preparedness</b>.</li><li>• Investing in programs that support local <b>business development, visitation and events</b>.</li><li>• Prioritising <b>housing supply</b>, diversity and affordability.</li></ul>	Our place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Investing in programs that improve <b>resource recycling and reduction of waste</b>.</li><li>• Prioritise and improve <b>environmental resilience and asset protection</b> through the delivery of the Coastal Management Program.</li><li>• Deliver actions that support <b>renewable energy</b> and alternative fuel use</li><li>• <b>Balancing</b> the demand for housing with the protection of our environment.</li><li>• Commence planning on an Environmental Strategy to <b>enhance and protect our environment</b>.</li></ul>	Our environment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensuring <b>financial sustainability</b> and resilience.</li><li>• Providing genuine opportunities for the <b>community and stakeholders to actively participate</b> in Council decision making.</li><li>• Prioritising <b>workforce attraction and retention</b>.</li><li>• Investing in digital technologies <b>to improve Council performance</b> and support to customers.</li></ul>	Our Council

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Our community's ideal neighbourhood is safe and connected to nature and its local community.





# Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035

Our community vision  
– A great lifestyle in a  
treasured environment



## Community Strategic Plan on a page

### Our community

An accessible, welcoming and connected community respecting diversity, traditions and culture

#### C1 Community wellbeing

Our community feels connected, included, supported and has access to services and facilities to support their wellbeing

#### C2 Traditions and culture

Our community supports the richness of its traditions and culture

#### C3 Connecting with community

Our Council is committed to enabling an engaged and informed community



### Our place

A liveable, safe and connected place supporting community wellbeing and local economic growth

#### P1 Housing, tourism and economy

Our community has adaptable, sustainable and diverse housing, tourism and economy

#### P2 Infrastructure, facilities and connections

Our community's infrastructure, facilities and connections are safe, convenient, reliable and adequately resourced

#### P3 Community safety

Our community feels safe and resilient



### Our environment

Port Stephens's environment is protected, enhanced, sustainable and resilient

#### E1 Environmental balance

Our community's natural and built environment supports biodiversity conservation, is sustainably balanced and resilient to environmental risks, natural hazards and climate change

#### E2 Environmental sustainability

Our community uses resources sustainably, efficiently and equitably



### Our Council

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

#### L1 Resources and finance

Our Council is resourced, financially sustainable and advocates to meet community needs





# Council's role

Council knows that it can't deliver on all of the community's priorities and must partner or advocate to other levels of government, state agencies, private enterprises, community groups, businesses and more to achieve these.

In delivering this plan we can:



## Deliver

This icon indicates that Council is solely responsible for delivering services and activities that contribute to the Plan. Council delivers a wide range of infrastructure, facilities and services such as waste collection, library services, local roads and public spaces.



## Partner

This icon indicates that Council shares the responsibility for contributing to the Plan through strategic partnerships with federal and state government agencies or facilitating/supporting a range of other stakeholders to deliver services or facilities.



## Advocate

This icon indicates that Council advocates to other levels of government to deliver and support services that contribute to the Plan.

# Our partners and stakeholders

Our partners and stakeholders are diverse. Understanding why our partners are important and our importance to them is vital in working together to shape our place. How we work with and engage with these partners is outlined in our **Communication & Engagement Strategy**.





# Our community

An accessible, welcoming and connected community respecting diversity, traditions and culture.



Where do we want to be? (Key directions/goals)	How will we get there? (Actions)	Council's role
<b>C1 Community wellbeing</b> Our community feels connected, included, supported and has access to services and facilities to support their wellbeing	C1.1 Support wellbeing, inclusivity, accessibility and making all feel welcome  C1.2 Provide facilities and learning options for children and families  C1.3 Provide equitable and safe access to sports, recreational, cultural and leisure activities  C1.4 Provide vibrant, inclusive, accessible community spaces to support lifelong learning and community connection  C1.5 Support volunteers to deliver appropriate community services	
<b>C2 Traditions and culture</b> Our community supports the richness of its traditions and culture	C2.1 Recognise, respect and support the values and priorities of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People  C2.2 Support and promote local cultural activities and heritage	
<b>C3 Connecting with community</b> Our Council is committed to enabling an engaged and informed community	C3.1 Continue to enhance the focus on customer experience  C3.2 Inform the community and provide opportunities for stakeholders to actively participate in council decision making	

## Community indicators

We use these indicators to track trends within our community	Data source
Community perception "Child Services"	Liveability Index
Community perception "Family and community services"	Liveability Index
Community perception "Sense of belonging in the community"	Liveability Index
Community perception "Cultural and/or artistic community"	Liveability Index
Population % who volunteer	SGS Annual Cities and Regions Wellbeing Index

## Service indicators

We use these indicators to track progress and performance of our service delivery for our community	Data source
Progress in implementing the Community Wellbeing Strategy (CWS) to provide services and support for a diverse community	Internal data source
Progress delivering the Yabang Gumba-Gu Agreement to recognise and support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Internal data source
Progress implementing the Events, Arts and Culture Strategy	Internal data source
Progress implementing the Communication and Engagement Strategy	Internal data source

# Our place

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



Where do we want to be? (Key directions/goals)	How will we get there? (Actions)	Council's role
<b>P1 Housing, tourism &amp; economy</b> Our community has adaptable, sustainable and diverse housing, tourism and economy	P1.1 Support sustainable local business development, employment, tourism, visitation and events  P1.2 Provide land use plans, tools and advice that sustainably support housing and employment for the community  P1.3 Enhance liveability through the use of Council's strategic and statutory planning services  P1.4 Investment in Newcastle Airport to achieve international routes and significant industrial development	
<b>P2 Infrastructure, facilities &amp; connection</b> Our community's infrastructure, facilities and connections are safe, convenient, reliable and adequately resourced	P2.1 Deliver and maintain sustainable and safe community infrastructure to connect the community  P2.2 Create useable links, pathways and connections within towns and centres	
<b>P3 Community safety</b> Our community feels safe and resilient	P3.1 Enhance public safety through the use of Council's regulatory controls and services  P3.2 Prioritise emergency services, disaster preparedness and the protection of community assets from natural disasters	

## Community indicators

We use these indicators to track trends within our community	Data source
Community perception "Locally owned and operated businesses"	Liveability Index
Visitor average expenditure profile (average stay, average spend)	REMPAN/ Tourism Research Australia (TRA)
Community perception "Quality of public space"	Liveability Index
Community perception "Sense of neighbourhood safety"	Liveability Index

## Service indicators

We use these indicators to track progress and performance of our service delivery for our community	Data source
Progress in implementing the Economic Development Strategy	Internal data source
Progress in delivering the Strategic Asset Management Plan 2025-2035 (SAMP)	Internal data source
Progress in delivering the Local Housing Strategy	Internal data source



# Our environment

Port Stephen’s environment is protected, enhanced, sustainable and resilient.



Where do we want to be? (Key directions/goals)	How will we get there? (Actions)	Council’s role
<b>E1 Environmental balance</b> Our community’s natural and built environment supports biodiversity conservation, is sustainably balanced and resilient to environmental risks, natural hazards and climate change	E1.1 Protect and enhance our local natural and built environment  E1.2 Plan for and support adaptation and mitigate measures that improve community resilience to climate change including coastal and waterway hazards	
<b>E2 Environmental sustainability</b> Our community uses resources sustainably, efficiently and equitably	E2.1 Deliver actions that support renewable energy and alternative fuel use  E2.2 Support programs that improve resource recycling and reduction of waste	

## Community indicators

We use these indicators to track trends within our community	Data source
Community perception "Protection of the natural environment"	Liveability Index
Non-recyclable garbage generated by households in our community	Internal data source
Community perception "Sustainable behaviours in community"	Liveability Index

## Service indicators

We use these indicators to track progress and performance of our service delivery for our community	Data source
Progress in implementing the Port Stephens Coastal Management Program	Internal data source
Progress in implementing the Emissions Reduction Action Plan	Internal data source
Progress in implementing the annual actions of the Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031	Internal data source
Bush areas regenerated	Internal data source
Number of trees planted	Internal data source



# Our Council

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



Where do we want to be? (Key directions/goals)	How will we get there? (Actions)	Council's role
<b>L1 Resources &amp; finance</b> Our Council is resourced, financially sustainable and advocates to meet community needs	L1.1 Develop and encourage the capabilities and aspirations of Council's workforce	  
	L1.2 Provide strong leadership, advocacy role and government relations	
	L1.3 Provide a strong ethical governance structure and systems for Council	
	L1.4 Invest in digital technologies to improve Council performance and support to customers	
	L1.5 Maintain financial sustainability and resilience	

## Community indicators

We use these indicators to track trends within our community	Data source
Community perception "Evidence of Council/government management"	Liveability Index

## Service indicators

We use these indicators to track progress and performance of our service delivery for our community	Data source
Progress in implementing the Workforce Management Strategy	Internal data source
Progress in implementing the 3 year Digital Strategy and Roadmap	Internal data source
Progress in delivering the Financial Sustainability Strategy	Internal data source
Progress in delivering the Property Investment Strategy	Internal data source





**PORT STEPHENS**  
COUNCIL