



MIDCOAST
council

PART SIX

END OF TERM REPORT 2018-21

Part 6 of 7
ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, the Gathang-speaking people and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside in the MidCoast Council area. We extend our respect to elders past and present, and to all future cultural-knowledge holders.

Our community vision

We strive to be recognised as a place of unique environmental and cultural significance.

Our strong community connection, coupled with our innovative development and growing economy, builds the quality of life we value.



Our community values

- Our unique, diverse and culturally rich communities
- A connected community
- Our environment
- Our thriving and growing economy
- Strong leadership and shared vision

About this report

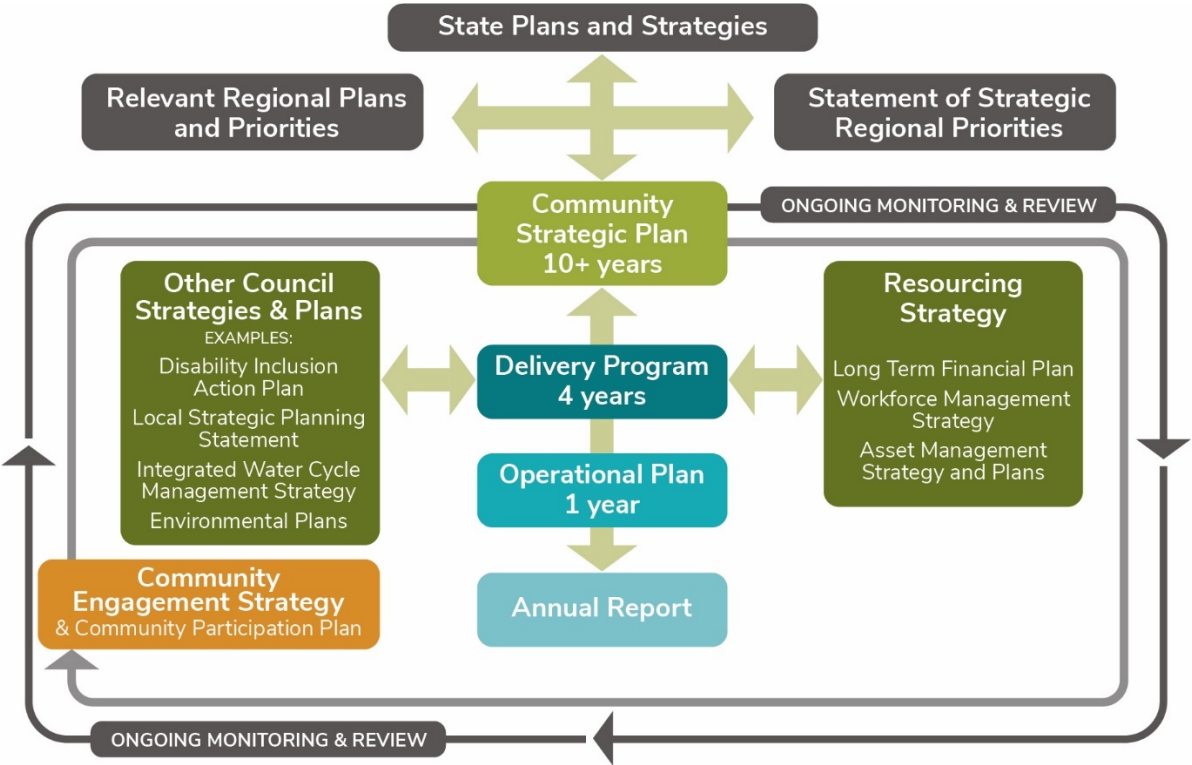
The End of Term Report is an overview on progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) during the term. The CSP, *MidCoast 2030 - Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility* is part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework that Council uses for strategic and operational planning. The CSP is used to provide an understanding of community priorities and guides service delivery over the term of Council.

How it fits in with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

All NSW councils are required by legislation to develop long-term, medium-term and short-term plans as part of the NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. The framework ensures that short and medium term planning complements the long-term goals of the community.

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) represents the highest level of strategic planning within a local government area and is facilitated by local councils. All other plans developed by councils as part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework must reflect and support the implementation of the CSP. The plan is developed by Council on behalf of and in consultation with the community. Being a long-term plan, the Community Strategic Plan must cover between 10 - 20 years.

Section 428(2) of the Local Government Act 1993 requires that the outgoing Council report on the achievements in implementing the Community Strategic Plan over its 4 year term. This report outlines the progress in achieving the objectives in our CSP *MidCoast 2030 - Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility*. It summarises the achievements and challenges experienced in the delivery of the strategic objectives in the plan.



From the General Manager

As the inaugural elected Council term comes to an end, we acknowledge how far we have come over the past four years.

When the first MidCoast Council was elected in September 2017, we were 18 months into the amalgamation of four separate entities. A lot of work was undertaken to build and strengthen the new organisation in order to deliver positive outcomes for our new, greater community.

One of the first things the new Council did was to adopt the 'Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility' community strategic plan, a guide for the decision making and direction of the Council.

The plan identified five key values: Unique diverse and culturally rich communities; A connected community; Our environment; Our thriving and growing economy; and Strong leadership and shared vision

This End of Term report sets out how we have progressed against those each of those values and measures in the community strategic plan.

During this term we have undertaken two community satisfaction surveys in order to compare the MidCoast to regional benchmarks and to identify what is most important to our community.

Over the past four years we have delivered against a range of these, spending in excess of \$200 million on roads and associated infrastructure improvements, and delivering a range of community upgrades to libraries and other public infrastructure.

We have completed our new Administration and Customer Service Centre in Taree, which is both modern and enduring, allowing us to bring administration staff together and supporting more efficient delivery of services to our community. In naming the building Yalawanyi Ganya, our elected Council have shown their support for the local Aboriginal community and the re-emergence of the Gathang language.

Over the past two years, the MidCoast region has experienced several devastating natural disasters. From drought to fire, flood to pandemic, our community has been both stretched and challenged. We continue to work with our communities to recover and rebuild.

We have been greatly supported by our wonderful and enthusiastic volunteers who enhance the services we deliver by assisting with parks, libraries, art gallery, entertainment centre, tourism, heritage, youth, graffiti removal, ageing and disability and representation on committees and interest groups.

I would like to thank our councillors for their direction during their term and our staff who have worked hard to deliver services to our community in ways that add value and build trust.

Adrian Panuccio, General Manager

Part one

We value our unique, diverse and culturally rich communities

Our diverse communities offer active and social opportunities, are safe and are places where we work together with a creative focus acknowledging our rich history and culture

Objective 1	We are a diverse community that works together to care for all our members
Objective 2	We will embrace the uniqueness and creativity of our communities
Measures	Results (from Community Satisfaction Survey, February 2020)
The community is satisfied with Council's recreational facilities	84% satisfied with services / facilities and recreational areas 70% satisfied that sporting facilities in the area meet your needs 66% satisfied that there is a good range of leisure and recreation opportunities
The community is satisfied with the overall services Council provides	71% of residents were somewhat satisfied with the overall performance of Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97% satisfied with libraries • 92% satisfied with sewerage services • 89% satisfied with water quality • 86% satisfied with recycling / waste management / landfills • 89% satisfied with cultural opportunities • 88% satisfied with emergency management



Bulahdelah skate park

Parks & Recreation

Variety Livvi's Place opened for play

This modern, all-inclusive park is part of a national network of inclusive play spaces.

MidCoast Council, Variety – the Children's Charity, "Touched by Olivia", the NSW Government "Everyone Can Play Program", Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, along with local service clubs and businesses came together to make sure every child can be included in play in the community.

The playground, located at Fotheringham Park Taree, combines clever design and engineering, accessible amenities and surrounding facilities to give people of all abilities a fun and challenging place to play side-by-side.

Shade sails

The playground shade program was funded through NSW Government Stronger Country Communities Fund grant of \$550,000.

Eight playgrounds across the MidCoast region have benefited from this initiative.

Sports fields

Sports fields across the region received lighting upgrades.

Upgrades included new LED lights and Halytech remote systems allowing use beyond daylight hours more efficiently.

Showground upgrade for Stroud

Stroud showground upgrades totalling \$1,848,144 included 3 new astro turf tennis courts, new tennis clubhouse, poultry pavilion and a multipurpose building including commercial kitchen, cool room, kiosk, toilets and a bar area.

Funding came from a number of sources including NSW Disaster Relief funding, Duralie Mining, Federal Community Developments grants and Lions Club of Stroud.



Fish cleaning tables

Fishing tables at Manning Point Foreshore and Endeavour Park Taree were just a few upgrades during the past four years. They provide low maintenance fish cleaning facilities made from reinforced concrete. Design features include running water and flat tabletops made of durable recycled plastic cutting board material.



Forster Main Beach barbecue shelter/Ocean Baths

The Ocean Baths facilities upgrade project was funded by a NSW Government Stronger Country Communities grant of \$250,000 along with Council contributions of \$350,000.

Upgrades include:

- eight berth amenities block, including unisex toilets
- storeroom for 'Mudcrabs' group
- accessible toilets
- ambulant toilet
- improved accessibility ramp



Libraries and Community Services

Major library upgrades

Upgrades and improvement works have been undertaken or funding secured, including:

- Gloucester Library - fully renovated
- Nabic Library - significant upgrade
- Harrington Library - a new customer access model was introduced
- Wingham Library - grant funding secured for major extension and renovation
- Tea Gardens Library - grant funding secured for the extension



Gloucester Library

MidCoast Council Libraries have been successful in every grant round since amalgamation, including: 2017/18 – Forster Library - \$200,000, 2018/19 – Nabic Library - \$58,449, 2019/20 – Wingham Library - \$500,000

One library management system

In March 2019 all MidCoast Council Libraries integrated their collection management system so that all residents can access all of the library collection across one platform.

Libraries and COVID-19

The effects of the pandemic resulted in the temporary closure of libraries. Recognising the important resource our libraries provide to the community, a major enhancement of online services was completed. This included new online databases, a substantial increase in eBooks and eAudio titles and the provision of online storytime and author events. The library plans to maintain these new services into the future and for as long as they remain popular with the community.

Community Services

NAIDOC Week celebrations were held across the MidCoast to recognise the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC Week is a great opportunity to participate in a range of activities and support our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Celebrations included exhibitions, dancing, gallery events, weaving and clapsticks workshops. Due to COVID-19 restrictions celebrations were cancelled in the later part of the reporting period with smaller workshops provided to communities instead.



NAIDOC Week exhibition

Aboriginal Action Plan

Work commenced on the *MidCoast Council Aboriginal Action Plan* to strengthen connections with the wider MidCoast Aboriginal community. A survey was conducted to understand the way our services could better meet the needs of the local aboriginal community, which makes up 6.2% of the MidCoast population. The survey provided a snapshot of the areas identified - language, employment opportunities, education and resources.



Youth

In partnership with the University of New England, the Youth Strategic Plan was developed and later adopted by Council in July 2019.

After extensive consultation with young people, emerging themes and relevant objectives were road-tested and refined to develop the strategies identified. The plan aims to provide clear strategic direction for the community and Council to support and empower our young people.

The MidCoast Youth Taskforce was established in April 2021. A deliverable under Department of Communities & Justice funding, this forum will provide opportunities for young people to have a voice in decisions that affect them and develop leadership skills. The taskforce of 12 young people will facilitate local action groups in each region to ensure the voices of young people across the LGA are heard.

Live n Loud

The Manning Youth Action Team (MYAT) continued to grow during the past four years with 15 young people engaged in the group. In 2018, Live n Loud celebrated its 10th year. 2019 saw the successful delivery of quarterly Live n Loud events in the library, on the back deck of the Art Gallery and in the foyer of the Manning Entertainment Centre, attracting crowds of over 100 young people and community members each time. The pandemic restrictions limited many events in 2020 and 2021 to live-streaming with the MYAT assisting with the success of these events by contributing to MidCoast Youth social pages.



MidCoast Assist

MidCoast Assist has significantly grown in numbers over the past four years, with most new clients identified through referrals from existing connections.

The friendly local team of professionals from MidCoast Assist has expanded significantly to meet the growing demand for ageing and disability services in the region. Additional services were provided to NDIS participants and Ageing services clients in line with sector standards.

One new Supported Independent Living house was opened enabling participants to live more independently in a house rather than an aged care facility.

Overall participant numbers:

	1/7/2017 *	30/6/2021
Ageing services	81	610
Disability services	77	656

Note * Approximate figures due to system upgrades

Tech Savvy Seniors

Thanks to a Federal Government Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) grant, MidCoast Council's ageing services team implemented a 'Technology in Homes' project for older people in the MidCoast region and clients lined up to be a part of the program. The aim of the project is to help older people stay connected and become confident in using technology.



Eisteddfod win

The 'MCA Crew' won a number of awards at the Taree Eisteddfod for their powerful performances.

They trained for many hours and were coached and costumed by their talented disability support workers.



Manning Entertainment Centre

The Manning Entertainment Centre commemorated its 30th year in 2018 with a birthday event for friends, invited guests, Councillors, former managers, volunteers and staff. The local Waang-djarii indigenous dancers performed a cleansing ritual at the construction site of the MEC's new Theatre Studio Space. Funding for the new studio was secured in four stages through local, state and federal government funding as well as a large bequest from the estate of Beryl Jane Flett.



Major upgrades completed to date include meeting rooms, foyer, Green rooms and dressing rooms. The \$140,000 upgrade of the main auditorium PA System included grant funding provided by Create NSW. The new Theatre Studio is due for completion in 2022, a value of approximately \$4 million.

Over the past four years more than 280 separate events and programs have been staged, with over 75,000 ticket sales, featuring world renowned artists, regional touring staples and emerging local talent. While the pandemic resulted in unprecedented times for the entertainment industry, new avenues of promotion were explored to ensure continued delivery of services to the community.



360 Allstars

During the closure between March and September 2020, staff produced a series of videos – “Behind the Curtains” – showcased along with past performances via a newly established YouTube Channel. The centre reopened to the public in September 2020 under COVID-19 safe conditions with a screening of the National Theatre Live film “One Man Two Guvnors”, with the next few months focused on promoting local talent including Taree Arts Council, The Jay Davis Band and Goodfellas with Matt Zarb.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Melbourne International Comedy Festival are regularly showcased along with productions by Taree's own Taree Arts Council. In 2019 Taree Arts Council's production of *Les Miserable* generated a quarter of a million dollars in ticket sales. Other regulars include The Taree and District Eisteddfod, local dance studios, school presentations, OnScreen films and performer workshops

A valued volunteers group of around 40 ushers and bartenders contribute around 2,500 hours of support each year which helps to keep the cost of the centre low for our community.

Manning Regional Art Gallery

The Gallery turned 30 in 2018, with a special celebration held with former Directors, patrons and 'Friends' present. A total of 78 exhibitions were held in the past four years with over 375 NSW Artists shown, from emerging to established artists.

17 major touring shows hosted, including:

- The Patient
- ARTEXPRESS
- Doug Moran National Portrait Prize
- Saltwater Freshwater Art Award
- JADA – Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award
- The Art of Wool exhibition, matching award-winning garments with inspirational paintings and artworks by Australian artists - a touring exhibition from the New England Regional Art Museum.



Art of Wool exhibition

Major changes to the front entrance and access ramp saw the Gallery become truly accessible in 2020. The Friends of the Gallery contributed over 20,000 volunteer hours to enhance the creative fabric of the Gallery. Without this support the Gallery team would not be able to deliver the quality exhibitions, programs and events year after year.

Exhibition highlight - The Forgotten Works of Pixie O'Harris

The oil on plywood paintings by Pixie O'Harris and her brother Olaf had been hanging in the Manning Hospital from 1957 to the 1980s. The paintings featured scenes of fairy tales and Australiana and brought back many memories for viewers when they were exhibited at the gallery. Special thanks to researchers Janine Roberts and Penny Teerman, curator Sue Mitchell, conservator Tracey Golds and the volunteer conservation team who cleaned the paintings before they were exhibited.



The exhibition won the 'Conservation of Objects' award at the National Trust Heritage awards.

Part two

We value a connected community

We are socially and physically connected with each other, by ensuring we have activities, facilities, roads, footpaths and technology that are upgraded and well maintained.

Objective 3	We feel connected to each other
Objective 4	It is safe and easy to get around our region
Objective 5	We utilise technologies to connect us locally and beyond
Objective 6	We protect the health and safety of our communities
Measures	Results
The number of people at council-run and council-sponsored events has increased	<p>While attendee numbers increased during the 2018-19 periods, there was a noticeable reduction in later years due to COVID-19 restrictions</p> <p>Some examples include:</p> <p>Art Gallery – tickets sold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 – 18,017 • 2019 – 18,553 • 2020 – 13,174 • 2021 – 10,647 in-house visitation, 3,876 outreach activities <p>Entertainment Centre – tickets sold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 – 22,961 • 2019 – 25,553 • 2020 – 13,225 • 2021 – 13,487 <p>Live n Loud, Summerfest and Youth Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 – 300 • 2019 – 470 • 2020 – 400 in-person, 3,500 livestreamed • 2021 – 333 in-person, 2,700 livestreamed (2 events) <p>During the lockdown period Council redirected resources and collaborated to increase its digital platform to be better able to engage audiences in new ways. Online delivery of events via “livestreaming” provided the community with opportunity to continue to participate and stay connected.</p>
The number of council volunteers has increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 – 1,640 • 2019 – 1,700 • 2020 – 1,700+ • 2021 – 1,600
The condition of our sealed roads has improved	<p>From Community Satisfaction Survey, February 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% satisfied with overall condition of the local sealed road network • 43% satisfied with maintenance of local roads
There is an increase in the number of new developments connected by footpaths and cycleways	<p>Km of footpaths and cycleways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 – 160.1km • 2021 – 166km <p>In 2019 a revaluation was completed and 160.1km was identified as footpaths and cycleways.</p> <p>An impressive 5.9km of paths have been constructed since then</p>

Roads and Bridges

Following on from the \$30 million roadcare program established in 2016-17 using merger funds and savings, in May 2018 the NSW Government announced a \$100 million Road Upgrade for our region. Jointly funded by Council through our Special Rate Variation (\$50 million), the program focuses on the roads that connect us. Over 70km of key connector roads and bridges will be upgraded across 25 separate projects, rolling out over a 5 year period.

Queen Street, Gloucester

Upgrade costing \$1.6 million started April 2020 and completed September 2020 was well received by the Gloucester community as it provided a major upgrade to the road and added some long-term parking.



Comboyne timber bridge upgrade \$1m project

Replacing old timber bridges is a better long-term financial outcome than the constant ongoing maintenance. Before and after pictures show a much safer and more reliable transport network.



Wattley Hill Road and The Branch Lane

Several segments have been completed and improved from unsealed to a sealed road. Improvements included road widening, better road geometry and drainage.



Figtrees on Manning

The Figtrees on Manning project included a pedestrian/cycle bridge over Browns Creek, linking the Taree CBD through the Bicentennial Gardens through to the Taree Recreation Grounds/Manning Aquatic and Leisure Centre/Manning Entertainment Centre. It was completed as part of an \$8.5 million grant



Isabella Street to McCullagh Carpark

A new concrete path connecting Isabella Street (CBD) Wingham to McCullagh Carpark was completed providing all day parking and under-cover parking.

Water security

The Nabic Aquifer Water Supply system was officially opened in February 2019, after the project's inception 20 years earlier and environmental approval in 2005. The \$34.6 million project improves the area's water security in times of drought, supplementing the Manning scheme which services around 70,000 people, or up to 100,000 in peak holiday periods.

In November 2020 Bootawa Water Treatment Plant had its 10 year anniversary of the official opening of the facility with the then State Member of Myall Lakes John Turner MP and featured a "Welcome to Country" by Russell and Jeremy Saunders.



Volunteers

Volunteer numbers increased during the earlier part of the review period and dropped off due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Areas of Council reported that *“when we were able to restart activities the volunteers just didn’t come back”*

Volunteers enhance the services we deliver by assisting with parks, libraries, art gallery, entertainment centre, tourism, heritage, youth, graffiti removal, ageing and disability and committees. At times they provide a service that council don’t have the capacity to undertake.

Council recognises the efforts of our volunteers with celebrations held in multiple locations across the MidCoast during Volunteers Week usually held in May each year.



Taree Regional Airport

FlyPelican commenced direct flights between Taree and Sydney in early 2018.

FlyPelican is a Newcastle-based independent regional airline that operates a fleet of 19 seat pressurised British Aerospace Jetstream 32 aircraft.

The partnership is a win for the local community. Based on the needs of both business and personal travellers, as well as local medical facilities, it was Council’s objective to assist provision of direct flights to and from Sydney, removing the need to land in Newcastle and reducing overall travel time.



Paul DeSzell, Council’s Director of Liveable Communities with Paul Graham, CEO FlyPelican

Part three

We value our environment

Our natural environment is protected and enhanced, while we maintain our growing urban centres and manage our resources wisely.

Objective 7	We protect, maintain and restore our natural environment																																																																
Objective 8	We manage resources wisely																																																																
Objective 9	We balance the needs of our natural and built environments																																																																
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There are improved or maintained scores in the annual waterways report card	<p>Waterways Report Card Summary</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2018</th> <th>2019</th> <th>2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Mid Manning Estuary</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Upper Manning Estuary</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Coolongolook</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Smiths Lake</td> <td>A</td> <td>A</td> <td>B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Myall Lake</td> <td>B</td> <td>A</td> <td>A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lower Myall Estuary</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lower Manning Estuary</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Khappinghat</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mid Wallamba Estuary</td> <td>B</td> <td>C</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wallamba Cove</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pipers Creek</td> <td>B</td> <td>A</td> <td>B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wallis Lake</td> <td>A</td> <td>A</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Charlotte Bay</td> <td>A</td> <td>A</td> <td>B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Karuah</td> <td>C</td> <td>C</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dawson</td> <td>B</td> <td>B</td> <td>C</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Note: 2021 results have been delayed to December 2021 this year due to COVID-19 restrictions *See table on next page for definitions of results</p>		2018	2019	2020	Mid Manning Estuary	B	B	B	Upper Manning Estuary	B	B	C	Coolongolook	B	B	C	Smiths Lake	A	A	B	Myall Lake	B	A	A	Lower Myall Estuary	B	B	B	Lower Manning Estuary	B	B	B	Khappinghat	B	B	C	Mid Wallamba Estuary	B	C	C	Wallamba Cove	B	B	C	Pipers Creek	B	A	B	Wallis Lake	A	A	C	Charlotte Bay	A	A	B	Karuah	C	C	C	Dawson	B	B	C
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The community is satisfied with land use planning decisions	<p>Results from Community Satisfaction Survey, February 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 57% satisfied that there is sufficient choice of housing types ie apartments, town houses etc. 40% satisfied that new development is helping to provide an attractive urban landscape 																																																																

Waterway health

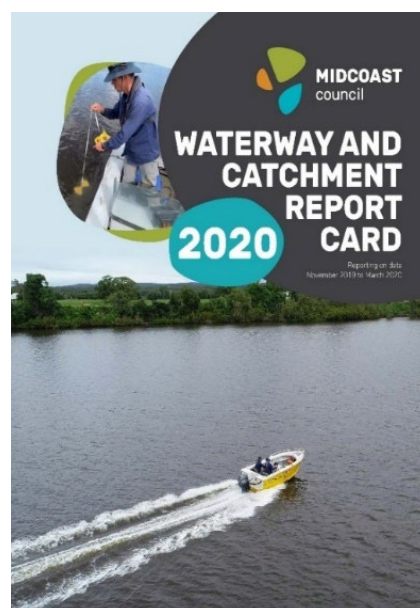
Healthy waterways support our local towns and communities, they keep them thriving. They put food on our tables, support our outdoor lifestyle, local economy and provide homes for wildlife, trees and plants of every sort. With healthy waterways our communities have a healthy vibrant future.

Council partnered with scientists from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to independently assess the health of our waterways as part of the Waterway and Catchment Report Card.

The most recent results available are from the 2020 report and indicate that our waterways fared well considering we have experienced three of the most extreme climatic conditions during the sampling period, drought followed by intense fires and flooding all of which can have an impact on water quality.

During a drought there is less ground cover across the catchment and in many areas this was made much worse with the intense fires. When vegetation is lost there isn't anything to hold the soil in place when it rains and this causes the sediments and nutrients to run into our waterways impacting their health, especially under moderate-heavy rain conditions.

Because of the moderate and heavy rainfall that followed the fires in January and February 2020, it is difficult to differentiate the changes in water quality due to the bushfires from the changes due to the flooding that followed them, however from the results we can see they both had an effect.



**Definitions of Report Card results – results on previous page*

Grade	Results	Definition	Description
A	Excellent	All environmental values met (The indicators measured meet all of trigger values for almost all of the year)	The best 20% of scores in the State
B	Good	Most environmental values met (The indicators measured meet all of the trigger values for most of the year)	Next 30% of good scores
C	Fair	Some of the environmental values met (The indicators measured meet some of the trigger values for some of the year)	Middle 30% of scores
D	Poor	Few of the environmental values met (The indicators measured meet few of the trigger values for some of the year)	Next 15% of poorer scores
F	Very Poor	None of the environmental values met (The indicators measured meet none of the trigger values for almost all of the year)	The worst 5% of scores in the State

NSW Sustainability Advantage Program

Council is a member of the NSW Sustainability Advantage Program with bronze recognition after satisfying several milestones in relation to improving sustainability practices including adoption of the MidCoast Council Climate Change Strategy at the June 2021 council meeting.



Solar array at Yalawanyi Ganya

Due to the impact of the bushfires on waste to landfill, the drought on our water consumption, and addition of new assets from Water Services to our electricity monitoring system, the results are not showing a reduction in our carbon footprint yet. We expect to have a more accurate reporting system in place to track our progress in meeting our newly adopted emission reduction targets.

Clean up from fires, floods and the first-time issue of bulky waste vouchers has contributed to increased volumes in 2020 and 2021.

Waste Services

Recycling promotion

Bus signage is helping to promote ways of correctly disposing of difficult items such as batteries, smoke detectors, fluoro globes, motor oil, paint and gas bottles. The message, seen on various bus routes in the Great Lakes area, encourages the community to visit their community recycling centres in Gloucester, Taree and Tuncurry to drop off these items free of charge. The promotion is part of a partnership between MidCoast Council, MidWaste and the NSW Government.



Re-imagine Waste campaign

The Re-imagine Waste campaign was initiated to encourage and inspire change in all sectors and communities. Programs dealing with specific waste streams including food composting, promotion of Tip and Op shops and general recycling were delivered through workshops, media and online throughout the review period

Land Use Planning

Zoning in on our future

As part of consolidating planning controls across the region, we consulted with the community in March 2020 inviting them to “Know Your Zone”.

This part of the overarching project covered the Housing Strategy, Urban Land Monitor, Large Lot Residential supply and demand analysis, Recreation Zones Review, Infrastructure Zones Review, Employment Zones Review and the Manning Health/Taree CBD Precinct Plan.



Consultation at Taree City Centre

Almost 400 submissions were received, many which resulted in changes to the Zoning In documents, a positive outcome for our community.

The project has given people the opportunity to shape the vision and outcome for their community.

With new rezoning, Council has incorporated where possible, measures to enhance the amenity and liveability of the future urban area. An example is the Kolodong rezoning, for which a site specific Development Control Plan (DCP) is being prepared.



Consultation at Harrington

Part four

We value our thriving and growing economy

We are a place where people want to live, work and play; a place where business is resilient and adaptable to change by using knowledge and expertise that supports innovation.

Objective 10	Our region is a popular place to visit, live and invest
Objective 11	Our villages and business precincts are vibrant, commercial, cultural and social hubs
Objective 12	We encourage greater rural and agricultural economic diversity
Measures	Results
There is a reduction in the MidCoast unemployment rate	<p>Employment rate summary*, sourced from Profile ID</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 – 5.27% • 2020 – 8.45% • 2021 – 6.57% <p>*number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force (employed plus unemployed)</p> <p>2020 result attributed to impact of COVID-19 / lockdown restrictions. Once the national lockdown was lifted, the economy and employment were quick to recover, with economic output and employment levels beginning to bounce back by June 2021. Accommodation and food services remained below pre COVID-19 employment rates.</p>
The net number of new businesses has increased	<p>Number of businesses summary, sourced from Australian Business Registry database as at 4 June 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 – 6,026 • 2019 – 6,478 • 2020 – 6,892 • 2021 – 7,309
Annual visitor numbers have increased	<p>Annual visitor summary, sourced LGA Annual Profiles, Tourism Research Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 – 2m • 2019 – 2.1m • 2020 – 2.2m <p>Figures unavailable from Tourism Research Australia for the 2021 year</p>

Vibrant Spaces

The Vibrant Spaces Initiative was permanently implemented across the MidCoast region in July 2017.

The aim was to give businesses the opportunity to creatively utilise footpaths, free of charge, in order to boost business and create main street vibrancy.

It proved highly successful, with significant increases in sales and store foot traffic reported by those who participated. The initiative was rolled out in Wingham, Old Bar and Harrington. Town centres of Taree, Wingham, Old Bar, Harrington, Bulahdelah, Gloucester, Tea Gardens, Hawks Nest, Pacific Palms and Stroud are all now part of the Vibrant Spaces program.

Not only does the initiative benefit local businesses by increasing foot traffic, sales and their ability to effectively advertise, it also creates vibrancy in our town centres allowing for street stalls, busking, footpath cafes and much more.

One of the initiatives undertaken by a local community out of Vibrant Spaces was the Tuncurry CBD makeover. The project was completed in 7 days with 200 local volunteers and donations exceeding \$50,000.



Small Business Month 2020

NSW Government's Small Business Month was celebrated across the MidCoast region in October 2020 with a joint venture between MidCoast Council and the Taree, Harrington, Wingham and Forster Tuncurry Business Chambers and a grant from the NSW Government. In the wake of the devastating bushfires and the global COVID-19 pandemic, we know this is one of the toughest years many small businesses have faced. Many have suffered immeasurable losses, some have pivoted more than once to retain customers and others have worked to capture new markets and radically change their offerings. A competition

was run asking our community to nominate their favourite businesses, the businesses they felt deserved recognition and a little pampering. Over 160 nominations were received from the community, all telling us good things about our businesses. 100 Happiness hampers were delivered to the deserving "winners" from all over the LGA. The hampers were filled with products sourced from our local area – another way to recognise and celebrate our local businesses.



#ShopMidCoast

The #shopmidcoast gift card program was launched on 1 September 2020 with over 100 businesses from throughout the region participating.

Participation continued to grow with more than 300 businesses now active as either loading or redeeming stores or in some instances both.

A total of \$118,272 has been loaded onto 1,711 individual gift cards since the launch noting that all funds will be spent at local businesses participating in the program. This value equates to a direct impact of around \$212,889 for the MidCoast economy.

The program has been promoted through TV, print and online media campaigns.



Supporting local businesses - workshops

A variety of workshops were held during the review period to assist businesses with marketing, tendering, business planning, grant writing and social media.

Marketing: Practical marketing advice was offered to over 100 small businesses across the region in October 2019 with workshops encouraging business owners to use the footpath to add colour, movement and sound to their shop fronts aligning with our Vibrant Spaces initiative.

Tender and procurement: Workshops were held in May 2019 to assist business owners understand these processes and give them the best opportunity to compete for Council business.

Business planning: Participants were taken through a process to develop a one page business plan. Individual sessions on budget

development, pricing tips, time management and marketing ideas were also available. The workshop was conducted over 2 days with 30 attendees.



Grant writing: Eight workshops to assist with applying for grants were held during March and April 2021 at locations including Wingham, Gloucester, Tea Gardens, Elands, Forster and Taree. Approximately 120 attendees participated in the workshops from a range of community organisations and businesses.

Social media: The Barrington Coast team developed and delivered a range of digital and social media workshops to assist local businesses grow their knowledge and confidence. This has been particularly important in building resilience and capacity following the series of recent disasters and COVID-19.

Destination branding - Barrington Coast

In August 2018 MidCoast Council endorsed the new destination brand name of *Barrington Coast*.

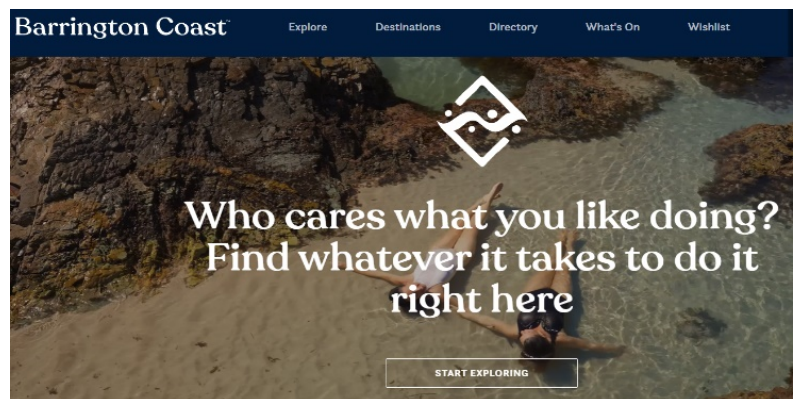
Our destination name is inspired by an Aboriginal description of our region - “the place where the leaves touch the waters from the mountains to the sea.” Our new destination name also leverages the best-known attributes of the region - its spectacular and popular coastline and the world heritage-listed plateau of Barrington Tops. Barrington Coast offers the ability to connect and bring to life the stories of all the places within a diverse and vibrant region.



Destination Barrington Coast online

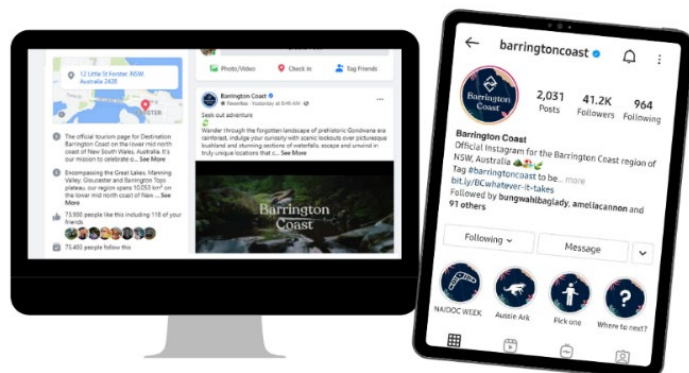
The new destination website went live at the end of October 2020. It is focused on the visitor and what makes researching their potential stay engaging and fun. It is designed to enhance the visitor's stay by being a useful reference point and resource while they're here. It is experience-led, showcasing the best we have to offer with content tailored to our audiences. It includes influencer recommendations and the voice of our locals within Explore Field Guides.

<http://barringtoncoast.com.au>



The destination brand has also achieved strong results with its social media marketing.

Launched in April 2019, the Barrington Coast Social Media audience is highly engaged and has grown fast. In January 2020 Barrington Coast became the first regional NSW destination to be officially verified by Facebook and Instagram.



Festival of Place

The Festival of Place was held from 26 March to 17 April 2021, an initiative of the NSW Government Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.



Some of the region's best local musicians performed on main streets helping to support the revitalisation of the heart of our communities after a year that was anything but fun and spontaneous. Performances popped up in Harrington, Nahiatic, Wingham, Hawks Nest, Tea Gardens and Stroud, with performers such as Heath Lancaster, Matty Zarb, Maddy Andrews and Jake Davey, Chelsea Berman and Harrison Hoven and The Grasscutters.



The Grasscutters

The Festival incorporated the creation of a group public art mural. The community were invited to contribute a small 10cm canvas that was colour mapped to produce a large artwork. Two sessions, at Manning Regional Art Gallery in Taree and at Forster Library, were held during the Festival.



Mural workshop with Stephen Michael King

Part five

We value strong leadership and shared vision

We work in partnerships towards a shared vision, that provides value for money and is community focused.

Objective 13	We work in partnership with our community and government to ensure Council is a trusted and flexible organisation that delivers on their needs
Objective 14	We maintain strong organisational health that contributes to Council's success and community-focused culture
Objective 15	We make opportunities available for the community to inform decisions that shape our future
Objective 16	We develop and encourage community and civic leadership
Measures	Results (from Community Satisfaction Survey, February 2020)
The community is satisfied that Council is well run and managed	71% of residents were somewhat satisfied with the overall performance of Council
The community is satisfied that Council provides value for money for ratepayers	71% of residents were somewhat satisfied with the overall performance of Council
The community is satisfied that decisions are made in their best interest	58% satisfied with Council decision-making reflecting community opinion
The community is satisfied with the level of engagement by Council	60% satisfied that council is engaging the community in planning

First Council elections for MidCoast

On 9 September 2017 MidCoast Council held its first election, electing eleven Councillors. Cr David West was elected Mayor by his peers to serve a two-year term and was re-elected in September 2019 to lead Council until the next election. Cr Katheryn Smith served two years as Deputy Mayor. Cr Claire Pontin was elected in September 2019 as Deputy Mayor for one year and then later re-elected and will serve until the next election.



Left to right Cr Christensen, Cr Roberts, Cr Hutchinson, Cr Keegan, Cr Pontin (Deputy Mayor), Cr Epov, Cr Bell, Cr Smith, Cr West (Mayor), Cr Fowler and Cr McWilliams

Council meetings

Councillor attendance at meetings from 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2021

	Ordinary Meeting	Extra Ordinary Meeting	Strategic Committee Meeting
Total number of meetings	51	8	18
Cr Bell	50	6	16*
Cr Christensen	45	6	11
Cr Epov	48	7	16
Cr Fowler	47	7	16*
Cr Hutchinson	48	7	15
Cr Keegan	38	5	10
Cr McWilliams	35	5	15
Cr Pontin	46	6	17
Cr Roberts	48	7	16
Cr Smith	51	8	17
Cr West	47	8	18

**Councillors K Bell and T Fowler requested to attend 12 May 2021 Strategic committee meeting via Audio Visual Link, and this was resolved by Council. However due to technical failure they were unable to participate and is reflected in the above results.*

Councillor J McWilliams resigned as at 5 March 2021 and Councillor D Keegan resigned as at 9 April 2021.

General Manager appointed

Following a comprehensive recruitment process, that saw three shortlisted candidates interviewed by Councillors at an extraordinary meeting on Monday 28 May 2018, Adrian Panuccio was appointed as the new General Manager of MidCoast Council.

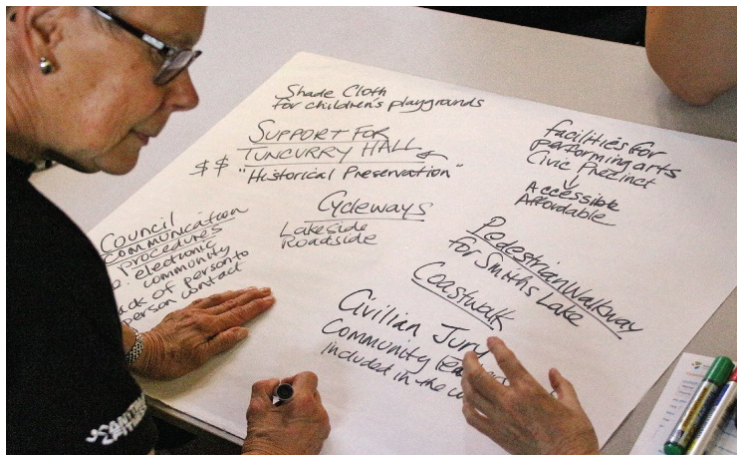
Mr Panuccio's performance agreement was renewed on 29 March 2021 for a further five years.



Engagement

Engagement throughout the period saw us continuing to work with our community to involve them in decision making.

Up until March 2020 we delivered through the usual channels of communication and face to face methods. However once the COVID-19 pandemic hit we were faced with the worldwide health crisis which halted community engagement. After reassessing how we could deliver safely, community engagement moved to predominately online methods.



We have continued to deliver for our community and adapted to meet health requirements and project deliverables, continuing to build and develop how we connect. This process had its challenges however, we have moved from strength to strength identifying new opportunities and adapting existing methods to how we engage.

Some examples of how we have engaged our community during the past 4 years are:

- Project community meetings
- Information sessions
- Workshops
- Pop ups/ drop ins
- Online
- Community conversations

Community Conversations

In April and May 2019, Community Conversations began with a new interactive format in 12 key locations across the region. Community members were engaged in the conversations that mattered to them. As well as answering questions registered online prior to the workshop and on the day, the facilitated sessions were used to identify priorities for each local area.



Priorities identified formed part of an action plan, and progress was reported back to the community in follow-up Conversations held each 6 months. Due to the impacts of the pandemic the program is on hold however we are currently looking at how this can be delivered into the future.

Some examples of the content of engagement activities:

- Cultural plan
- Strategic projects
- Biodiversity Framework
- Climate Change Policy
- Greening Strategy
- Vegetation Management Policy
- Tuncurry water playground
- Community garden for Gloucester and Tea Gardens
- Wingham CBD beautification project
- Local community plans for the Gloucester, Wingham and North Arm Cove area
- Harrington Playground



Strategies adopted

The MidCoast Communications Strategy and MidCoast Community Engagement Strategy were adopted by Council in 2019 to guide how we communicate and engage with our community. Both strategies include clearly outlined action plans that act as performance measures as we strive to work more cohesively with community members across all areas of Council.

Community Reference Groups

We recognise the importance of drawing on community experience and expertise when it comes to decision-making. Reference Groups play a vital role within their respective focus areas with assistance from the community, generally recruited through a nomination or Expression of Interest (EOI) process. Community members assist in planning and informing important decisions, working alongside Council in the areas of:

- Economic Development
- Barrington Coast Destination Management
- Community Inclusion and Wellbeing
- Heritage
- Sport and Recreation
- Community Recovery Bushfire
- Cultural Plan
- Bulahdelah Highway Service Centre Planning
- Old Bar and Manning Point Coastal Management Program
- Manning River Estuary and Catchment Management Program

Australia Day

Australia Day celebrations including awards and citizenship ceremonies continued across the region. Some events were impacted due to the pandemic restrictions including reduced numbers at citizenship ceremonies and the suspension of the awards for the 2020/21 year.



The Australia Day civic ceremony in 2020 was a little different than usual and combined a celebration alongside the Saltwater Freshwater Festival held at the Forster sporting complex. The event was an opportunity to highlight the importance of our local Aboriginal culture as well as celebrating Australia Day.

Citizenship ceremonies were held to welcome our new citizens. New citizens have an incredible impact on our country, and we wouldn't be as rich in diversity and culture as we are today without the people who have come from all over the world and made the decision to call Australia home.

Summary of new citizens

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
49	75	51	34



Mayor West with Dr Sangeetha Rengasamy Selvaraj, Jaiganesh Ragadurai and baby Athiran Jaiganesh

Yalawanyi Ganya

Council's new administration and customer service centre at Yalawanyi Ganya was opened to the public on 7 January 2021 as planned. The project was completed on time, under budget and was officially opened at a ceremony on Friday 5 February 2021. The opening ceremony brought together contractors, Gathang language-holders, Biripi artists, Councillors, local Aboriginal Elders and staff who were involved in the design and construction journey.



The name Yalawanyi Ganya was developed in close consultation with Gathang language-holders, the language of the Birrbay, Warrimay and Guringay people of the MidCoast region.



Moving a large number of our staff into a centralised office is the culmination of a significant body of work following the merger of four former entities. Bringing staff together under the one roof is contributing to a number of benefits such as improved collaboration and streamlined processes.

Not all MidCoast Council staff merged into the one building - other council buildings that remain operational and staffed include, depots, regional Customer Service points at Forster, Gloucester Tea Gardens and Stroud, libraries, visitor information centres, Manning Entertainment Centre, Manning Regional Art Gallery, Taree airport and MidCoast Assist. Upgrades to technology and equipment were made at these locations where required to ensure continued communication is maintained.



The first exhibition proudly shown in Yalawanyi Ganyas's public art space was the *Barray marrung duumu* exhibit, meaning 'keep country well', a reflection of and ode to Aboriginal culture in our area. Among the works were the original pieces by local artists Brittany Cochrane and Raechel Saunders. Elements of these works were selected to be incorporated into the design of Yalawanyi Ganya. 'Living as One on Biripi Country' and 'Connected' feature prominently throughout the building.



Emergency Operations Centre

In response to the flooding event in March 2021 an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was established in the training rooms of the new council building *Yalawanyi Ganya*.

Services including NSW Police, SES, Ambulance, Health, Roads and Maritime Services, Local Land Services, Disaster Welfare and Council collaborated to monitor and manage the event from the EOC.



The training rooms were designed to be used in these situations and provided the technology and facilities required to run an EOC.

As part of our response, we created a Flood Recovery Hub on the Council website, which contains important information to assist the community and continues to be updated with information as it evolves.

The Flood Recovery Hub is part of a broader emergency information service covering a range of emergencies – visit www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/emergencies

Industry awards

Tuncurry Community Recycling Centre

Gold: IPWEA (NSW) Engineering Excellence Awards 19/20

Tuncurry Community Recycling Centre

Gold: National Innovation In Waste Transfer Station Awards 19/20

Water sensitive design policy

Gold: NSW Stormwater Awards for Excellence 19/20

Gold: National Stormwater Awards for Excellence 19/20

Yalawanyi Ganya

Winner: Special Project Initiative, NSW Local Government Excellence Awards 20/21

Manning Regional Art Gallery - The Forgotten Works of Pixie O'Harris and Olaf Harris

Winner: Conservation of Objects award, National Trust Heritage Award 20/21

MidCoast Council

Finalist: Large Employer of the Year award, NSW Training Awards 20/21

Matthew Agnew, MidCoast Council

Winner: Operator of the Year, Water Industry Operators Association 20/21

Jimmy's Beach Sand Transfer System

Highly commended: New or improved Techniques, NSW IPWEA Engineering Excellence Awards 20/21

Claire Shultz, MidCoast Council

Highly commended: The David Abbott award, NSW IPWEA Engineering Excellence Awards 20/21

MidCoast Council, 2019-20 Drought Response

Highly Commended: NSW Local Government Excellence Awards 20/21

This award coincided with the publication of 'A Drought Like No Other', a comprehensive review of the drought response strategy. Visit www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Water-Services/Water-Resilience/A-Drought-Like-No-Other

Queen's Baton Relay

The Queen's Baton Relay made its way to MidCoast on 2 February 2018.

The baton, which carried a message from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, left Buckingham Palace in March 2017. It was the longest relay in the history of the Commonwealth Games, passing through every nation and territory of the Commonwealth on its way to the 2018 Gold Coast games.

It was an exciting event for the local region and offered our community a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of a long-standing Commonwealth Games tradition. It was great to see the community out to witness the excitement, and cheer on our sixteen local baton bearers.



Mayor David West and Steve Embry (Director Corporate Services) with one of the region's baton bearers Laura Thurtell

Risk Management Roadmap

MidCoast Council made an organisational commitment to enterprise wide risk management through the development and implementation of our Risk Management Roadmap. The Roadmap was developed following the merger at which time all of our former organisations had varying approaches to risk management. The objective was to build a single Council-wide risk management vision and solution. As such, the Roadmap provides the organisational arrangements for the 'MidCoast Council approach' to risk management, the strategies and practical activities that we will undertake to embed risk management across the organisation and how we will measure our success, identify opportunities for improvement and ensure that we are delivering on desired outcomes.

Our Roadmap focuses on integrating risk management into our business practices in a manner that is positive, proactive and, most importantly, adds value for our staff and operations at all levels of the organisation.

Climate Change

In 2019-2021, the MidCoast region experienced first-hand the disastrous effects of climate change including:

- the worst bushfire season on record, which burnt almost one quarter of the local government area and resulted in a significant loss of biodiversity, life and property
- an increase in the number of intense storm events resulting in coastal erosion and localised flooding
- a substantial reduction in annual rainfall leading to a crippling drought and the introduction of Level 4 (severe) water restrictions for the very first time.

Since 2009, the MidCoast region has had 23 natural disaster declarations; the second worst affected council area in NSW (NSW Office of Emergency Management, 2020).

MidCoast Council recognises that a state of climate emergency exists, with the elected Councillors declaring a climate emergency in October 2019. In declaring a state of climate emergency, Council has affirmed that urgent action is required by all levels of government, including local councils, to avert a climate crisis. To help us do this, Council has prepared a Climate Change Policy and Strategy, to both manage and reduce our greenhouse emissions, and adapt our practices and infrastructure to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

In adopting these documents, MidCoast Council has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse emissions from its operations (including facilities, fleet and waste) and 100% renewable electricity for its operations by 2040.

As part of raising community awareness about the actions proposed a video was produced and is available to view at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6T5UF5LkTE>

