



STATE OF THE MIDCOAST

2022-2024





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.

How to contact us

Taree	Forster	Gloucester	Stroud	Tea Gardens
Yalawanyi Ganya 2 Biripi Way Taree NSW 2430	4 Lake Street Forster NSW 2428	89 King Street Gloucester NSW 2422	6 Church Lane Stroud NSW 2425	Myall Street Tea Gardens NSW 2324
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Introduction

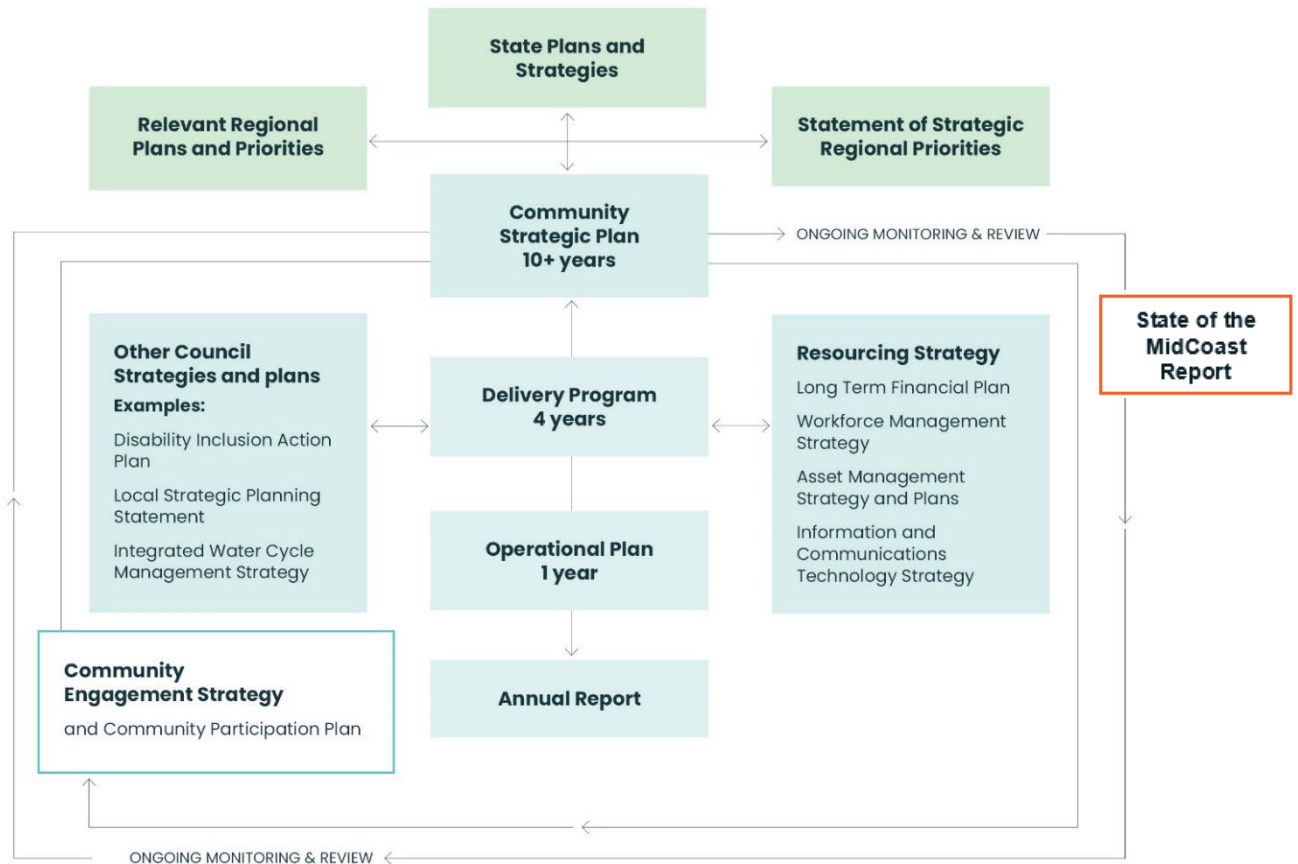
The State of the MidCoast Report is prepared in accordance with the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework (as shown below) and legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

The purpose of the State of the MidCoast Report is to provide an update on the progress towards achieving the long-term community vision as described in the Community Strategic Plan (CSP). It outlines the progress Council and other stakeholders have made against the social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives identified in the CSP over the previous Council term (December 2021 to September 2024). We recommend reading this report in conjunction with the [MidCoast Community Strategic Plan 2032](#).

In line with the framework below, Council also reports on the progress of activities in our Delivery Program and Operational Plan through six monthly Delivery Program Progress Reports and in our Annual Reports.

Note: The State of the MidCoast report generally covers a four-year period which is the usual length of a Council term. The delay in the 2020 Local Government elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a reduced Council term.

For more information visit: www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/integrated-planning-and-reporting/



Our MidCoast

Home to an estimated resident population of 97,909 (ABS ERP 2023), the MidCoast region offers our diverse community a wide range of lifestyle opportunities.

Located on the mid north coast of NSW, the geographical area of the MidCoast local government area covers more than 10,000 km² and extends from the coastline, west to the escarpment of the Great Dividing Range. The Gathang-speaking people are the traditional owners of the land.

The region is well known for its natural beauty and is a key holiday destination that attracts over 2 million tourists and visitors each year. The area spans from sparkling beaches on the coast to mountains in the hinterland, with expansive national parks and green spaces in between. It includes the Manning River valley, the Wallis, Smiths and Myall Lakes systems, the northern foreshore of Port Stephens, the agricultural hinterland and rugged, forested ranges of the Woko and Tapin Tops National Parks, and the World Heritage-listed Barrington Tops National Park.

These natural features contribute to our lifestyles, livelihoods and wellbeing, and protecting and celebrating them is an important focus for our future.



Image: Map of MidCoast Local Government Area (LGA)

Strategic Direction

The following summary of the MidCoast Community Strategic Plan 2032 outlines the community's aspirations for the future of the MidCoast Local Government Area (LGA) over the 10-year period from 2022-2032.

Our Community's Vision

The vision describes what the MidCoast community wants our region to be in the future:

MidCoast is 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 Outcomes, Strategic Objectives and Strategies

Community Outcomes: The community outcomes are the big picture results that we will keep in sight and focus on achieving. They align with the four themes of the quadruple bottom line: social, environment, economic and civic leadership. The purpose of using these themes is to make sure that everything is considered in a balanced and sustainable way. The community values were used to shape the community outcomes.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework requires that a Council's Community Strategic Plan addresses social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues in an integrated and sustainable way. This is known as the 'quadruple bottom line' principle.

Strategic Objectives: These are the long-term priorities that define what the community's long-term vision will look like once it is achieved. The purpose is to answer the question 'where does the community want to be in 10 years' time?'

Strategies: These describe how the strategic objectives will be achieved. In other words, 'How will we get there?'. These strategies are further expanded with specific and measurable actions, timeframes and responsibilities in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

Community Outcome 1: A resilient and socially connected community

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

Community Outcome 2: An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments

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

Community Outcome 3: A thriving and strong economy

A strong regional economy that supports business and jobs growth.

Community Outcome 4: Strong leadership and good governance

Council is focused on being sustainable, well-governed, and delivering the best outcomes for the community.

How to read this report

The report shows the progress made towards achieving the high-level strategies and objectives identified in the CSP. While Council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining the CSP on behalf of the local government area, it is not wholly responsible for its implementation.

The structure of the report is set out by each Community Outcome area in the CSP. For each community outcome, we provide highlights related to the strategic objectives with a summary of progress for each of the strategies we have employed to help us reach these objectives.

This report tracks progress against the baseline toward the desired targets. The results are obtained from a variety of sources including Council's Community Satisfaction Survey, MidCoast Councils audited Financial Statements and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
















Where performance results are sourced from the Community Satisfaction Survey an asterisk (*) has been added to the Performance Indicator/Measure. The Baseline is from the February 2020 survey and the Performance Results 2023-24 are from the August 2023 survey. The results of these surveys are subjective and measure a respondent's feelings, attitudes and perceptions.



OUR PROGRESS

Community Outcome 1:

A resilient and socially connected community

<p>55 community halls</p> 	<p></p> <p>9 patrolled beaches</p>	<p>9% need daily help</p>  <p>due to living with disability</p>	 <p>1 entertainment centre</p>
<p>1 regional art gallery</p> 	<p>42% aged over 60</p> 	 <p>11 libraries</p>	<p>8</p> <p>protected aboriginal places</p>
<p>15.7% volunteer</p> 	 <p>76 playgrounds</p>	<p>5 hospitals</p> 	<p>7.3% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</p> 
 <p>9 public swimming pools</p>	<p>10.1% born overseas</p> 	 <p>71 full size playing fields</p>	<p>14 heritage conservation areas</p> 

1.1 We celebrate our history, culture, creativity and diversity

NAIDOC funding and celebrations

Across every generation, Aboriginal Elders have played an important role in communities and families. Many NAIDOC events celebrate our Elders as cultural knowledge holders, trailblazers, nurturers, advocates, teachers, survivors, leaders, workers and loved ones.

MidCoast Council continued to support NAIDOC community events through its NAIDOC Grants program which provided \$16,000 each year in support for four community-led events in both 2023 and 2024.

The events consisted of community days with cultural activities, markets and workshops across the region to inspire and celebrate the richness of our Aboriginal heritage and culture.

The NAIDOC Forster Tobwabba Aboriginal Community Event, Taree Purfleet, Gloucester & Tea Gardens Events were held during July each year.

Celebrations also included a community basketball shootout, youth discos, 'Koorioke' events, a church service, an outdoor corroboree at Saltwater National Park and a flag raising ceremony.



Preserving local history



We have continued to celebrate and support the preservation of local heritage through our Local Heritage Fund. This is a collaboration of funding between Council and Heritage NSW.

Each year grants of up to \$2,000 are available for eligible property owners.

Projects included painting and repairs to commercial and community buildings in Taree and the restoration of heritage houses in Gloucester, Wingham, Booral, Stroud, Taree and Coopernook. The historic Cundletown Post Office was funded for roof and gutter replacement.

Significant heritage restoration was undertaken by Council on the Wingham Library (pictured) which was officially re-opened in August 2023. Extensions and the addition of a lift improved access to the library, re-establishing the first floor for community use. All works retained the heritage features of the library.



Funding for arts

The pilot MidCoast Arts Support Program was rolled out with grant funding of \$14,920 allocated across four projects. The program aims to enhance opportunities for artists to contribute to a thriving community through a public art project, an idea for a creative industry development workshop or a way our community can learn and participate in caring for Country.

Summary of our progress

1.1.1 Celebrate, acknowledge and empower our local Aboriginal heritage through sharing of art, stories, history and places

First Nations theatre was promoted at the Manning Entertainment Centre (MEC) through our entrepreneurial program, by providing workshops and other engagement opportunities for local arts practitioners, offering excursion and incursions for local schools and offering a selection of tickets to elders where possible.

The Manning Regional Art Gallery and library services held programs and initiatives that recognise culture and place. Programs included the *'Home: Aboriginal Art from NSW'* program which is a partnership between Wiradjuri community at Wagga Wagga, The Arts Unit, NSW Department of Education, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of NSW, and connects schools to local Aboriginal artists, community, language and culture and *'Saltwater Freshwater arts'* A showcase of Aboriginal art and contemporary cultural objects from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island artists who reside in the Worimi, Biripi, Dughutti and Gumbaynggirr nations.

1.1.2 Foster a welcoming community where everyone feels included and where cultural diversity is appreciated and valued

Our Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group continued to provide feedback to assist Council in making the MidCoast an accessible, inclusive and cohesive community, where all people can participate fully in community life, regardless of their age, ability or background.

As an action implemented from the MidCoast Aboriginal Action Plan Council's first Aboriginal reference group was formed. The reference group will support a collaborative approach between Council and the local Aboriginal community to achieve outcomes across the six key focus areas in the Aboriginal Action Plan.

Council continues to maintain our strong relationship with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) who invest in our Council to deliver on strategies in the Aboriginal Action Plan and Youth Action Plan.

In our libraries we highlighted books in languages other than English to celebrate the cultural diversity of our community.

1.1.3 Encourage community connection by supporting and delivering a diverse range of cultural, creative and community programs and events

Cultural diversity was celebrated at the MEC with performances by the Soweto Gospel Choir (South Africa), Mother Africa, a number of touring Irish groups and the staging of the Indian Cultural Festival. The Taree Film Society presented movies in the Beryl Jane Flett Studio focusing on content from different perspectives and cultures.

The 29th annual Taree Envirofair and Multicultural Festival returned in 2023 after a four-year hiatus due to COVID-19. The festival included multicultural dance and music performances as well as cultural food stalls.

The *'Home'* program mentioned above connects professional Aboriginal artists, students and teachers with local Aboriginal community, regional galleries and the Art Gallery of NSW to explore cultural practice, language and artmaking. It is a series of workshops, virtual excursions and a teaching and learning program for primary students culminating in an exhibition at the Manning Regional Art Gallery.

1.1.3 Encourage community connection by supporting and delivering a diverse range of cultural, creative and community programs and events *(continued)*

Council progressed the implementation of the MidCoast Cultural Plan 2036 and has made a direct investment into future growth of our cultural spaces and activities in supporting a Cultural Officer role, investment in the Beryl Jane Flett Studio and Art gallery upgrades.

1.1.4 Celebrate and preserve the unique and distinctive character, history and cultural heritage of our towns, villages and significant places

There are almost 550 heritage places and 14 heritage conservation areas listed across the MidCoast Council area which are eligible for funding through the Local Heritage Fund program. Council supported 15 projects with a total contribution of \$29,000.

1.2 We have access to a wide range of services and activities that contribute to the wellbeing of all members of our community

Tuncurry water playground

Following engagement with the community between July and August 2017 a decision was made to repurpose the Tuncurry pool and construct an accessible water playground.

The Tuncurry Water Playground opened in September 2023 and was designed with inclusivity at the forefront of the design process.

The playground recycles the water on site and includes a fully accessible amenities block with a disability hoist and an all-age change table.



Home library services

Our Home Library Service supports local residents with mobility issues to access the library service from their home.

Across the region the service continued to grow with a substantial increase in home library membership over the past 12 months of 12.77% in the Manning population catchment, and 45.5% in the Great Lakes population catchment.



Accessibility at the Manning Entertainment Centre

Council implemented accessibility upgrades to the Manning Entertainment Centre.

Completed works include footpath, lighting and carpark upgrades and the installation of automatic main entry front doors.

A wheelchair lift to provide access to the main stage for people using wheelchairs has also been purchased.



Summary of Our Progress

1.2.1 Provide accessible and safe local community spaces and facilities

In October 2023 the Forster Library was re-located to the new Forster Civic Centre. This larger space is over double the size of the previous Forster Library, and now has the space to meet the demands of the expanding population in the area.

Significant works were undertaken at the Nabiac Showground Hall which improved safety and access, including upgrades to the kitchen and emergency exits and improved disabled amenities. The project was jointly funded by Council and the Federal Government.

New grandstand seating was installed at the Bert Gallagher Field in Gloucester with grant funding from the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund. The grandstand includes an accessible seating area and provides seating for 300 spectators.

Council adopted the Tree Maintenance on Council-managed Land Policy to better manage the risks to our community associated with trees on land managed and controlled by MidCoast Council.

1.2.2 Deliver services and facilities to support the ageing population and people with disabilities

We have continued to invest in enhancing service offerings in our libraries by installing computers that have accessibility features, wheelchair accessible loan kiosks, a new audio book service and continued provision of large-print books, audiobooks, DVD and CD collections, which assist people with vision impairment and low literacy to access resources.

We implemented year one actions from the Ageing Strategy and Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) in consultation with stakeholders. We celebrated the 2024 NSW Seniors Festival through activities held at our libraries and gallery and a tour of Cattai Wetlands.

The MidCoast Dementia Friendly project commenced in August 2023 and is working towards creating a dementia-friendly community. Dementia Alliance groups have been established in Taree, Forster, Gloucester and Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest.

1.2.3 Strengthen the capacity of our young people to participate and thrive in community life

In 2023 we evaluated the Youth Strategic Plan (YSP), through a consultation process that included meeting with the youth sector to discuss focus areas, one on one interviews with service providers to gain feedback on the influence of the strategy and a survey with service providers to measure YSP related outcomes. A comprehensive evaluation report was completed through this process. The report has been useful in helping Council to better understand the needs of young people in the MidCoast and has helped inform the consultation for the next iteration of the YSP.

We continued to celebrate Youth Week, with a wide range of activities delivered across the MidCoast. The Youth Week activities were planned in consultation with young people across the LGA including headspace's Youth Reference Group, and students from Bulahdelah Central School and Gloucester High School. Young people were also involved in the delivery of a number of the events.

12 school holiday programs were held in library sites, wetlands, Council reserves and the gallery to engage young people and their families in civic life.

1.2.4 Provide learning hubs to support learning opportunities

New community partnerships were developed to deliver learning, literacy and cultural outcomes. Partnerships were formed including the Taree Universities Campus HSC Study Partnership, Forster Fellas Partnership, Great Lakes Women's Shed Partnership and the Forster Knit & Spin Partnership.

1.2.5 Advocate for regional health services to meet demand

The Mayor and General Manager met with community groups including the Manning Great Lakes Community Health Action Group and Bulahdelah and District Health Action Group to hear first-hand what health facilities and services are needed in the MidCoast region to meet current demand.

They have also met with representatives from the Hunter New England Local Health District and the Manning Base Hospital to advocate for upgraded facilities.

They have advocated for improved funding for hospital services to:

- The Hon. Chris Minns, MP, Premier
- The Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, Treasurer
- The Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC, Minister for Finance
- The Hon. Emily Suvaal, MLC, Duty MLC for Myall Lakes
- The Hon. Ryan Park MP, Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health
- The Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Regional NSW
- The Hon. Yasmin Catley MP, Minister for the Hunter
- The Hon. Matt Kean, MP, Shadow Minister for Health
- The Hon. Bronnie Taylor MP, Shadow Minister for Regional Health
- Dr David Layzell MP, Member for Upper Hunter
- Mrs Leslie Williams, Member for Port Macquarie
- Mrs Kate Washington, Member for Port Stephens

The Mayor has also attended various events hosted by health-related community groups to show her support and to understand the issues.

1.3 We work towards being a sustainable, resilient and socially connected community

Resilient connections

Council supported the establishment of the Small Communities Supporting Each Other (SCSEO) network which comprises representatives from over 30 communities, the RFS, SES and NSW Reconstruction Authority, who have self-identified the value of sharing community preparedness strategies.

The network held workshops regarding disaster resilient communications. When natural disasters cause prolonged power outages, communities struggle to stay connected as many mobile phone networks are down and other mainstream telecommunication options require a dedicated power supply to stay operational. UHF radios were found to be the most practical alternative telecommunications technology available to community groups and individual community members.

MidCoast Council's Community Recovery Officer facilitated a partnership with 14 communities in the SCSEO network and Taree Lions Club to provide fixed UHF radios, masts, antennas and batteries. Lions committed over \$20,000 in funding for the installation of the UHF infrastructure.

Communities supported by this funding included Killabakh, Upper Lansdowne, Lansdowne, Marlee, Wherrol Flat, Burrell Creek, Harrington, Mitchells Island, Oxley Island, Hannam Vale, Moorall Creek, and Mount George.



Floodplains near Mt George

Summary of our progress

1.3.1 Encourage and support volunteering to enable community participation opportunities

As part of Council's Volunteer Framework, we created a volunteer database to ensure we had accurate information on the number of Council's active volunteers. This review found we have 1614 volunteers, and that they are mainly working in outdoor spaces. This database is integral to ensuring the future safety, supervision and education for Council's volunteers.

Council's volunteers are essential across various operations, including parks and recreation, libraries, the MEC, the Manning Regional Gallery, community halls, and local heritage. They maintain public spaces, assist in libraries, serve at the MEC, support gallery activities, manage community halls, and contribute to historical societies.

We continued to celebrate the contribution our volunteers make to our community by holding four annual volunteer recognition events with the 2024 event attended by 192 volunteers.

Local volunteer Ted Bickford was awarded at the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards for his commitment to the removal of Graffiti in the MidCoast area. Ted has developed a relationship with local youth to put a stop to graffiti in the area.

1.3.2 Support communities to identify priorities to ensure they are sustainable into the future

Over the term Council's Community Recovery Officer led the Local Community Resilience Network. This network of disaster recovery providers collaborated on community recovery works and completed the MidCoast Pre-event Disaster Recovery Plan, stepping out how recovery organisations will work together for future recovery operations.

1.3.3 Strengthen social connectedness through programs and partnerships with community groups, government agencies and other service providers

The MidCoast Arts, Culture & Environment team was reformed as the MidCoast Youth Action Collective in 2024 and continues to provide a consistent platform for young people across the MidCoast to have a voice and share their opinions and perspective on community issues. The group aims to increase youth participation in community and civic life and provide young people with opportunities to connect with service providers and the community, develop their skills, and take part in organising and leading initiatives for young people. The group is delivered in partnership with MidCoast Council, Mid North Coast Community College, Taree Universities Campus, Manning Support Services, Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Group and Catholic Care.

Council partnered with Dementia Australia in working towards making the MidCoast a dementia-friendly community by holding workshops throughout the Region.

1.3.3 Strengthen social connectedness through programs and partnerships with community groups, government agencies and other service providers (continued)

A community planting day, planting flora that provides bush tucker, was held at Minimbah Reserve in Gloucester with support from Deadly Ed. The project aimed to restore Indigenous significance in the reserve and provide educational resources that present and future generations can learn from.

Council continued to assist organisations to connect through facilitating Community Interagency meetings. A total of nineteen meetings enabled over 50 agencies to regularly engage and network over the past three years. These collaborative events enabled service providers to identify needs and gaps and facilitated referrals and partnerships to benefit the community.

As a condition of the 2011 Development Approval for the Duralie Coal Mine near Stroud, Duralie Coal was required to make developer contributions to fund community projects in the area in which the mine operated. While the mine has ceased operating, Council continued to administer the Community Fund to benefit community projects in the Stroud, Stroud Road and Wards River areas. The fund is now exhausted with \$284,202 being allocated to 14 community projects over the last three years.

The Community Donations Policy continued to be administered, providing \$405,433 in financial support to community groups for capacity building activities across the following funding streams:

- Annual Donation
- Seed Funding
- Small Donations
- Recurrent funding (Rates & Fixed)

1.3.4 Support individuals, families and communities to prepare, respond and recover from natural disasters or emergency events

Our Bushfire Safety Campaign 'The Preparation to Resilience Project' reached almost 10,000 residents over 15 months. The campaign was funded through the Federal Government Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Program. We held more than 70 workshops throughout the MidCoast region through libraries assisting residents to write a plan to prepare for any future disasters.

Over \$1.4 million dollars of grant funding was used to make upgrades and improvements to 23 Council owned and 32 community-owned halls, including electrical upgrades, water supply, storage and toilet facilities. Community halls are a focal point for communities during natural disasters. The funding was provided through the Australian Government's Bushfire Recovery Exceptional Assistance Immediate Support Package.

Following the declaration of the MidCoast as a disaster-impacted region in July of 2022, we partnered with organisations to provide face-to-face support at Disaster Recovery Hubs to affected people and businesses across the MidCoast.

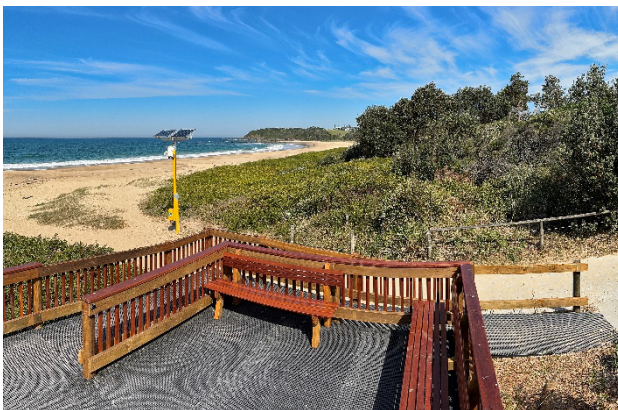
In partnership with the Red Cross, we delivered four resilience workshops on cultural weaving to educate on disaster preparedness.

1.4 We protect the health and safety of our communities

Providing safer access

Upgrades were made to boardwalks and viewing platforms in our area to improve accessibility (pictured below).

- Diamond Beach viewing platform
- Browns Creek walkway
- Pelican Boardwalk Forster



Summary of our progress

1.4.1 Uphold public health and safety standards and increase the capacity of our community to understand and meet them

Council's Environmental Health Officers held a series of free Food Safety seminars designed for both business owners and their staff. They also held a community group seminar at the Gloucester Country Women's Association Hall in July 2023, which was attended by nearly 100 participants from 21 groups. These seminars were delivered to inform the community about recent changes to food safety rules including the new food standards code.

Over the term 100% of food outlets, hairdressers, beauticians, tattooists and retail outlets in the LGA that were assessed as high risk were inspected for compliance.

Currently, there are 418 food businesses in the MidCoast Council area categorised as high or medium risk, requiring bi-annual or annual inspections. During the reporting period, Council's Environmental Health Officers completed 485 initial inspections and conducted various follow-up activities. Approximately 91% of businesses achieved a 5-star (excellent) or 4-star (very good) rating based on the 'Scores on Doors' system.

In May 2023 we partnered with Animal Welfare League NSW to assist with the registration of companion animals. The Animal Welfare League brought a mobile vet truck to the Taree Showground to microchip and vaccinate the animals.

Alcohol Free Zones and Alcohol Prohibited Areas were re-established in eight areas across the region. These were implemented in accordance with the Local Government Act and used to help police and Council rangers enforce inappropriate behaviour across the region. These were re-established in consultation with the Police, Liquor Accords, community, Councillors and staff to ensure that they are established in appropriate areas with the aim of increasing public safety.

1.4.2 Provide safe and sustainable networks of water, sewer and stormwater systems to meet community needs and health and safety standards

As of June 2024, our overall Drinking Water Quality Compliance was at 99.7% under the Australian Drinking water guidelines.

The quality of the treated effluent that was discharged complied with 99.6% of our EPA licence conditions.

Our Sewer Inflow & Infiltration Reduction Program targeted sewer catchments in Taree, Cundletown and Harrington. The program has resulted in significant reduction of wastewater flows during wet weather reducing the instances and risk of overflows in these catchments.

Programmed water and sewer asset renewals have been delivered as reported monthly to Council.

Under the MidCoast Onsite Sewage Management (OSSM) Strategy approximately 500 high risk systems were inspected in 2024 and remedial action was undertaken.

Our stormwater program resulted in 75km of stormwater pipelines being inspected using CCTV camera systems. Over 1100 Drainage related requests were responded to during the year.

Pipe-relining/repairs were completed at Strand Street and Burrawong Place, Forster and Palanas Drive, Taree.

1.4.2 Provide safe and sustainable networks of water, sewer and stormwater systems to meet community needs and health and safety standards (continued)

Drainage system improvements were completed in:

- Pervil Street and Alpine Drive, Tinonee
- Elliot Street and Craven Close, Gloucester
- Napunyah Drive, Taree
- Tiri Road, Tiri
- Lethbridge Street, Elizabeth Beach
- Blue Gum and Eucalypt Close, Wingham
- Cove Boulevard and Promontory Way, North Arm Cove
- Headland Drive and Belbowrie Avenue, Boomerang Beach
- Peace Parade and Cunningham Street, Pindimar
- Macquarie and West Street, Coopersnook
- Jubilee Parade, Dune Springs Drive and Saltwater Crescent, Diamond Beach
- Banksia Street, Blueys Beach
- Maslin Close, Red Head
- Oceanic Place, Old Bar
- Coastal View Drive, Tallwoods Village

1.4.3 Encourage physical health and fitness and social connectedness by providing safe and appropriate recreational facilities

The Tuncurry Water Playground which opened in September 2023 is an all-age, all-ability water splash pad with a water slide, water tower and active water play equipment. The playground is designed with no standing water to exclude the need for lifeguards.

Resurfacing works were completed to the ageing courts at Nancy Smith Netball Complex, with grant funding from the Australian Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.

During peak periods our surf club volunteers and/or Council's contracted service provider (Australian Lifeguard Services) provided surf lifesaving patrols across Bennetts, Blackhead, Boomerang, Crowdy Head, Elizabeth, Forster Main and One Mile Beaches. Over the 2022 and 2023 seasons over 220,000 people were recorded each year visiting MidCoast Council beaches during lifeguard patrols with a total of 84 rescues performed and 435 first aid responses recorded over the reporting period.

We also undertook a review of swimming pool operations across Council's nine swimming pools to ensure that an appropriate and consistent level of service is being provided to the community.

We continued our maintenance of the eight ocean baths/estuary swimming pools across the region.

Community Outcome 1: challenges and future opportunities

Funding challenges - Funding community development and cultural programs is an ongoing challenge for Council.

Funding for the Resilience and Recovery Program concluded in June 2024, limiting Council's ability to provide ongoing support and resources to help the community prepare for future natural disasters and emergency situations. Council is reliant on government funding being made available in the future when these events occur which is a reactive rather than proactive approach.

Many of Council's community development projects are supported through funding from the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). The DCJ currently funds positions within Council that are integral to supporting young people and Aboriginal people across the MidCoast. The funding contracts expire in 2025. Should DCJ redirect or not renew funding for these positions, Council will need to fund these positions by seeking alternative opportunities or reconsider the delivery of these services. This includes the delivery of actions identified in the Aboriginal Action Plan to develop, grow knowledge of, and incorporate Aboriginal culture across various facets of Council operations and in the community.

There has also been a decrease in cultural funding from the NSW Government to regional areas as funds have been redirected to other projects. Council will continue to pursue opportunities to become more self-reliant in funding its community development and cultural activities. This will include:

- Exploring partnership and sponsorship opportunities to support cultural projects and facilities.
- Working with community stakeholders to access grant funding for collaborative community and cultural projects.
- Partnering with community support agencies to access available health funding to support the delivery of community assistance services.
- Building the capacity of community groups to access and improve their success in obtaining grant funding.

Effectively managing Council volunteers - Volunteers are critical to Council's ability to deliver a range of services across the LGA including maintenance of outdoor spaces and library services. With over 1600 volunteers (which is more than Council's paid workforce) and limited resources allocated to working with them we face challenges in ensuring the sustainability and safety of this important group.

Facilitating equitable access to services and facilities across the region - The combination of MidCoast's large geographic footprint, accessibility options and a concentration of services in larger townships to serve the 195 localities across the LGA makes it difficult for many of MidCoast's residents to access important services (such as health and education), employment opportunities and community facilities and events.

Council has an ongoing role to play in advocating for greater availability of health services and improved public/community transport across the region as well as improving mobility options (e.g. more cycleways and footpaths) for those people who do not have access to a motorised transport. Ongoing funding to improve the accessibility of community facilities and spaces is also crucial to ensuring that all residents can participate in community life.

Impacts of weather events - Over the term, Council was challenged to deliver and support the delivery of outdoor programs and events designed to connect the community, with events such as the 2024 Envirofair and the Emergency Services Expo being cancelled due to bad weather. With a significant amount of rain and a lack of large indoor spaces, these events could not proceed.

The forecasted increase in the frequency and severity of weather events will continue to impact Council's cultural assets and its ability to deliver community-connecting programs. Council will continue to explore emerging technologies to enhance service delivery and provide opportunities for the community to connect in non-traditional ways.

Extensive wet weather experienced during 2022, 2023 and 2024 has resulted in many sports field closures across the region impacting on community sporting competitions and events.

Delivering and managing the LGA's expanding Open Space facilities - Council adopted the MidCoast Open Space and Recreation Strategy in July 2023 followed by a number of supporting strategies and plans. These documents set the future direction for these important community facilities across the region through to 2035. The delivery of actions within these strategies is largely reliant on grant funding.

Continuing to maintain and manage the increasing number of buildings and facilities within budgetary constraints is also challenging. Council is implementing a Community Assets Inspection policy and procedure to ensure that the state of these assets is maintained in a way to increase their service life.

Opportunities include exploring collaborative partnerships such as the Coastline Community Foundation where funding is provided to help school students attend education programs at MidCoast Council's cultural facilities, the Manning Regional Art Gallery, Manning Entertainment Centre, and Libraries.



OUR PROGRESS

Community Outcome 2:

An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments

<p>Area</p>  <p>10,052KM²</p>	<p>192KM of coastline</p> 	 <p>50,484 dwellings</p>	<p>7 waste management centres</p> 
 <p>826 parks and open space</p>	<p>13 major water catchments</p> 	 <p>14% Council fleet EV</p>	<p>5 wetlands of national significance</p> 
 <p>9 BIL LITRES annual water supplied</p>	 <p>\$816M building approvals</p>	 <p>5 coastal lakes and lagoons</p>	<p>162 threatened species</p> 
 <p>58 national parks and reserves</p>	<p>45 water reservoirs</p> 	 <p>34 cemeteries</p>	 <p>14 sewage treatment plants</p>

2.1 We protect, manage and restore our natural environment and our biodiversity

Keeping our koalas safe

In 2023 we entered a four-year regional partnership with the NSW Government to fund and support koala conservation in our area. Parts of the MidCoast local government area contain some of the highest densities of koalas in NSW.

Through the MidCoast Regional Koala Partnership we aim to provide more habitat for koalas, support local community action, improve koala safety and health, and build our knowledge to improve koala conservation.

So far through this partnership we have:

- Received 208 expressions of interest from landholders interested in undertaking koala conservation projects on their properties
- Conducted site visits at 108 properties with landholders interested in koala projects
- Planted 30,000 koala food trees
- Undertaken weed control on 250 ha of private property making more koala habitat available
- Given away 4500 trees to the community



Image: Peter Goonan

Continuing our community engagement around koala conservation, we also held a koala artwork competition for school aged children and a Speaking for the Planet event at the Forster Civic Centre.

On 26 June 2024 Councillors adopted the MidCoast Koala Conservation Strategy which guides us in our role as a regional partner.



Summary of our Progress

2.1.1 Protect, maintain and rehabilitate natural areas

Our biosecurity program continued to focus on new and emerging species. In 2023 we were winners in the Invasive Species Management category at the Excellence in the Environment Awards organised by Local Government NSW for our 'Rapid response biosecurity program to eradicate Plume Poppy.'

The 'Smiths Lake Backyards for Biodiversity Program' involved inspections of urban properties to look for the presence of problematic weeds in backyards and work with landholders to treat and remove the plants. Key benefits of the program included successfully identifying priority weeds and engaging landholders with Council's biosecurity team.

We engaged the community to increase awareness of feral deer in our area with a focus on reporting sightings. This program was funded by Hunter Local Land Services and involved instating a control program across south Forster, Coomba Park, and Diamond Beach.

2.1.2 Encourage community involvement to care for our natural environment

Our Annual Waterway and Catchment Report Card is delivered in conjunction with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to compare current conditions of our waterways with the condition we would like our waterways to be. We celebrated the release of the report card in 2023 by holding a water awareness workshop to educate the community on ways urban runoff pollutants can impact the water quality in our estuaries and how re-introducing natural processes such as raingardens can help protect them.

We continued to deliver community education on threatened species, such as the yellow-bellied glider, koala, Manning River turtle and included citizen science activities. The biosecurity team also attend multiple events to help engage the community on weed management issues.

2.1.3 Improve and maintain water quality for our beaches, lakes and waterways

Council conducted an audit and refurbished all gross pollutant traps. An asset management plan was developed establishing a maintenance cycle for the traps. An asset management system was also developed for water quality improvement bio-retention systems and constructed wetlands.

Wingham Wetland refurbishment works have commenced with a concept design developed, which is now ready to move to the construction phase. This work will see the replacement of a life expired water treatment wetland that treats urban stormwater from a large part of the Wingham CBD and urban area helping to improve water quality in Cedar Party Creek and the Manning River.

We have also completed a detailed design of the Dunns Creek Water Quality improvement system and commenced tendering. The system will improve stormwater discharge to Pipers Bay in Wallis Lake, with construction expected to commence in 2025.

Council continued the development of our Coastal Management Programs, with the Manning River Estuary Coastal Management Program completed in 2022. These programs are formed with the intention of improving and maintaining the water quality of beaches and lakes in these areas.

2.2 We understand and manage environment and climate change risks and impacts

Assessing climate-related risks

Council participated in a Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils' project funded under the NSW Disaster Risk Reduction Fund to identify any gaps in Council's risk reduction and risk mitigation measures. Opportunities were also identified where MidCoast communities can implement place-based, pragmatic solutions to reduce local and regional risks and improve their disaster resilience.

Climate risks for Council were also reviewed as part of the periodic review of Council's Risk Management Framework in June 2024.



Old Bar Manning Point and Southern Estuaries Coastal Management Programs

Council is developing Coastal Management Programs (CMPs) for the LGA's coastal areas to set the long-term strategy for the co-ordinated management of the coast. The CMPs will identify a range of site-specific management options to address hazard risks to private, public and environmental assets while taking into account the social, economic, ecological and heritage values of the area.

The development of the Old Bar Manning Point CMP has been prioritised because of concerns about rapid coastal erosion and shoreline recession in the area and the need to provide the community with a clear direction about how this area is managed in the future.

Scoping studies were completed for both the Old Bar Manning Point and the Southern Estuaries CMPs over the reporting period. Supporting community reference groups have also been established to provide strategic stakeholder input to the development of the CMPs.



Summary of our Progress

2.2.1 Promote understanding of place-based risks and vulnerabilities and develop resilience and adaptation plans

Council continued to work with the Floodplain Management Advisory Committee to help develop and implement Floodplain Risk Management Plans for the MidCoast to reduce the impact of flooding and flood liability on the community and reduce private and public losses resulting from flooding. Bulahdelah residents were invited to provide feedback on the review of the Bulahdelah Flood Study. The finalisation of the Flood Study will be a key input into the Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan and will inform decision-making for investing in the floodplain and managing flood risk.

As part of the Southern Estuaries Coastal Management Programs, we completed a tidal inundation study, which modelled dry water flooding as a result of projected rising sea levels.

Throughout 2023, Council, in partnership with the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils (Hunter JO), hosted workshops in bushfire-affected communities across the LGA to help residents prepare for disasters by developing their own bushfire preparedness plans. The Hunter JO showcased a digital sand table which simulated how fire moves across local landscapes and provided residents with a realistic demonstration of how their property and community could be affected by fire. The project was funded by the Federal Government's Black Summer Fire Grants.

Updated bushfire mapping provided by the NSW Government is integrated into Local Environmental Plans and used in land use planning and development assessments. An online mapping tool is available to the community through the NSW Rural Fire Service that identifies bush fire prone land.

2.2.2 Climate change risk management planning and adaptation frameworks are applied in development proposals, infrastructure planning and land use planning

One of the aims of the draft MidCoast Local Environment Plan (LEP) which was developed during the reporting period is to minimise the exposure of development to natural hazards and promote climate change resilience. As an example of this, the draft LEP includes provisions to ensure that potential flood behaviour and sea level rise as a result of climate change are considered in the approval of development applications.

Climate change was an important consideration in the development of two key infrastructure strategies – the Our Water, Our Future 2050 Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy (IWCMS) and the MidCoast Road Strategy. The IWCMS Options and Scenarios Report which informed the development of Our Water, Our Future 2050, assessed 10 climate change adaptation options against six projected long-term climate change trends:

- Increased temperatures including longer and hotter heat waves
- Increased rainfall intensity and flooding
- Rising sea levels
- Increased frequency and severity of bushfires
- Increased frequency and severity of drought and associated water scarcity
- Increased frequency and severity of extreme storms

The revision of our IWCMS included modelling of 15 different climate projections covering a wide range of projected and climate change impacts. Additionally, we continue to implement Councils Climate Action Strategy.

2.2.2 Climate change risk management planning and adaptation frameworks are applied in development proposals, infrastructure planning and land use planning (continued)

This allowed our long-term strategy to be developed based on the worst-case scenarios ensuring we are well positioned to counter climate change risks in future for our water supply. This analysis along with other strategic issues then informed the development of Council's preferred strategy and 30-year investment plan.

The impact of climate change and coastal erosion is being considered for Seal Rocks Road with work progressing on the investigation of long-term stability of the road and development of an alternative road access proposal. This is the first of the adaption planning projects for our transport infrastructure to address the impacts of climate change over the longer term.

2.3 Council works towards net zero emissions

Charting a path towards sustainability

In 2022 Council established the Climate Change Project Control Group to better integrate sustainability into the organisation's everyday operations and support implementation of Council's Climate Change Strategy and achievement of associated targets. These targets include Council achieving net zero emissions by 2040, 100% renewable energy by 2040, net zero emissions from landfill by 2050 and 75% waste to landfill diversion rate by 2030.

As part of the NSW Government's Sustainability Advantage Program, Council undertook a Sustainability Diagnostic in September 2023, which assessed Council's understanding of and progress towards achieving sustainability across Council's operations. Based on the results of the Diagnostic, actions were identified to improve Council's sustainability performance across the organisation.



Sustainability centre

Council has recently completed the construction of the MidCoast Sustainability Centre, jointly funded through the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund and MidCoast Council Waste Services. Located at Tuncurry Waste Management Facility, the building showcases sustainable architecture principles including solar passive design, recycled brick, timber and low emissions concrete. The landscape has been planted with bushfire resilient species and will act as a living plant library, complete with plant identification plaques, for visitors to view.

The purpose of the facility is to provide education to the community aligned with sustainability initiatives, circular economies, waste reduction and recycling. The facility has three workshop spaces where information sessions will be held.

The Centre is due to officially open on Monday 11 November 2024 in alignment with the commencement of National Recycling Week.



Summary of our Progress

2.3.1 Incorporate renewable energy and energy efficiency in future design and planning

Council has been working to reduce its carbon emissions through the installation of rooftop solar systems at key Council sites across the LGA. Since 2022 Council has installed over 300 kW of rooftop solar including 84.4 kW across two water and sewer systems sites and a waste management facilities site in the 2023-24 financial year.

Council has also prepared detailed designs and business cases for a further 350 kW of solar at the Manning Aquatic & Leisure Centre and the Great Lakes Aquatic Centre. The new rooftop systems will provide most of the energy required to operate the centres during the middle of the day. Aquatic Centres consume significant amounts of electricity for pumping, filtering and heating water. The installation of these systems is expected to be completed in the 2024-25 financial year. These solar projects reduce the operating costs of these facilities while improving Council's environmental performance.

Despite Council's electricity consumption being relatively stable over the reporting period, the carbon emissions from electricity have reduced by over 30% due to energy efficiency initiatives and the move to renewable energy sources.

2.3.2 Promote energy and resource efficiency initiatives to our community

The Waste Team have delivered targeted campaigns, workshops, and school programs designed to raise awareness about sustainable waste management. These initiatives educate residents and businesses on reducing waste generation, proper recycling practices, and the importance of resource recovery. Pop-up stalls, public seminars, and digital media have been utilised to foster community participation in these initiatives.

In 2024, Council introduced the Water Wise Grant program which offers one-off grants up to the value of \$10,000 to schools, community groups and other organisations to co-fund projects and activities that increase water conservation and sustainability while protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

This may include:

- Water efficiency solutions
- Water education programs
- Conservation initiatives and more.

To celebrate World Water Day in 2024, Council launched the Water Wiser Hub, a new online resource which provides MidCoast residents with a range of useful tips and tools to help them save water inside and outside their homes.

We continued to teach children the importance of saving water and looking after the environment through engagement with Whizzy the Waterdrop. Whizzy and his helper visited more than 80 preschools and primary schools across the region. During school holidays the Whizzy the Waterdrop program was also held at our libraries.

2.3.2 Promote energy and resource efficiency initiatives to our community (*continued*)

To celebrate National Water Week, we held a quiz and giveaway and promoted the National Water Night in which we asked individuals and households not to turn on any taps or water source between 5pm-10pm on a night in October. During Water Week we also conducted tours of our sewage treatment plants to raise community awareness about the importance of water and sewerage processing.

Smart water meters have been installed on some properties, allowing organisations to track water usage and to help identify leaks. This has provided real time data to major users and those at high risk of wastage due to leakage, saving a significant volume of water.

Council is working with several community stakeholders including the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and tourism operators to achieve ECO Destination Accreditation for the LGA. Managed in Australia by Ecotourism Australia, the global certification process has 91 criteria across six categories that must be met and maintained. The program assures travellers that certified destinations are backed by a strong, well managed commitment to sustainable practices and provide high quality nature-based tourism experiences. Council is sponsoring three local operators to complete the ECO Business Certification Program - Forster Dive Centre, Waukivory Estate and The Steps Barrington. Myall River Camp are already an ECO Certified Business in our LGA.

Council continues to actively promote grant funding (e.g. for destination EV charging) and education opportunities which support sustainable practices to its tourism and business base via its regular newsletters.

2.3.3 Invest in renewable energy efficient measures, power purchasing agreements and Carbon sequestration

Council moved to purchasing 100% renewable electricity for small water and sewer electricity accounts during the reporting period and is currently in negotiations to extend this to streetlighting from January 2025 and large sites from January 2026 via a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). This long-term energy contract would deliver renewable energy until 2030, provide budget certainty for Council and achieve a reduction in current energy costs.

Council has introduced three electric vehicles in the fleet of pool vehicles which are largely powered by Council's rooftop solar at the Yalawanyi Ganya building in Taree. Electric vehicles (including Battery EVs, Hybrid and Plug-in Hybrid EVs) now make up 14% of the passenger fleet. Council continues to support the ongoing increase of this metric through improved staff awareness, trialling of electric vehicles and appropriate policy changes. This transition will contribute to reduce fuel use and emissions.

Council facilitated the installation of 12 electric vehicle charging bays at Wynter Street, Taree. These stations are in addition to the existing 2 public charging stations in the carpark of Councils' Yalawanyi Ganya building.

Council's operational staff are increasingly using battery powered electric power tools. As these tools do not rely on petrol for power, they are quieter, safer and easier to use. Some of the benefits to staff include no fumes, less vibration, less noise, easier to start, no need to carry fuels, reduced disturbance to residents and businesses and the ability for the batteries to be used on multiple tools.

2.3.4 Minimise waste through education, reduction, reuse, recycling and repurposing

In 2023 alone, over 41,937.64 tonnes of recyclables were processed, including green waste into mulch, concrete into recycled aggregate, second hand goods diverted and sold through Reviva Shops (tip shops), mattress foam and springs, E-Waste, batteries, problem waste, paper, cardboard, glass, plastics, steel and aluminium. This has helped divert 47.32% of waste from landfill, contributing significantly to emissions reductions and extending landfill lifespans.

Recognising that a significant portion of our emissions come from organic waste in landfills, (primarily methane) Council commenced implementation of two significant waste projects for the LGA.

The Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) system will divert organic waste from landfills, reduce methane emissions and promote composting across the community. The design, construction and operation of the FOGO facility was tendered during the reporting period.

Council also tendered for the design, construction, and operation of gas management systems at both the Taree and Tuncurry landfill sites. These systems will significantly reduce emissions by destroying harmful greenhouse gases like methane, thereby greatly enhancing the environmental performance of these landfill sites. Additionally, they will generate a positive revenue stream through the creation of Australian Carbon Credit

Both projects will commence operations during the next term of Council.

2.4 We have an adequate and reliable water supply



Gloucester Water Upgrade

The construction of a seven-megalitre main service reservoir and gravity water main in Gloucester represents a significant step forward in enhancing water security for the community and has reduced reliance on booster pumps to provide adequate water pressure to residents.

Despite facing delays due to unforeseen circumstances, this \$27 million project has successfully addressed historical issues with water pressure and treated water storage, particularly during wet weather events.

By providing residents with a reliable and modern water supply network, this project helps ensure that Gloucester will have the necessary infrastructure to meet the growing demands of its population and adapt to future challenges.

Below: Unveiling of the Gloucester water reservoir upgrade





Our Water Our Future

In August 2023, Council adopted Our Water, Our Future 2050, Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy which sets out Council's 30-year plan for the sustainable and affordable delivery of MidCoast's water services.

In developing this strategy, Council focused on the largest water-related challenge we will face over the next 30 years, water security. Council also considered how we should approach the key strategic issues of managing our effluent sustainably, dealing with the impacts of climate change, and providing water and sewer connections for our unsewered villages.

The adaptive plan for the next 30 years includes:

- Constructing off-river storage dams for the Manning, Bulahdelah, Gloucester and Stroud water supply schemes
- Additional water recycling to provide cost-effective irrigation for public open spaces
- Delivering sewer services to high-risk unsewered villages where funding allows
- Continuing to target leakages in our network and with our customers
- Progressing cost-effective water conservation measures
- Integrating catchment management initiatives into our water management
- Minimising the impacts of development on stormwater runoff to protect the aesthetic, recreational and ecological value of our waterways.
- A sustainable price pathway for the next 30 years

Summary of our Progress

2.4.1 Manage all elements of the water cycle to deliver an adequate and reliable water supply that meets community needs now and into the future

Our projects to expand the Nabisac bore-field and the upgrade at the Nabisac Water Treatment Plant are a part of MidCoast Council's strategy to address water security issues in the Manning Water Supply Scheme. By increasing the volume of water extracted from the Nabisac Aquifer, the project will enhance the capacity of the treatment plant to provide potable water to the community. This increased water supply will not only help mitigate the impacts of drought but also ensure a more resilient and sustainable water system for the region.

The Peg Leg Creek Off-river Storage Dam project has progressed with preliminary environmental studies, biodiversity assessment work and a funding application to the National Water Grid Fund. The off-river storage projects for the Gloucester and Bulahdelah Water Supply Schemes have progressed with options for suitable locations assessed to allow the concept designs to be progressed.

Implementation of our Inflow and Infiltration Reduction Program over the term has led to a considerable drop in stormwater entering MidCoast Councils' sewerage system. Our Inflow and Infiltration Reduction team has worked to identify defects on private properties where stormwater was getting into the system through unauthorised plumbing connections, poorly designed landscaping or broken or missing sewer shaft caps. Residents have been active in fixing defects on their properties with close to 90% of homeowners who were notified about an issue taking steps to fix them. The team has also identified defects in our own sewerage network and worked to rectify them. This has reduced the amount of overflow from the system into the environment, which had been exacerbated by the pressure put on the system from recent wet weather.

Through the upgrade of the Hawks Nest Sewage Treatment Plant, we will have increased treatment capacity, which will address peak holiday loadings and accommodate future population growth. Moreover, these upgrades will ensure compliance with regulatory licensing requirements, further safeguarding the environment and public health.

2.5 We balance the needs of our natural and built environment

Strategic land use planning

The development of the draft MidCoast Local Environment Plan (LEP) is a significant step forward in land use planning for the LGA. The LEP will provide consistent and renewed planning controls that reflect the diversity and character of the MidCoast and replaces the three existing LEPs for the previous Taree, Great Lakes and Gloucester LGAs.

The draft MidCoast LEP is based on extensive work undertaken over the past five years in the development of the following Land Use Planning strategies and reviews:

- Housing Strategy (June 2021)
- MidCoast Recreation Zones Review (July 2022)
- MidCoast Rural Strategy – The Way Forward (December 2022)
- MidCoast Employment Zones Review (August 2021)
- Infrastructure Zones Review (July 2022)

All documents were developed in consultation with the community and relevant NSW Government Departments.

Aims of the draft LEP which are relevant to this community outcome include:

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, natural ecosystems, ecological processes and landscapes
- Minimising the exposure of development to natural hazards and promoting climate change resilience
- Protecting places and objects of cultural and heritage value
- Encouraging sustainable living, housing affordability and diversity.

Community consultation on the draft LEP concluded in September 2024 and feedback is being considered in the finalisation of the LEP which is expected to be put before Council for adoption in early 2025.



Summary of our Progress

2.5.1 Practice integrated land use planning that balances the environmental, social and economic needs of present and future generations and our existing natural, heritage and cultural assets

The Draft MidCoast Local Environmental Plan was developed in consultation with State Government. On 20 March 2024 a Gateway determination was provided by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. Community consultation and State Government consultation concluded on 14 July 2024.

Future planning controls for rural and natural landscapes were identified and included in the draft MidCoast Local Environmental Plan, following adoption of the 'MidCoast Rural Strategy – the way forward' document.

A draft Heritage Conservation Areas Review was also undertaken, this was required to help bring together the 14 heritage conservation areas across the three existing LEPs. We developed new heritage planning controls for the draft MidCoast Local Environmental Plan that provide a consistent approach in preserving our region's heritage. The draft is subject to further consultation, prior to inclusion in the draft MidCoast LEP.

A master plan for the Old Bar Foreshore and Old Bar Reserve was developed and placed on public exhibition. Old Bar Park is a key precinct within the Old Bar community and provides a range of sporting, event, tourism, social and recreational activities. Following community feedback and consultation the final master plan was adopted at the 24 July 2024 Council meeting.

Council conducts internal referrals including Transport Assets, Ecology, Environmental Health, Building Services and other specialist areas of Council. 245 coastal, flooding and stormwater development application internal referrals were completed over the term.

Council engages external agencies in the assessment process including Department of Planning and Environment, Department of Planning and Environment-Water, Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries), WaterNSW, Transport for NSW, Essential Energy and the Rural Fire Service.

In March 2024 Council adopted the Cemeteries Strategy identifying six principles for the future management of cemeteries across the region including environmental assets, respect and care, heritage and history, accessible documentation, consistency and cultural understanding.

2.5.2 Plan, provide, manage and advocate for infrastructure that continues to meet the needs of our community

Through the development of Our Water, Our Future 2050 we plan for our future water infrastructure to continue to meet the needs of our community.

Over the term we have completed projects to provide infrastructure for the future needs of our community including:

Water and Sewer

- Gloucester water upgrade to improve Gloucester's water security for the long term.
- Halliday's point sewer pump station 13 to allow for future growth and development in the area.
- Manning River Drive water main renewal to allow for future growth in the Cundletown area.

2.5.2 Plan, provide, manage and advocate for infrastructure that continues to meet the needs of our community (*continued*)

Sewer and water mains renewal projects also commenced at a number of sites in Harrington, Smiths Lake, Hallidays Point, Hawks Nest, Forster, Manning Point, Taree South, Tuncurry, Stroud, Old Bar, Pacific Palms.

Community Spaces

- Manning Entertainment Centre (MEC) building and car park upgrades
- Upgrade of Tuncurry John Wright Park Amenities
- Upgrade of Marine Drive Tea Gardens boating facility
- Upgrade to facilities at Forster Boronia Park Sporting Complex
- Upgrade of Bulahdelah Showground fencing and cattle shed

The Mayor and General Manager have met with community groups and business owners to understand their concerns regarding improvements to local infrastructure.

They have made representations for new or improved infrastructure to meet the needs of the community to:

- The Hon. Paul Toole MP, Deputy Premier
- The Hon David Elliott MP; NSW Minister for Transport
- The Hon Dugald Saunders MP, NSW Minister for Agriculture
- The Hon James Griffin MP, NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage
- The Hon Sam Faraway MLC, NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads
- The Hon Kevin Anderson MP, NSW Minister Lands and Water
- The Hon. Yasmin Maree Catley MP, NSW Shadow Minister for Customer Service, Digital, and the Hunter
- The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, NSW Minister for Water
- Dr David Gillespie, Federal Member for Lyne
- The Hon. Tanya Plibersek, Minister for the Environment and Water of Australia

They have also advocated for causes like the Tuncurry Slipway upgrade, Wallis Lakes sand shoaling and the Peg Leg Creek off-river storage dam.

2.6 We have a diverse range of housing options

Housing Barriers Review Report

The Housing Barriers Review project was developed to seek an understanding of what barriers unnecessarily complicate the development assessment process and/or impede the delivery of good housing outcomes within the MidCoast Council LGA.

One of the strategies identified was to work with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to review opportunities to increase land release options. The aim is to stimulate the next wave of post-pandemic housing with a focus on where land is most able and ready to be developed.

The Housing Barriers Review Findings report was endorsed by Council on the 25 October 2023 and an implementation plan adopted.



Summary of our Progress

2.6.1 Plan and advocate for a range of housing options to meet the diverse needs of our community

The draft MidCoast Local Environmental Plan aims to offer a broad range of housing options to cater for our diverse needs while simultaneously delivering housing that is affordable. A range of residential zones are proposed to meet our diverse housing needs.

MidCoast Council processed over 1300 development and modification applications for residential housing each year worth over \$376m in 2022-23 and \$440m in 2023-24 financial years.

The Mayor and/or the General Manager advocated for housing options for the MidCoast region through:

- Meeting with various community groups to discuss homelessness, supported living arrangements and short-term and long-term housing options for domestic and family violence victims.
- Participating in the Local Government New South Wales Housing Roundtable facilitated by The Hon. Paul Scully, NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and The Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC the NSW Minister for Housing, Homelessness and the North Coast.
- Meeting with The Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC the NSW Minister for Housing, Homelessness, Water and the North Coast and the Hon. Deborah O'Neill Duty Senator for Lyne to discuss housing affordability and availability as well as meeting with individual owners and community members.

Council also wrote to all local property managers and rate payers encouraging them to transition short-term accommodation to more longer-term accommodation to help alleviate the housing crisis.

Community Outcome 2: challenges and future opportunities

Supporting population growth - The MidCoast population is expected to grow by 16.33% by 2036. Facilitating the delivery of sufficient housing and the required supporting infrastructure and services to meet this growth is a key challenge and will place a strain on both the LGA's natural environment and Council resources.

Council will need to continue to look at ways to support the natural environment and minimise the negative impacts of the built environment as land rezoned under the Urban Release Area program is released for development.

With housing supply and affordable housing being a national issue, there is an opportunity for Council to advocate for State and Federal Government support in providing cost-effective housing to meet the diverse needs of the MidCoast community where housing stress is comparatively high.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change – Council faces challenges in achieving carbon emission reduction targets, while still maintaining the required levels of service to the community. For example, Council is battling an increase in carbon emissions from its vehicle fleet (particularly its heavy vehicle fleet) due to the current lack of suitable electric vehicle options.

Council does however have opportunities to implement additional energy efficiency initiatives and increase the use of solar photovoltaic at Council sites. These projects both reduce Council's carbon footprint and contribute to Council's financial sustainability. There are also opportunities to incorporate lower emission materials in Council's infrastructure projects and investigate carbon offset projects to help meet emissions targets.

Managing the impacts from the expected increase in the severity and frequency of weather events on both the natural and built environment will require significant resourcing (both in people and funding). Council is dependent on State and Federal funding for reconstruction of infrastructure following natural disasters which may pose issues for Council in the future.

Community satisfaction rate for water service remains high, and over the term Council has continued to implement cost and water saving initiatives and programs such as leak detection projects. Future water availability, however, may become more of a prominent issue due to changes in rainfall patterns. Delivery of projects that allow for greater water production and storage may need to be accelerated to keep up with demand.

Water Security We have made progress to improve water security across the MidCoast following adoption of the revised Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan (Our Water, Our Future 2050) in August 2023. The expansion of the Nabic Water System is providing an immediate boost to water security, but it's not enough to fill the gap in our long-term water security challenge. We are in the early planning phases for the proposed Peg Leg Creek Dam Project, which will be a significant undertaking. The project will be the single largest project ever undertaken by Council.

Managing our waste – With an increased population, comes more waste. Waste is also the most significant contributor to Council's carbon emissions profile and an area subject to ongoing changes in policy, regulation and legislation as well as changing recycling and processing markets and technologies.

Council will need to keep abreast of emerging technologies that contribute to improved delivery of our waste services, improve community engagement and education on waste management services and initiatives including the new FOGO service when it comes on-stream.

Funding implementation of strategies and programs – Council has made significant progress over the past term in the development of strategies and programs to support the delivery of housing and essential services such as water and waste, as well as frameworks and programs to protect our natural environment.

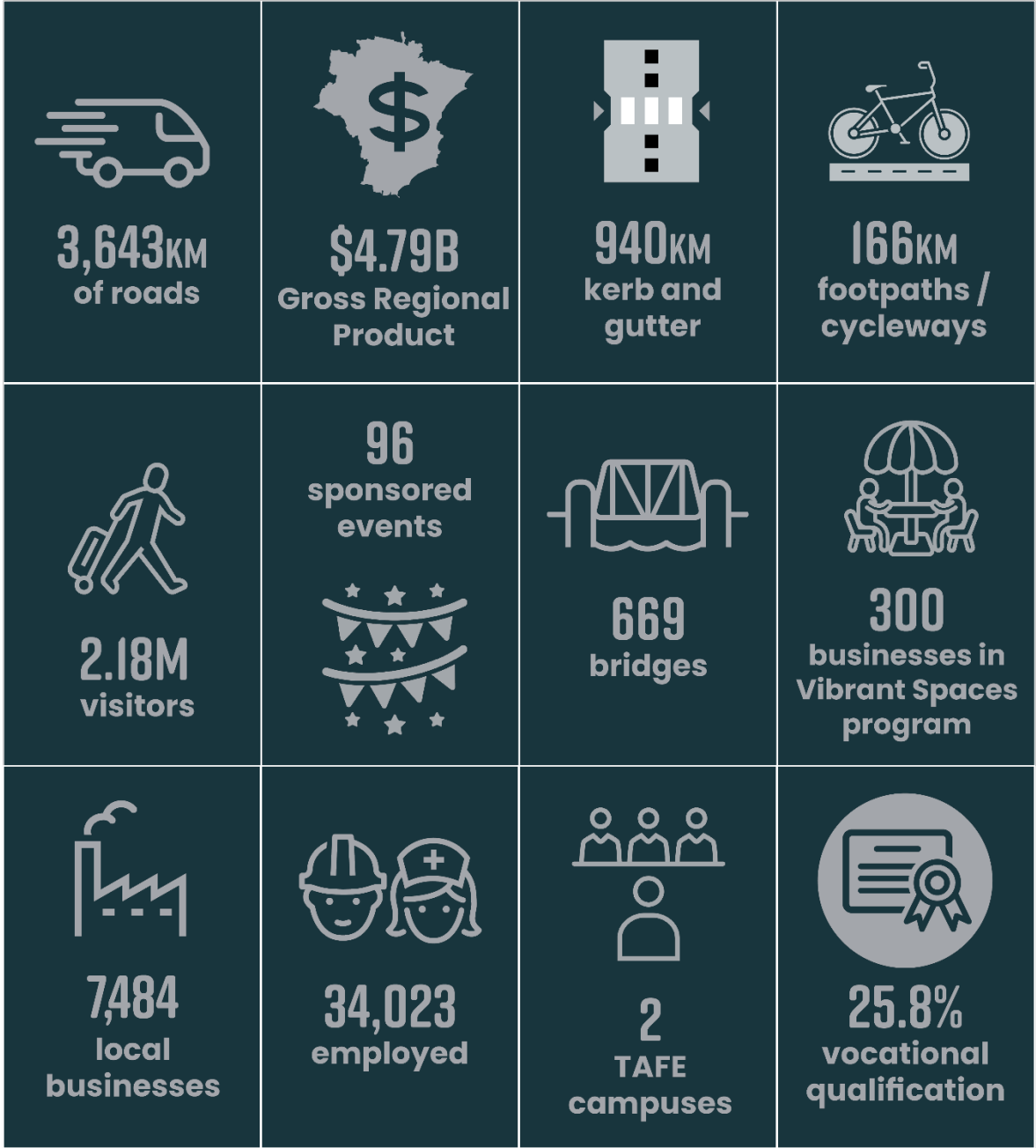
Council will need to advocate for and pursue external funding to support the implementation of these strategies and programs which are key to maintaining and improving the liveability of the LGA.



OUR PROGRESS

Community Outcome 3:

A thriving and strong economy



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3.1 MidCoast is a great place to visit, work and invest

Forster Civic Centre

The Forster Civic Centre opened on Monday 9 October 2023.

Significant community consultation informed the design of this impressive new building which includes a customer service point, the Forster Library and flexible community spaces.

The project was delivered with funding from Council, Federal Government and the developer.



Winning gold

In November 2022 MidCoast Council won two Gold Awards at the NSW Tourism Awards for our Destination Barrington Coast campaign.

The categories were Tourism Marketing and Campaigns and the Local Government Award for Tourism.



Supporting festivals and events

Events and festivals are important for bringing tourism and to increase spending into the local area supporting local businesses. In 2022 and 2023 Council provided over \$120,000 of event sponsorship.

Some of the events sponsored included:

- Lakeside Music Festival
- Wingham Music Festival
- NSW Rugby 7s Youth and senior State Championships
- Hawks Nest Triathlon
- Old Bar Beach Festival
- Taree Rowing Regatta
- Stroud Rodeo and Camp draft
- Gloucester Open Tennis Tournament
- Lakes Trail Festival (pictured)
- Tastefest on the Manning



Summary of our Progress

3.1.1 Identify and harness opportunities for businesses and economic development

MidCoast Council, in partnership with the MidCoast Economic Development Strategy Reference Group developed the MidCoast Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028. With 10 action areas to achieve the objectives of 'attract' and 'grow'. These actions are a joint responsibility with local business and industry and will rely heavily on attracting external funding. The Strategy was endorsed by Council in June 2023.

During the reporting period, Council received over \$1.2 million in grants from the State Government to deliver a range of activities and programs including, Small Business Month business workshops and the development of the Northern Gateway Transport Hub Strategy and Masterplan.

On 20 March 2024 Council adopted our updated Destination Management Plan. This plan sets to set the direction and priorities to sustainably grow our visitor economy to 2030 and beyond.

In July 2024 Council endorsed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Newcastle Airport Pty Ltd. The MoU aims to:

- Promote Taree Regional Airport as a secondary hub / reliever hub for Newcastle Airport General Aviation activities to alleviate Newcastle Airport constraints
- Expand freight services at the Taree Regional Airport site in conjunction with Air Freight capability development at Newcastle Airport
- Create support for an aviation training hub at Taree Regional Airport
- Grow employment and economic opportunities for the MidCoast region
- Drive visitation (including international visitors) to the Barrington Coast through cooperative marketing opportunities
- Collaborate on in-bound and out-bound trade and investment delegations

The following masterplans were developed for future opportunities to attract funding for upgrades to the area, support industry growth and develop the economy and to attract visitors:

- Wingham Racecourse Masterplan
- Northern Gateway Transport Hub Masterplan
- MidCoast Regional Sporting Precinct Strategy and Masterplan

3.1.2 Advocate for and encourage local education and vocational training to cover skill and employment gaps

Council staff have continued to support the high school entrepreneurial programs by mentoring students and connecting them with industry.

Council has on-going association and meets regularly with Taree Universities Campus following the signing of a 25-year lease agreement for the use of the former MidCoast Council building in Taree CBD.

Council supports and encourages local education by participating in events such as CareerQuip, MidCoast Council Youth Awards, MidCoast Council Hackathon and attending many local schools for assemblies and graduations.

3.1.3 Advocate for improved telecommunications and utilities to provide consistency across the region

NBN services have increased across the region with most areas not serviceable by wired or wireless connection able to connect through satellite.

The General Manager regularly meets with the NSW Telco Authority, Essential Energy and Telstra to build stronger partnerships and discuss plans for the MidCoast region.

3.1.4 Support and encourage the development and attraction of strategic events

On 22 May 2024 MidCoast Council approved a sponsorship package for a regionally significant event. The Barrington Coast Airshow is scheduled for the 9 November 2024. This partnership between MidCoast Council and Paul Bennet Airshows is expected to draw more than 6,000 visitors and have more than a \$2 million economic impact to local businesses.

During the reporting period 190 events were approved for sponsorship. It was a difficult period with several events being cancelled due to COVID-19 and weather events.

We continue to support tourism development and growth in the visitor economy through our Destination Barrington Coast management team.

3.2 Our villages and business precincts are dynamic commercial spaces

Vibrant Spaces Program

Our town centres are places where we are entertained, shop, dine and catch up with friends and family.

The concept of vibrant spaces centres around businesses utilising the footpath, free of charge, in return for some innovative thinking and a commonsense approach to adding colour and vibrancy to our streets. The aim is to encourage people to stop, linger, shop and dine, which benefits local businesses.

Over 300 businesses are registered to participate in the program which ensures active and vibrant town centres.



Wingham Main Street

Summary of our Progress

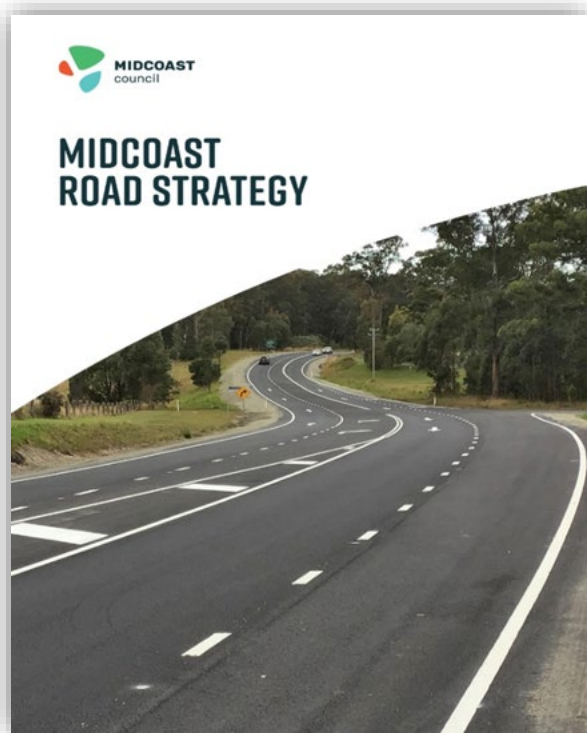
3.2.1 Implement innovative programs and projects to support business precincts in creating and maintaining vibrant spaces

There has been an annual competition that encourages local businesses to decorate their shopfronts / windows during the Christmas period. The purpose of the competition is to foster a colourful, festive atmosphere in our shopping precincts which encourages the community to travel to the location, linger and shop.

A project team and working party of Wingham residents finalised the details of the Wingham CBD Masterplan and stage one of the Masterplan was implemented with roadwork completed at the intersection of Bent and Farquhar streets.

Through Council's Footpath Activities in Town Centres (Vibrant Spaces) Policy, Council supported the 'Who Let The Cows Out' initiative which was undertaken by the Lions Club of Taree in partnership with the local Women in Dairy Group.

3.3 Our integrated transport networks meet the needs of our businesses and the community



Roads Strategy Developed

Council has the second largest public road network in NSW, extending over more than 3,600 km with roughly equal parts sealed and unsealed. The community has identified the need to improve the road conditions and Council has prioritised road maintenance by investing a substantial proportion of its annual budget.

The strategy shows that more than a quarter of the sealed road network has significant cracking. Timely maintenance is fundamental to ensure a road can achieve its useful life at the lowest lifecycle cost.

Extreme weather, including heavy rain and flash flooding has also put pressure on the network. Inflation and the related increases are among other challenges Council faces.

The MidCoast Road Strategy identifies a range of actions that are required to ensure the road network doesn't deteriorate further as well as actions required to improve the network over time. The extent to which these can be applied will depend on funding.

Northern Gateway progression

Stage two of the Northern Gateway new industrial access road was completed in December 2023. Council extended the scope of works to include a second roundabout to better facilitate access into the industrial lands.

This is a high priority project in both the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and the MidCoast Regional Economic Development Strategy, with the NSW Government providing \$15 million for infrastructure works.



Lakes Way / Blackhead Road Roundabout

The upgrade of the intersection at Lakes Way / Blackhead Road was completed in January 2023.

The project upgraded the intersection to a three-leg roundabout to improve safety and traffic efficiency.

The \$4 million project was funded by the Federal Government through Transport for NSW to address known road safety blackspots.



Bridges

Bridges are amongst our best managed assets. Most bridges form a critical link in the transport network forming the shortest routes between locations. Bridges have been prioritised over other infrastructure by Federal, State and Local Governments for a long time. As a result, the replacement of timber bridges is regularly progressing. MidCoast Council has around 10% of NSW's remaining timber bridges which is disproportionate to the 1% of the State's population that live in the region.



- Bundacree Creek Bridge replaced - *funded by MidCoast Council.*
- Deep Creek Bridge and Limeburners Creek Bridges replaced - *funded by the Australian Government's Roads of Strategic Importance initiative (\$20 million contribution), with an additional contribution from the NSW Government for works on The Bucketts Way (\$5 million contribution).*
- Cedar Party Creek Bridge commenced - *funded by \$28 million grant from the NSW Government's Fixing Country Bridges Program, and a \$5 million grant from the Australian's Government Bridge Renewal Program. \$6 million is being covered by MidCoast Council.*
- The Falls Bridge replaced - *funded through the NSW State Government's Fixing Country Bridges Program.*



Summary of our Progress

3.3.1 Plan, provide and advocate for safe and efficient regional transport networks

MidCoast Council administers the Mid North Weight of Loads Group on behalf of 14 member Councils in the Mid North Coast, Northern Tablelands and North-West Slopes areas of NSW.

The Weight of Loads Group has a strong focus on education to assist heavy vehicle operators in understanding and complying with their legal requirements. This includes inspectors presenting truck and caravan weighing days / workshops and providing practical advice on correct loading techniques. This Group also undertakes an enforcement function to ensure the safety of all road users and minimise the risk of damage to road infrastructure due to overloading.

Taree Airport has maintained 100% compliance with Airport Safety Standards as audited by Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

The Mayor and General Manager have advocated for a safer and more efficient transport network within the MidCoast region making representations to local state members:

- The Hon. (Jenny) Jennifer Kathleen Aitchison, NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads
- The Hon. Sam Faraway, MLC NSW Shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads
- The Hon. Deborah O'Neill, Duty Senator for Lyne
- The Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Regional NSW

They advocated for both short-term and long-term solutions to ease traffic congestion on state classified roads through Forster and Tuncurry, upgrade intersections at critical interchanges on the Pacific Highway and for more funding to maintain and renew our locally managed road network.

Council has also advocated for the handover of key regional roads such as The Lakes Way, The Bucketts Way and The Thunderbolts Way to the State Government. These roads should form part of the State Road network funded and maintained by the State Government, reducing the burden on Council.

The General Manager also meets regularly with Transport for NSW to build a strong partnership and discuss plans for the MidCoast region.

3.3.2 Design, construct and maintain safe and efficient local transport and mobility networks

Councillors allocated an additional \$7.5 million in the 2022-23 budget specifically for a local road repair program. Over 35 roads or road sections were completed in addition to roadwork undertaken in the annual roadworks plan.

The sections of road identified for repair were those that regularly result in requests from the community for repair, needed excessive maintenance and were in a condition that could be repaired (rather than requiring full reconstruction).

In addition to the Natural Disaster Recovery works that were fully funded by the State and Federal Governments, Council received over \$15 million in funding under the State Government's 'Pothole' program to undertake urgent works on the road network. Council targeted this funding to sections of the local road network that were no longer reasonably maintainable where the low speed, low-risk environment meant that they would not normally be prioritised.

3.3.2 Design, construct and maintain safe and efficient local transport and mobility networks *(continued)*

The Thunderbolts Way works program has been completed with over 9km of road rehabilitation works in accordance with the Thunderbolts Way Corridor Strategy.

The Bucketts Way Route Access Strategy upgrade program Stage 1 has delivered over 14km of the road rehabilitation works. Stage 2 is well underway which includes the replacement of the Limeburners Creek Bridge and Deep Creek Bridge.

Improvements were made to the following footpaths around the area to maintain safety:

- Oxley Street, Taree
- Mirren and Tuloa Street, Hawks Nest
- Waterman Street, Old Bar
- Edinburgh Drive, Taree
- Nabiac Street, Nabiac
- Gloucester Road, Wingham
- Boomerang Drive, Elizabeth Beach
- Likely Street, Forster

Community Outcome 3: Challenges and future opportunities

Realisation of economic opportunities - The key economic challenge for the MidCoast over the next decade is to ensure the realisation of the region's economic opportunities to help drive growth within the region. With the attrition of some industries over the previous decade, it is now time to strategically plan how Council can help to maintaining core economic sectors, whilst providing support to emerging industry sectors is the key economic challenge for the MidCoast over the next decade.

The recently completed Northern Gateway Transport Hub provides the MidCoast with a significant opportunity to grow the transport and supply chain sector in the region, given its proximity to the Pacific Highway. Over time, the Hub could be connected to other transport forms including air and rail. With the infrastructure in place, the key challenge is to attract transport-related businesses such as freight transport facilities, truck depots, transport depots, warehouses and distribution centres to the Hub.

Strong foundations in place but economic stimulation needed - The MidCoast's Gross Regional Product (GRP) and job growth have been slower compared to the Mid North Coast, Regional NSW, and national averages. This indicates room for economic and policy interventions that could support job creation and stimulate broader economic activity. Additionally, productivity per worker in the MidCoast has fallen behind, suggesting a need for enhanced capital investment and other productivity drivers.

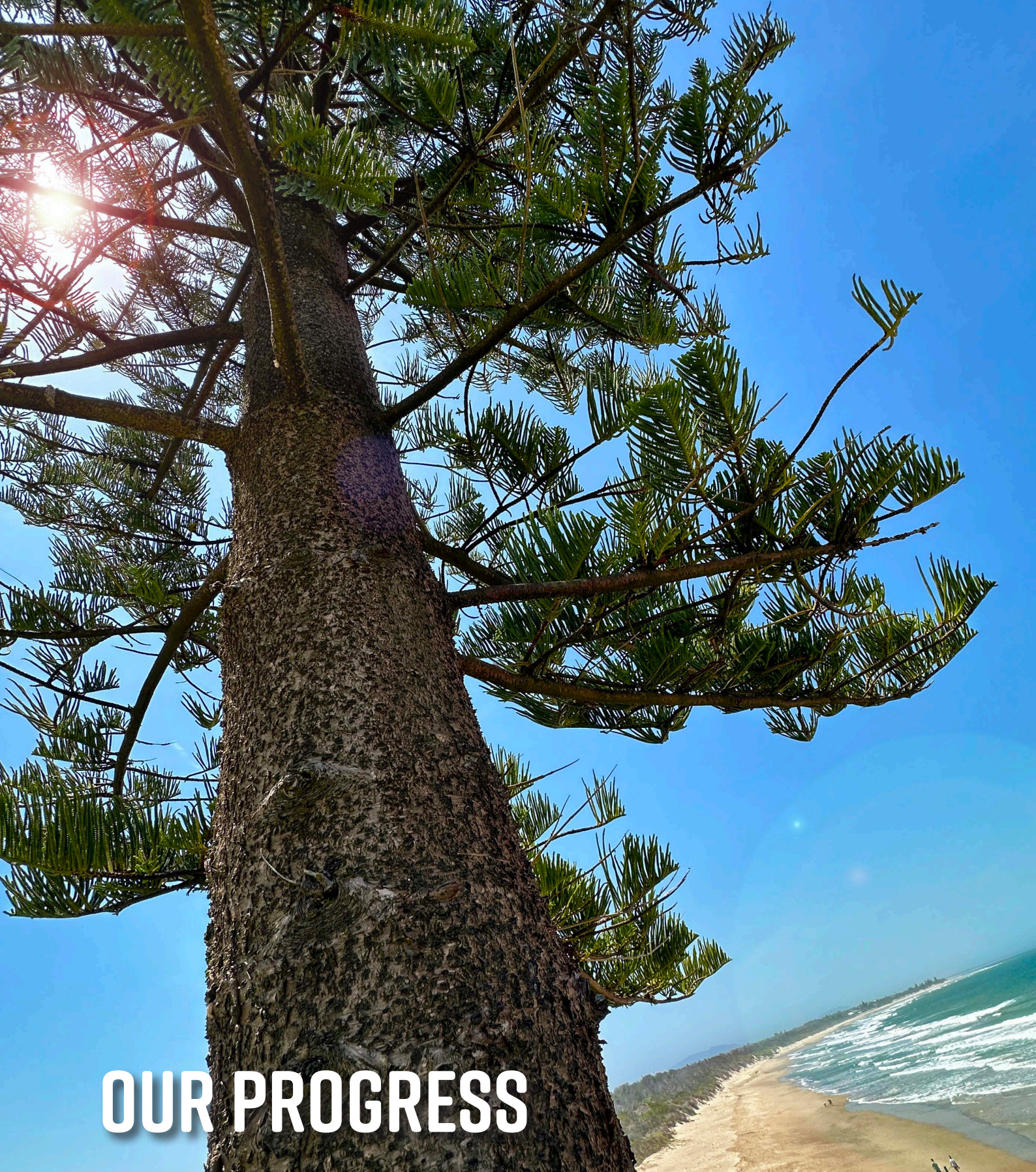
There are, however, positive trends. The unemployment rate in the MidCoast, which was notably higher than in benchmark regions in late 2020, had nearly converged with these areas by December 2023. This reflects a stabilising economy which provides a strong foundation for future growth.

Maximising competitive advantage - The availability of residential and industrial zoned land for development is a major strength for potential investors. MidCoast Council's 2021 Urban Release Areas Report identifies land in the MidCoast that can be used for residential or employment zones to meet the demand for additional housing, and business or industrial growth.

While development and building construction activity is slowing up slightly compared to previous years, builders and developers are still showing great confidence in the MidCoast region. Rising building costs and shortages in licensed trades are challenges nationally and may hamper development activity. NSW Government investment in the vocational sector to train additional workers, as well as government interventions to increase housing supply, may help to offset these challenges.

Transport challenges - Community satisfaction with roads continues to be a challenge. While the community expectations on traffic, safety and comfort grow, Council is contending with roads that have legacy issues as they were built to past standards and/or within budget constraints. Ongoing increases in population leading to additional roads and increased usage of existing roads and extreme weather, including heavy rain and flash flooding continue to put pressure on the network.

Our Road Strategy identified that we can only afford to undertake half of the renewals and two-thirds of the maintenance we should be doing on our road network each year. Without an increase in funding or grants the proportion of the network in poor condition will more than double over the next ten years. This is increasing the future costs and resulting in inefficiency, with many works deferred to meet the available budget for expenditure. Addressing the \$26.5 million per annum shortfall in road maintenance and road renewals is a key challenge in achieving financial sustainability. Council adopted a Financial Sustainability Action Plan in May 2024 and this Action Plan sets out tangible actions to progress Council towards a sustainable financial and asset position.



OUR PROGRESS

Community Outcome 4:

Strong leadership and good governance

 <p>5 customer service points</p>	<p>5.8% council employees with disability</p> 	 <p>100% GIPA applications completed on time</p>	<p>195 towns and villages</p> 
 <p>1,058 council employees</p>	<p>3,721 online engagement registrations</p> 	 <p>11 councillors</p>	<p>8,653 eNewsletter subscriptions</p> 
 <p>15 community conversation locations</p>	<p>13 council committees</p> 	 <p>97,909 population</p>	<p>34% council workforce identify as First Nations</p> 

4.1 The community has confidence in Council decisions and planning for the future

Community engagement

Council revised and adopted its Community Engagement Strategy in December 2022.

The 'Have Your Say' section of the website has been developed to better provide information and receive feedback on Council projects.

We increased our focus on face-to-face engagement across the local government area to be able to connect with as many sections of our community as possible on important issues such as future water resources, recreational needs, planning frameworks, master planning for important community spaces and more.

During the 2022-2024 period we have had more than 11,000 individual interactions with community members and received almost 4,000 pieces of feedback to help inform our decision making and future planning.



The way we inform and consult with our community is guided by our Community Engagement Strategy.



Summary of our Progress

4.1.1 Enable the community to participate in decisions that affect them

We have sought to increase opportunities for participation in engagement for hard-to-reach groups and developed a program for location specific information in community newsletters.

We revised the format of our Community Conversations programs to include six monthly presentations from each of the Directors focusing on the items of interest to the particular community.

From April – June 2024 we held 10 pop ups engaging with 218 people, four workshop events in which 82 people attended and received 269 surveys from members of the community while reviewing our Community Strategic Plan.

4.1.2 Provide clear, accessible, timely and relevant information to the community about council projects and services

Under the Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements in the Local Government Act, Council reports on the progress of its Delivery Program and Operational plan every six months.

We provide monthly finance and capital works reports and quarterly reports on the implementation of the Housing Barriers Review actions and our Financial Sustainability Action Plan.

Council's website was upgraded with a redevelopment that included a design refresh and an information architecture review to increase accessibility for the community. We also provide livestreaming and recordings of Council meetings to the community via Council's website for those unable to attend in person. Our engagement through digital communication channels, including websites and social media has increased over the term.

4.2 Council demonstrates good governance and financial management to ensure decisions and transactions are ethical, efficient, safe and fair

Financial Sustainability Review and Strategy

Councillors requested a report on how to achieve financial sustainability. The information tabled confirmed the challenges Council continues to face post-merger in its journey to long term financial sustainability. A key recommendation of the report was to develop a Financial Sustainability Strategy. Council appointed AEC Group Ltd to conduct an independent review of Councils financial sustainability. The review was delivered to Council in December 2023 and Council adopted a Financial Sustainability Action Plan on 1 May 2024.

The Strategy and supporting Action Plan have the following five key objectives:

1. Expenditure is managed to ensure the limited funds are controlled and spent effectively.
2. Council operations are effective, efficient, and lean - delivering value for money to the community.
3. Council assets are strategically managed across their entire lifecycle and asset management capability is continually developed and improved.
4. Revenue sources are regularly reviewed to align with expenses and agreed service levels.
5. Sufficient unrestricted cash is generated as determined by Council policy.

Together, achievement of these objectives will ensure that Council is financially sustainable i.e. Council has sufficient funds to meet all of its resourcing and financial obligations, including the provision of agreed services and properly maintaining Council assets.

A number of strategies and programs identified in the Financial Sustainability Action Plan including the MidCoast Roads Strategy, Service Optimisation Program, and the Business Transformation Program are in various stages of development and implementation.

There will be six monthly progress reports to Council on the Action Plan.



Summary of our Progress

4.2.1 Use governance frameworks and processes to guide our decisions and to ensure council is accountable to the community

Council established the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) in 2018. The objective of ARIC is to provide independent assurance, oversight and assistance to Council on risk management, control, governance, internal audits, organisational performance and external responsibilities in an advisory capacity. Membership of the committee comprised of three independent experts as well as two Council representatives. The Committee's role is to review aspects of Council's operations and provide advice and guidance to Council for the purpose of improving the performance of its functions.

Key achievements of ARIC over the reporting period included:

- Understanding and implementing the new legislative requirements included in the Local Government (General) Amendment (Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees) Regulation 2023 and the Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW Guidelines
- Developing the MidCoast ARIC Framework that connects Council's plans and strategies with the work ARIC is undertaking
- Developing the four-year MidCoast ARIC Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plan that includes a Framework for ARIC reporting to Council and performance measures
- Undertaking an assessment of the strengths, opportunities and improvements of the ARIC and associated activities of Council.

4.2.2 Use business improvement, project management and risk management methodologies to ensure best outcomes

Council adopted a five-year Business Transformation Program (the Program) on 29 June 2022 as part of the Delivery Program 2022-26 and Operational Plan 2022-23 after it was placed on exhibition during May and June 2022.

At the core of the Program is one central purpose; becoming a community centric organisation that is easy to do business with/for our community and staff. This will be achieved through a wide variety of projects, delivering significant improvements to our customer experience. Internally we will align business processes and policies with our latest software, removing double handling and frustration for both our customers and staff.

The Program will provide organisation wide benefits to Council and will have a significant positive impact on the community and residents. By the end of the Program, our community can expect an improved customer experience when making requests or putting in applications to Council.

Council has included the following benefits from the transformation program in its adopted Financial Sustainability Action Plan:

- 2024-25 (Savings from initial components of the Program will be progressively identified and realised during 2024-25 with full financial year benefits accumulating from 2025-26)
- 2025-26 (\$1.131 million)
- 2026-27 (\$1.291 million)
- 2027-28 (\$2.149 million)
- 2028-29 (\$3.137 million)
- 2029-30 (\$3.537 million)
- 2030-31 (\$3.451 million)
- 2031-32 (\$3.368 million)
- 2032-33 (\$3.286 million)

4.2.2 Use business improvement, project management and risk management methodologies to ensure best outcomes (*continued*)

In 2024 Council developed a Project Management Framework to increase consistency in the delivery, predictability, financial management and success of capital and operational projects across the organisation. The Framework has been systemised as part of the Business Transformation Program.

Council has also developed a Service Optimisation Framework which will drive the ongoing review of Council's services and ensure that appropriate levels of service are provided to the community while still being financially sustainable to deliver.

Council has an adopted Risk Management Framework and Roadmap for the integration of risk management through its business activities and associated strategies, processes and systems. This includes project management, business continuity, climate change and operational risk profiles which all support informed decision making and processes improvement at all levels throughout the organisation.

4.2.3 Council manages our services and infrastructure in a sustainable manner to balance community need and expectations

Over the reporting period a number of key strategies were developed that identify the infrastructure needs of the community into the future. These include:

- The MidCoast Roads Strategy and associated Transport Assets Strategic Business Plan.
- The Our Water, Our Future 2050 Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy.
- The MidCoast Open Space and Recreation Strategy and supporting strategies including the Skatepark Strategy and Playspace Strategy.

The delivery of infrastructure and projects identified within these strategies will be dependent on available funding and prioritisation by Councillors in the development of each 4-year Delivery Program.

4.3 Council builds a healthy and community-focused culture that contributes to our success

Customer Request Management

As part of our Business Transformation Program a new customer request system was developed. This system improves the way customers make requests by streamlining the process and ensuring the correct department receives the request for response or action.

Since the implementation in December 2023 Council has received 40,934 requests through the system. On average the requests are completed within six days.

Customers can also opt in for automatic notifications on the progress of their request. In the seven months between December 2023 and June 2024, 33.35% of customers opted in for SMS notifications and 28.43% opted in for email notifications.



Summary of our Progress

4.3.1 Develop and grow a skilled, motivated, accountable and a 'high-performing' workforce

Council has a Workforce Management Strategy 2022-2026 that identifies a range of strategies and initiatives that will help us create and maintain a positive and meaningful employee experience.

The strategy has been developed to meet the following objectives:

- To position MidCoast Council as an 'employer of choice'
- To shape a positive organisational culture and move it towards our preferred culture
- To assist every employee to continually deliver on our organisational vision:
- To be a high performing organisation where we are always striving to be better; one where we work collaboratively and are trusted.

We continued to offer entry-level career opportunities for apprentices, graduates and trainees as part of our Employment Based Training Strategy.

Council provides training and development opportunities to support staff to improve and develop in their roles and coordinate the Employment-Based Training Scheme with further support for development provided through Council's "LEAD" and "Manager Leadership" programs.

4.3.2 Provide a safe, accessible, fair and equitable work environment

Following the Recruitment Review conducted by the Australian Network on Disability in October 2022, Council continued to progress implementation of actions identified in the Review. The Human Resources team has been investigating options to increase the number of applications from people with disability including 'The Field' AI platform. While this format is currently not compatible with Council's systems, other strategies are being investigated in the pursuit of Council's Equal Employment Opportunity objectives.

Council's "Women Rising" program was established to support and mentor careers of high potential female talent.

4.3.3 Provide the community with an accessible, responsive and efficient customer experience

The community can access face to face customer service at any of our five customer service points, including Services Australia and Service NSW at the Gloucester customer service point. The Forster Civic Centre opened to the public in October 2023 and included a new customer service point. Customers can also access specialist planning and development advice at our customer service centre at Yalawanyi Ganya.

There is now a single phone number that allows the community to access Council's call centre during opening hours. 103,000 calls were received over the 2022-2024 reporting period.

A customer request system was introduced in December 2023 that allows the community to request information or a service and report an issue 24/7, even from a mobile device.

4.4 We encourage community and civic leadership



Empowering Community Groups

In March 2023, Council facilitated workshops to assist and educate community groups and organisations in the preparation of grant applications.

The workshops were free to attend and covered topics including making local connections, identifying opportunities, managing change, effective leadership and funding opportunities.

Attendees were informed of effective ways to work with their community, create partnerships, collaborate, build competency within their organisation and plan for the future.

The workshops aimed to provide long lasting benefits to MidCoast communities by providing education that can assist with strengthening an organisation's innovation, processes, and resources.

They were also a learning opportunity where attendees could benefit from networking with others who have the shared goal of improving the sustainability and liveability of the MidCoast.

Summary of our Progress

4.4.1 Inform, educate and empower community groups and leaders to respond and adapt to challenges and change

Committees and Reference Groups are an important way that Council works with community members to help deliver on the outcomes identified in the CSP. Over the reporting period, Council continued to work collaboratively with the following community-based groups

- Aboriginal Reference Group
- Arts and Creative Industries Reference Group
- Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group
- Community Resilience and Disaster Recovery Reference Group
- Heritage Reference Group
- Destination Management Plan Review Reference Group.
- MidCoast Koala Reference Group
- Local Traffic Committee

4.4.2 Identify and participate in initiatives for regional cooperation and collaboration

Council is a member of The Hunter Joint Organisation where it collaborates with nine other Hunter councils including Cessnock City Council, Dungog Shire Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, Maitland City Council, Muswellbrook Shire Council, City of Newcastle, Port Stephens Council, Singleton Council, and Upper Hunter Shire Council.

The Hunter Joint Organisation's statutory mandate includes identifying key regional strategic priorities, advocating for these priorities, and building collaborations around these priorities with other levels of government, industry and the community.

The Mayor and General Manager advocate through their association with the Hunter Joint Organisation, Country Mayors Association and through their attendance at the National General Assembly, Local Government New South Wales Conferences and the Local Government New South Wales Rural and Regional Summit.

Community Outcome 4 - Challenges and Future Opportunities

Financial sustainability – Financial sustainability is a challenge across local government broadly. In particular, the recent sustained period of inflation growth, and increases exceeding inflation in material costs for infrastructure projects, combined with the constraints of rate pegging, have placed increased pressure on Council's bottom line. Balancing the service level expectations of the community within available budgets continues to be a challenge. Further commentary on financial sustainability is made on page 62 'Financial Sustainability Review and Strategy' on and page 70 'Financial Performance Overview'.

Managing risk - Climate risks for Council were reviewed as part of the periodic review of Council's Risk Management Framework in June 2024. Cyber security is a high priority risk for Council. Although Council has implemented improvements to increase Council's cyber security posture, work will need to continue into the future.

Delivering, managing and maintaining a growing asset base – Work continued on developing asset management plans across key areas of Council infrastructure. The challenge remains in funding the necessary maintenance of our growing asset base to ensure that assets do not deteriorate prematurely, thereby requiring more costly replacement.

Skill shortage - Like many regional councils, MidCoast Council continues to face a skills shortage in key areas of its operations. Council continued to implement action plans to develop and grow a skilled, motivated, accountable and high performing workforce. Training from within included leadership programs and recruitment of trainees and graduates.

Effectively engaging with our community – Connecting with hard to reach groups remains a challenge when engaging with the broader community, particularly on high level strategies and long-term planning. We continue to work on improving how we do this and are constantly reviewing and implementing changes to our approach to maximise feedback from all sections of the community to inform our decision making.

Financial Performance Overview

Financial performance within the Community Strategic Plan is identified in Strategic Objective 4.2 – *Council demonstrates good governance and financial management to ensure decisions and transactions are ethical, efficient, safe and fair.*

This is measured against five indicators as outlined in the table below along with the results at 30 June 2024. The financial indicators are taken from the draft 2023-24 Financial Statements that are currently subject to audit.

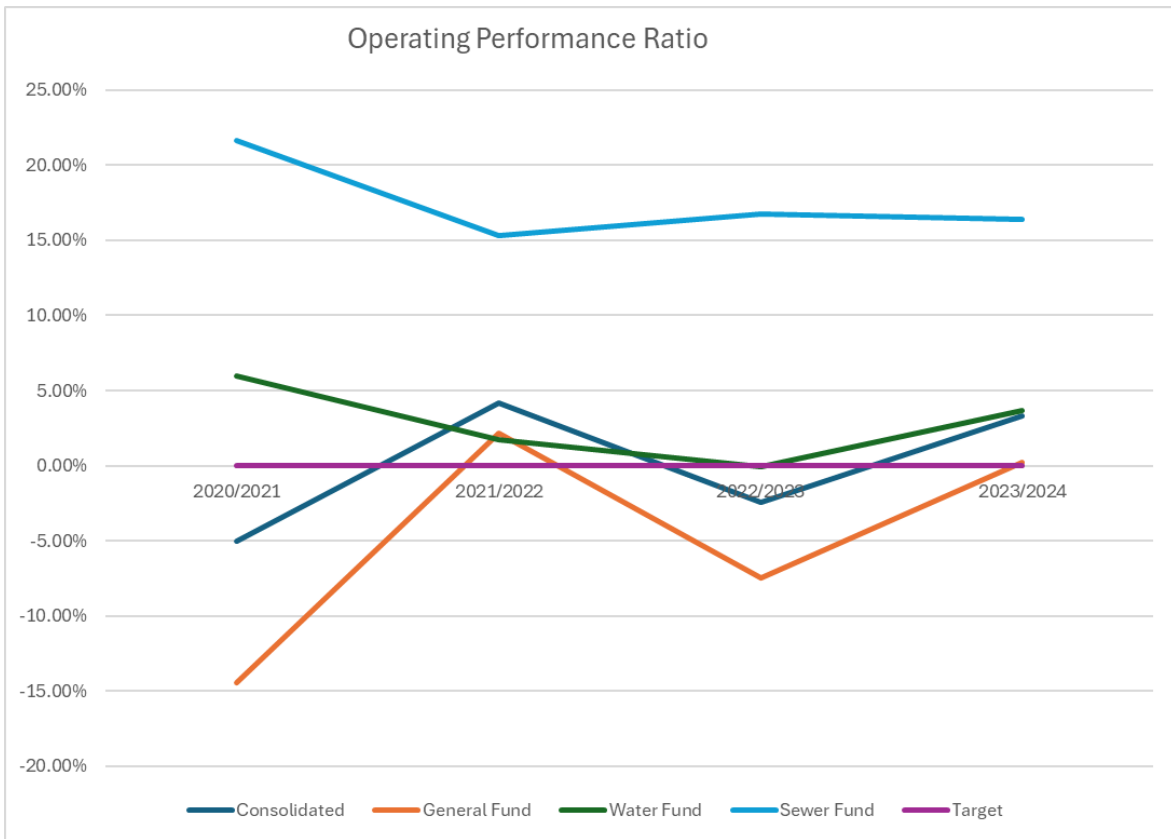
Performance Indicator / measure	Source	Baseline	Target	Performance Results 2023-24
Operating performance ratio	MidCoast Council Annual Financial Statements	-5.00%	>0.00%	3.33%
Debt service cover ratio	MidCoast Council Annual Financial Statements	1.77x	>2.00x	4.16x
Infrastructure backlog ratio	MidCoast Council Annual Financial Statements	4.01%	<2.00%	10.04% ²
Building & infrastructure renewal ratio	MidCoast Council Annual Financial Statements	94.46%	≥100.00%	115.59%
Community satisfaction with financial management*	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey	63%	Increase	54%

(Note: The baseline for the financial indicators above is from the 2020-21 audited Financial Statements)

² The large increase in this indicator reflects a change in the condition rating of infrastructure assets that is used in the calculation of this ratio. The baseline measure is based on cost to bring assets to a condition rating of 3 – Satisfactory. This was amended in the 2022-2023 Financial Statements to a condition rating of 2 – Good. This is an Office of Local Government requirement unless Council has agreed a different condition rating with its community through a community engagement exercise.

To better understand these results, it is important to understand that Council operates three separate funds (general, water and sewer) and the financial results of each are consolidated to give the ratios identified above. The separate accounting for the Water and Sewer operations of Council is a legislative requirement.

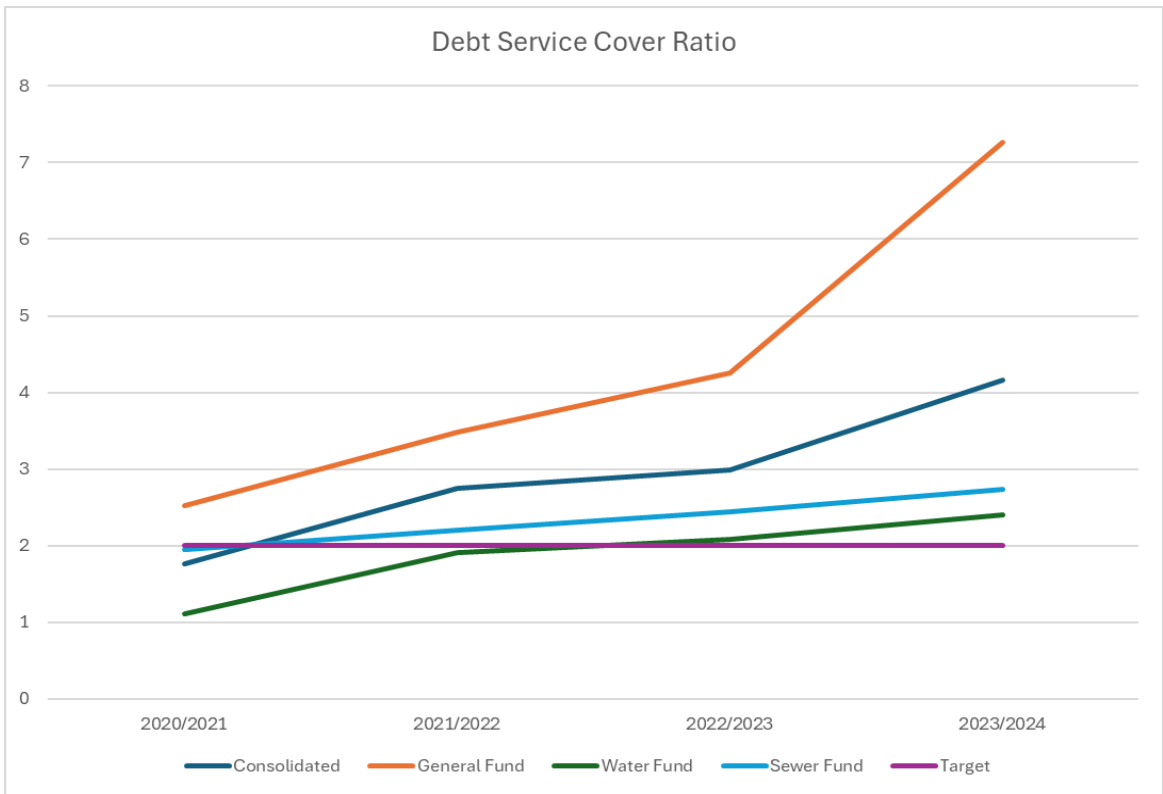
The series of charts included below highlight the annual performance for each measure on a consolidated basis and on a fund level basis. This provides additional information on the strengths and challenges of each Fund.



The Operating Performance ratio is a core measure of Council’s financial sustainability. It measures Council’s ability to contain operating expenditure within operating revenue. The Office of Local Government benchmark is that Council should record a breakeven operating position or better (over 0%).

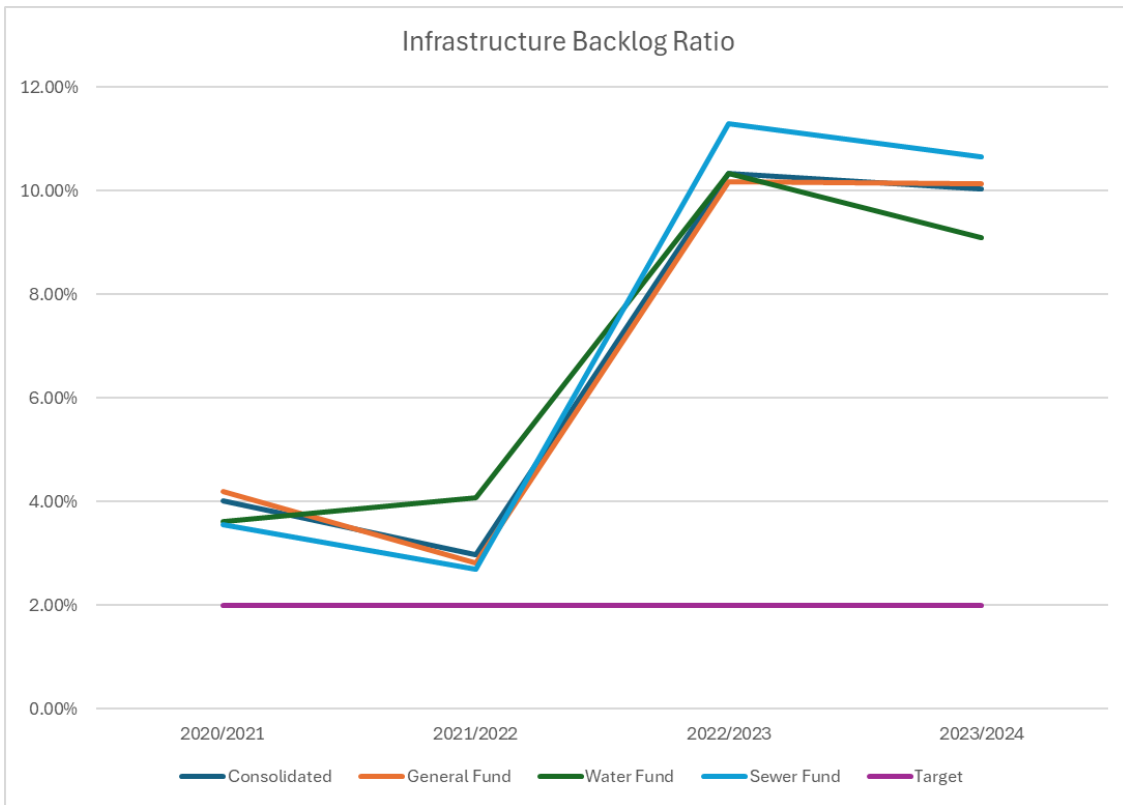
The chart shows that Council’s General Fund has and is experiencing challenges in meeting the required benchmark on a consistent basis. These results have confirmed the projections contained within the Long-term Financial Plan and reinforce why Council engaged the AEC Group in 2023 to undertake an independent Financial Sustainability Review.

The Water Fund continues to record small positive results while the Sewer Fund is generating a healthy annual result for this indicator.



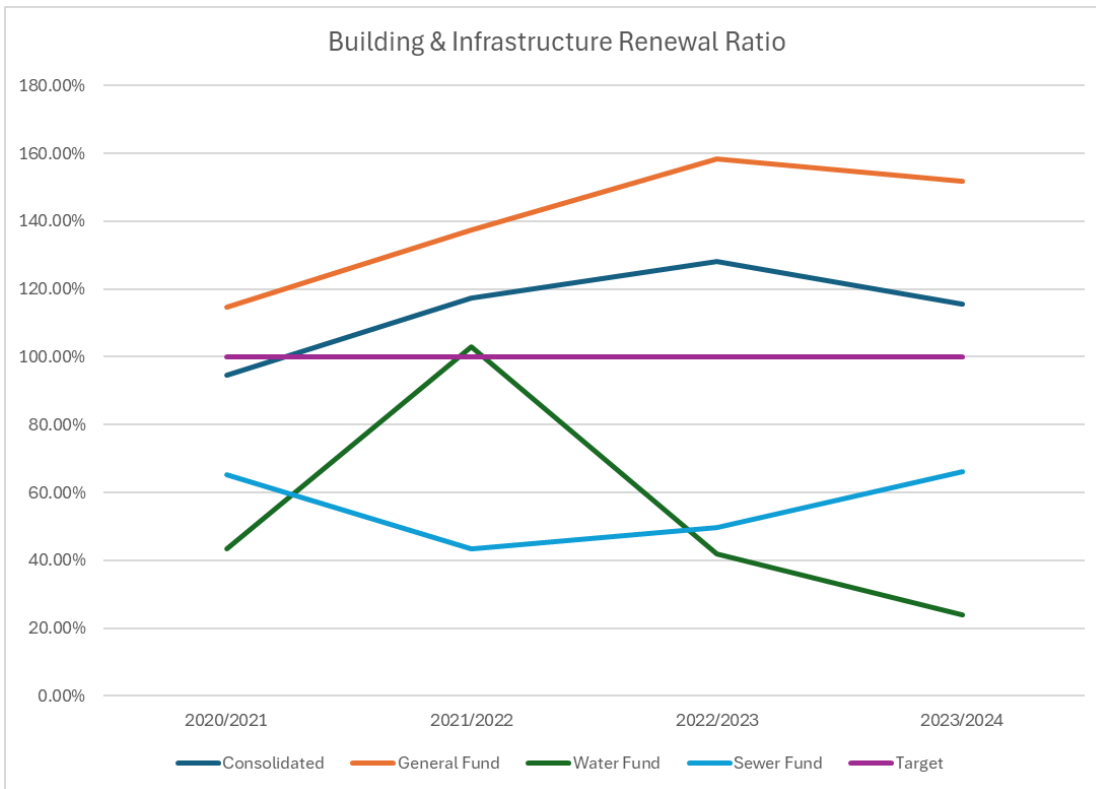
The Debt Service Cover ratio measures the availability of operating cash to service debt including interest, principal and lease payments. The Office of Local Government benchmark is greater than 2 (i.e. Council has \$2 or more of available operating cash to meet every \$1 of debt that is due).

The chart above shows that the General Fund is in a strong position in respect of this indicator. Both the Water and Sewer Fund are meeting the benchmark. The Water Fund continues to record results just above the benchmark and this is reflective of the large (but decreasing) debt that this Fund carries. This is related to major capital works programs carried out a number of years ago that were funded by loan borrowings.



The Infrastructure Backlog ratio shows what proportion the infrastructure backlog is against the total value of a Council’s infrastructure. The benchmark is less than 2%.

As indicated above this ratio is impacted by the change in underlying condition on which the indicator is calculated. However (after recalculating the ratios on the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 basis) the underlying trend has been positive with a gradual decrease over time in all Funds.



The Building & Infrastructure Renewal ratio assesses the rate at which assets are being renewed against the rate at which they are depreciating. The benchmark is greater than 100%.

The General Fund asset renewal position has benefited from a large influx of government grants that have targeted our road network. This has allowed Council to address asset renewal requirements in excess of the benchmark.

The ongoing results for the Water and Sewer Funds are being addressed through the consideration of asset data and review of resource allocations to ensure that funding is being allocated to achieve the optimal asset outcome.

Community Satisfaction with Financial Management Measure

Council measure for this indicator has decreased following the completion of the 2023 Satisfaction Survey.

It is important to note that the underlying question the Community Satisfaction Survey is measuring is generally a reference to how Council spends its funds and the priorities it sets not financial reporting and financial statements.

Financial Performance - Current and Future Actions

Council adopted a Long-term Financial Plan in June 2022 and has completed an annual review of that initial plan in June 2023 and June 2024.

Those reviews confirmed the underlying challenges that faced the Council during its term and into the future, particularly in respect of asset management. Each iteration of the LTFP indicated that Council was not generating sufficient funds to meet the optimal asset management requirements of its asset base and as such its long-term financial sustainability was under threat.

Council took action on several fronts to address this challenge. It requested that a Roads Strategy be developed and that a Financial Sustainability Review be undertaken to quantify the challenge and to provide options for the future. It also established an Asset Advisory Committee to provide strategic oversight of:

1. Councils adopted Asset Management Strategy and any revisions.
2. Councils Operational Property Portfolio and commercial property reserve established by Resolution 346/2023.
3. Other strategic property asset issues to improve operating performance and financial sustainability.

The AEC Group was engaged in 2023 to conduct this independent Financial Sustainability Review and provided their report to Council in December 2023. Council reviewed the Final Report and recommendations and developed a Financial Sustainability Action Plan 2024-2027 which was adopted in May 2024.

This Action Plan has the following goal and objectives:

MidCoast Council aims to be financially sustainable. This means having sufficient funds to meet all of our resources and financial obligations, including the provisions of agreed services and properly maintaining our assets.

It also means:

- a) Being able to maintain infrastructure (physical assets) over the long term for our future generations.
- b) Having sufficient cash reserves to accommodate unexpected financial events.

Objective 1: Expenditure is managed to ensure that limited funds are controlled and spent effectively.

Objective 2: Council operations are effective, efficient, and lean – delivering value for money to the community.

Objective 3: Council assets are strategically managed across their entire lifecycle and asset management capability is continually developed and improved.

Objective 4: Revenue sources are regularly reviewed to align expenses and agreed service levels.

Objective 5: Generate sufficient unrestricted cash as determined by Council policy.

In tandem with the engagement with AEC Group, a Roads Strategy was developed and presented to Council in May 2024. The Roads Strategy outlines what would be required to improve our road network condition and meet the community's expectations. It contains more than 50 recommendations that improve and develop the maturity of Council's road asset management systems, processes and actions.

Performance Results

Community Outcome 1: A resilient and socially connected community

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2023-24
1.1 We celebrate our history, culture, creativity and diversity	The MidCoast community is harmonious, cohesive and inclusive*	46% of residents Agree	Increase	38% of residents agree
	There is a good range of opportunities for cultural and artistic activities and expression*	54% of residents Agree	Increase	49% of residents agree
	Community satisfaction rate for festival and events programs*	85%	Maintain	82%
	Community satisfaction rate with heritage sites protected and maintained*	86%	Maintain	81%

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Number of events hosted at the Manning Entertainment Centre	119 (2023) 54 (2024)
Number of exhibitions hosted by the Manning Regional Art Gallery	24 (2023) 20 (2024)
Number of events hosted by the Manning Regional Art Gallery	187 (2023) 184 (2024)
Number of exhibitions, events and programs that celebrate First Nations Culture supported by Council	11 (2023) 12 (2024)
Number of Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group meetings held	3 (2023) 3 (2024)

Community Outcome 1: A resilient and socially connected community (continued)

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2023-2024
1.2 We have access to a wide range of services and activities that contribute to the wellbeing of all members of our community	There is a good range of leisure and recreation opportunities*	66% of residents Agree	Increase	57% of residents Agree
	Community satisfaction rate with youth activities*	72%	Maintain	64%
	Community satisfaction rate with library services*	97%	Maintain	93%
	People have fair opportunity to participate in community life*	67% of residents Agree	Increase	62% of residents Agree

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Percentage of Disability Inclusion Action Plan legislative requirements met	100% (2023 and 2024)
Library visitation rate per capita (visits per person per year)	2.5 (2023) 2.6 (2024)

Community Outcome 1: A resilient and socially connected community (continued)

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2023-2024
1.3 We work towards being a sustainable, resilient and socially connected community	There is a good range of community groups and support networks for residents*	66% of residents Agree	Increase	53% of residents Agree
	Living in the LGA gives you a sense of living in a community*	68% of residents Agree	Increase	58% of residents Agree
	Community satisfaction rate with Emergency Management*	88%	Maintain	84%

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Number of community events / training opportunities hosted, or supported per year	149 (2023) 52 (2024)
Number of interagency recovery meetings	36 (2023) 10 (2024)
Local Emergency Management Plan compliant with legislation	100% (2023 and 2024)

Community Outcome 1: A resilient and socially connected community (continued)

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2023-2024
1.4 We protect the health and safety of our communities	Meeting Australian Drinking Water Guidelines	Microbiological >99% Physical >99% Chemical >95%	Maintain	Maintained
	Community satisfaction rate with sewerage services*	92%	Maintain	91%
	Community satisfaction rate with stormwater drainage*	74%	Maintain	72%
	Residents feel safe using public facilities*	68% of residents Agree	Increase	60% of residents Agree
	Community satisfaction rate with Water Quality*	89%	Maintain	84%
	Sporting facilities in the area meet our needs*	70% of residents Agree	Maintain	62% of residents Agree

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Compliance to Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWF) for monitoring program sites	100% (2023 and 2024)
Compliance with Airport Safety Standards as audited by CASA (Civil Aviation Safety Authority) met	100% (2023 and 2024)
On-site sewage management high-risk systems, (systems within proximity to aquaculture sites) that are regularly inspected at a frequency based on risk	100% (2023 and 2024)
Level of interment compliance with NSW Public Health requirements	100% (2023 and 2024)

Community Outcome 2: An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments

Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2023-24
Waterway report card scores	Grade A = 4 Grade B = 11 Grade C = 3	Maintain or Improve	Grade A = 3 Grade B = 10 Grade C = 8 <i>(Note: These are the 2023 results which are the latest results at June 2024. There are 3 additional waterways now monitored and all are at a grade 'C')</i>

Waterways report scores are given for algae and water clarity. Overall water clarity was quite high in most waterways, however due to algae growth there was a decline in score for some locations.

Higher algal growth strongly influenced the grades in 2023, this is likely due to lower rainfall than the previous year which resulted in improved water clarity, less turnover of water within the waterbodies and thus more light, and more time for algae to grow.

Refer to our [Waterway and Catchment Report Card | Have Your Say \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/waterway-and-catchment-report-card) for the full report card.

Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2023-24
Threatened species status in MidCoast	Plants 43 Mammals 30 Frogs 8 Reptiles 2 Sea turtles 3 Birds 52 Insects 1 Fish 5	Maintain	Plants 45 Mammals 30 Frogs 7 Reptiles 2 Sea turtles 4 Birds 69 Insects 1 Fish 4

Note: A decrease in the figures in the above table could indicate that either the species are no longer threatened, or alternatively have become extinct.

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Proportion of bushland reserves under weed control program	42% (2023) 53% (2024)
Landholders participating in land for wildlife and other conservation programs	125 (2023) 399 (2024)

Community Outcome 2: An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments *(continued)*

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
2.2 We understand and manage environment and climate change risks and impacts	Community satisfaction rate with Climate change*	62%	Increase	68%
2.3 Council works towards net zero emissions	Recycling bins contamination rate of yellow recycling bins that are contaminated with non-recyclable material	11%	Decrease	11%
	Red waste bin recycling or organic material of red recycling bins that include organic or recycling material <i>(materials that could have been diverted)</i>	15% (12% recycling material, 3% organic material)	10-11%	12%
	Waste diverted from landfill	37.4 % per capita	Increase	47.32% per capita
	Dwellings with Solar Panels in MidCoast	35.3%	Increase	Approx. 44.7% of dwellings
	CO ₂ emissions from Council's fleet (light commercial vehicles, passenger vehicles and trucks)	New Measure Baseline	New Measure	3,324 tonnes

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Percentage of Council's passenger vehicle fleet that is comprised of non-ICE (hybrid, PHEV, BEV, FCEV) vehicles	10% (2023) 14% (2024)

Community Outcome 2: An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments (*continued*)

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
2.4 We have an adequate and reliable water supply	Water consumption does not exceed water production	100%	Maintain	100%
	Community satisfaction rate for Water service*	80%	Increase	84%

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Compliance to Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for monitoring program sites	100% (2023 and 2024)
Percentage of identified water asset renewals delivered per the Water Asset Renewals Program	100% (2023 and 2024)

Community Outcome 2: An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments *(continued)*

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
2.5 We balance the needs of our natural and built environment	Council's planning and leadership are contributing to a sustainable environment in the MidCoast LGA*	28% of residents agree	Increase	25% of residents agree
2.6 We have a diverse range of housing options	Community satisfaction rate with residential development*	79%	Maintain	64%
	Residents feel able to afford a reasonable standard of housing in this area*	67%	Increase	49%
	Dwellings in MidCoast region <i>Medium density = townhouses and 1-2 storey flats and units</i> <i>High density = 3+ storey flats, units and apartments</i>	Separate house - 36,923 Medium density - 7,006 High density - 1,790	Increase	Separate house - 40,030 Medium density - 7,136 High density - 1,935 <i>Results from 2021 Census</i>

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Median determination time for small-scale Development Applications	51 days (2023) 45 days (2024)
Average days taken to process Fast Track planning applications	12 days (2023 and 2024)
Amount of building approvals	\$376 M (2023) \$440 M (2024)

Community Outcome 3: A thriving and strong economy

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
3.1 MidCoast is a great place to visit, work and invest	Planning for local economic growth and development is adequate*	35% of residents agree	Increase	25% of residents agree
	Community satisfaction rate with Economic development*	64%	Increase	61%
	Community satisfaction rate for support for local business*	70%	Increase	69%
	Gross Regional Product	\$3.433 billion	Maintain or increase	\$4.79 billion
	Gross Regional Product per capita	\$36,026	Maintain or increase	\$48,922
	Local jobs	30,250	Maintain or increase	35,546
	Persons aged 15+ with University Qualifications	11%	Increase	12%
	Persons aged 15+ with trade qualifications (certificate)	24%	Increase	26%
	Local business	6,951	Maintain or increase	7,484
	Visitation rate	2.18 million	Maintain	2.18 million
	Total visitors spend	\$612 million	Increase by 4%	\$811 million
	Average overnight visitors spend	\$453	Increase by 1.5%	\$564
	NBN coverage in MidCoast	Hawks Nest, Tea Gardens, Karuah and Stroud currently do not have NBN coverage	NBN coverage in Hawks Nest, Tea Gardens, Karuah and Stroud	NBN coverage now in Hawks Nest, Tea Gardens, Karuah and Stroud

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Number of events sponsored and supported by Council (Community and local events, events and festivals, regionally significant events)	93 (2023) 71 (2024)
Number of professionals supported by the Community Connector Program to relocate to the area	86 (2024)

Community Outcome 3: A thriving and strong economy (continued)

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
3.2 Our villages and business precincts are dynamic commercial spaces	Shops and services in shopping areas meet residents' needs*	66% of residents agree	Increase	52% of residents agree

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Businesses registered in the Vibrant Spaces program	>250 (2023) >300 (2024)

Community Outcome 3: A thriving and strong economy *(continued)*

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
3.3 Our integrated transport networks meet the needs of our businesses and the community	Community satisfaction with local roads*	43%	Increase	26%
	Community satisfaction with road safety*	85%	Maintain	79%
	Community satisfaction with maintaining local bridges*	75%	Maintain	77%
	Community satisfaction with maintaining footpaths*	61%	Increase	60%
	Public transport is adequate for your needs*	39% of residents agree	Increase	29% of residents agree

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Sealed roads resurfaced	223,000m ² (2023) 252,334m ² (2024)
Unsealed roads re-sheeted by MidCoast Council	84km (2023) 94.5km (2024)
Number of bridges replaced by MidCoast Council	6 (2023) 6 (2024)

Community Outcome 4: Strong leadership and good governance

Strategic Objectives	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
4.1 The community has confidence in Council decisions and planning for the future	Community satisfaction with engaging the community in planning*	60%	Increase	58%
	Council plans well to help secure the community's long-term future*	28% of residents Agree	Increase	23%
	Community satisfaction with long-term planning for the MidCoast Local Government Area*	71%	Increase	61%
	Community satisfaction with provision of Council information to the community*	60%	Increase	61%

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
People involved in community engagement activities	2,477 (2023) 8,625 (2024)
People registered for Council's online engagement platform	2,533 (2023) 3,721 (2024)
Council eNewsletter subscriptions	4,911 (2023) 8,653 (2024)
Average Councillor attendance at meetings	93.94% (2023) 85.06% (2024)
Average Councillor attendance at workshops and pre-briefings	87.22% (2023) 79.40% (2024)

Performance Measures and results for outcome 4.2 relate to financial performance – please see page 70 for results and financial performance overview.

Community Outcome 4: Strong leadership and good governance (continued)

Strategic Objectives	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
4.3 Council builds a healthy and community-focused culture that contributes to our success	Workforce turnover rates (excluding fixed term contract employees)	12.3%	10-12%	11.31% <i>(at 30 September 2024 excluding the transition of MidCoast assist staff to other service providers)</i>
	Unplanned absences (days/FTE)	8.24 days	Decrease	3.75 days
	Lost time injuries rate	0.62 claims per \$1M of wages	Maintain	0.23 claims per \$1M of wages
	Community satisfaction with the ease in which they were able to contact Council*	New	A target will be set once we have a baseline	74% of residents
	Community Satisfaction overall with the way their contact with a Council officer was handled*	New	A target will be set once we have a baseline	66% of residents who had contacted council

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Number of requests received through the new Customer Request Management System	40,934 <i>(September 2024)</i>
Percentage of customers utilising self-lodgement request process through new Customer Request Management System	18.58% <i>(August 2024)</i>

Community Outcome 4: Strong leadership and good governance (continued)

Strategic Objectives	Performance Indicator / measure	Baseline at 2021-22	Target	Performance Results 2022-2024
4.4 We encourage community and civic leadership	Community satisfaction with support for community groups*	83%	Increase	78%

Additional measures

Measure	Result for 2022-2024
Landowner permission letters issued to community groups to support grant applications	69 (2024)

