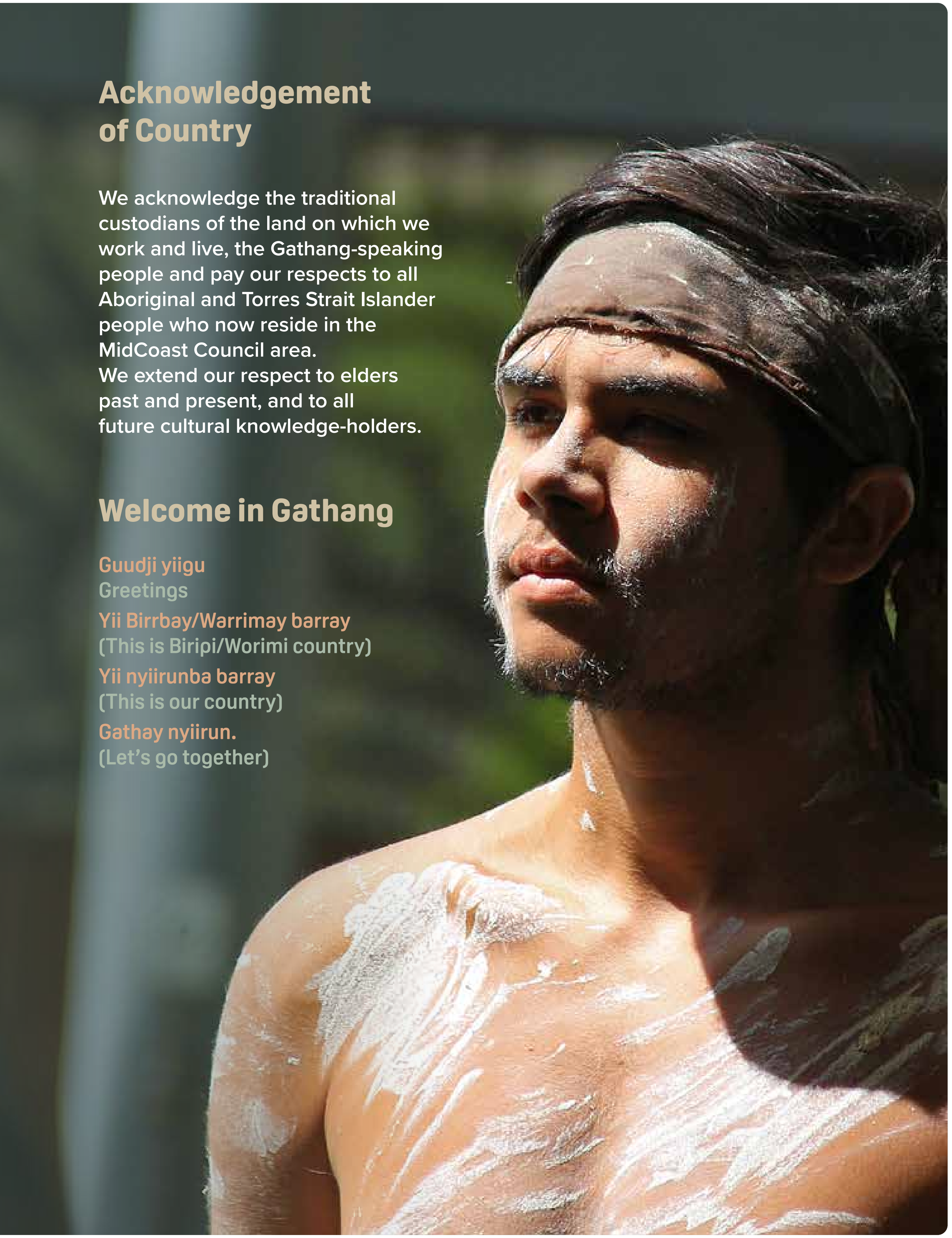
MIDCOAST 2035

Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035



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.

Welcome in Gathang

Guudji yiigu
Greetings

Yii Birrbay/Warrimay barray
(This is Biripi/Worimi country)

Yii nyiirunba barray
(This is our country)

Gathay nyiirun.
(Let's go together)

Contents

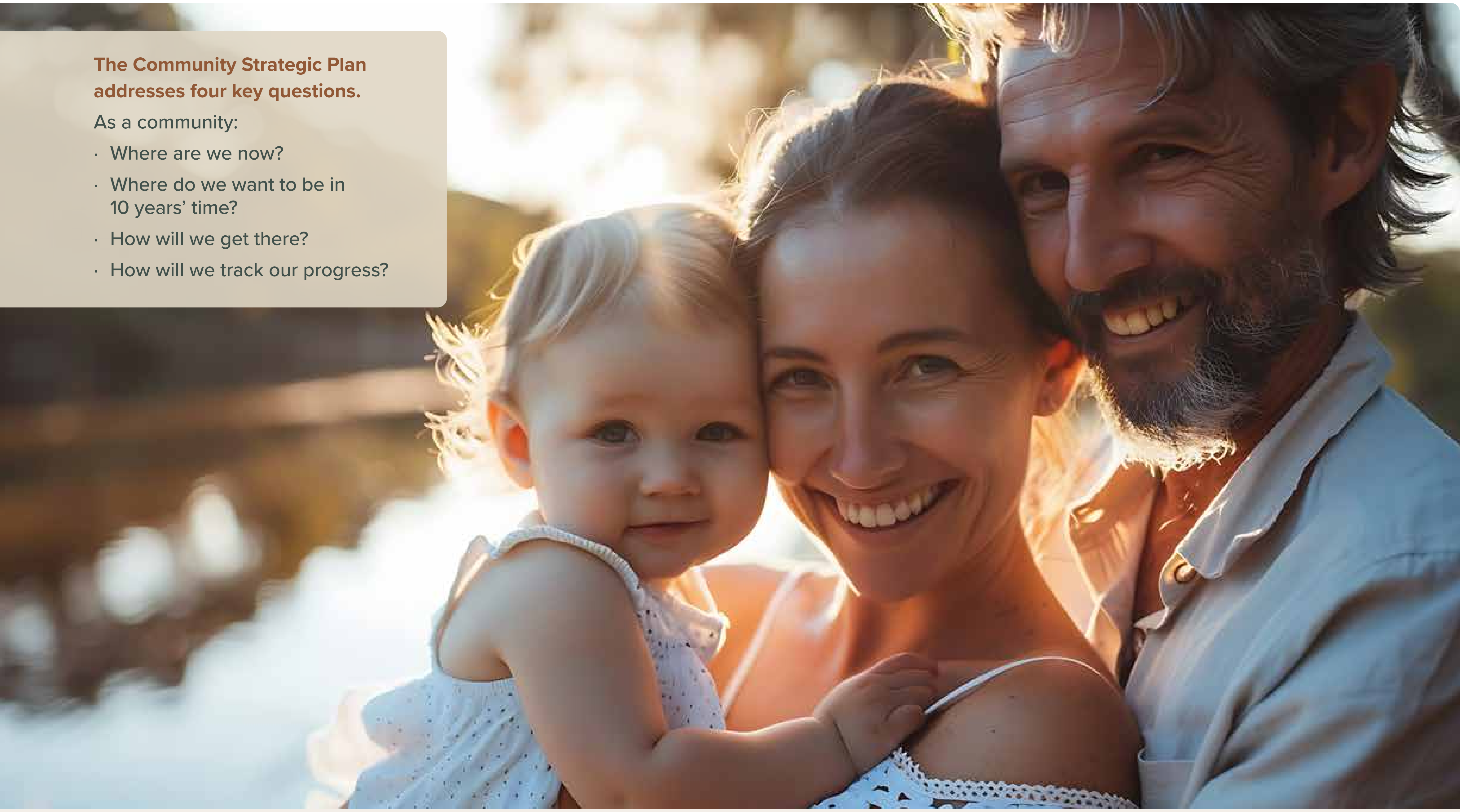
MidCoast 2035: Shared vision, shared responsibility

We all have a part to play in achieving the shared vision for the MidCoast, which is for everyone's benefit.

The Community Strategic Plan addresses four key questions.

As a community:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in 10 years' time?
- How will we get there?
- How will we track our progress?



Each council in NSW is required to develop a Community Strategic Plan on behalf of the community for its Local Government Area.

MidCoast 2035: Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility (*MidCoast 2035*) is the Community Strategic Plan for the MidCoast Local Government Area. It covers the 10 years from 2025-2035.

When *MidCoast 2035* refers to "we" and "our," it means the collective MidCoast community. This includes residents, businesses, landowners, not-for-profit and community organisations as well as all levels of government.

Our community's plan clearly sets out where we are heading and what we need to do to get there.

We can all use *MidCoast 2035* to guide the actions we take to create the MidCoast we want. We can also use it to help advocate for our needs to other levels of government.

Partnerships will be crucial to our success in creating the future we want for the MidCoast.

Social Justice Principles

We used the following social justice principles to guide the development of *MidCoast 2035*.

Equity - Decisions, priorities, and the allocation of resources are fair. This ensures we help those who need help the most.

Access - Everyone has fair access to services, resources, and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Participation - Everyone can have their say in decisions that affect their lives.

Equal rights - Everyone, regardless of background, has opportunities to take part in community life.

The Quadruple Bottom Line

The Quadruple Bottom Line ensures that planning and decision-making consider and balance four things:

Social and community – this aspect emphasises the wellbeing of residents and the community. It involves making sure everyone feels included and has equal access to services. It also means creating liveable communities where people can enjoy a range of cultural and physical activities and interact socially.

Environment – this aspect focuses on protecting and enhancing the environment including conserving natural resources, responding to climate change and building resilience to natural disasters.

Economic – this aspect looks at the financial health of the community and sustainability of the local economy. It involves creating jobs, supporting businesses and ensuring efficient use of resources.

Civic leadership – this aspect highlights the role of leaders in guiding and inspiring the community. It involves ethical decision-making, active participation in civic life and collaboration.

When we use the social justice principles and balance the quadruple bottom line, we create a solid foundation to reach our goals in ways that benefit us all.

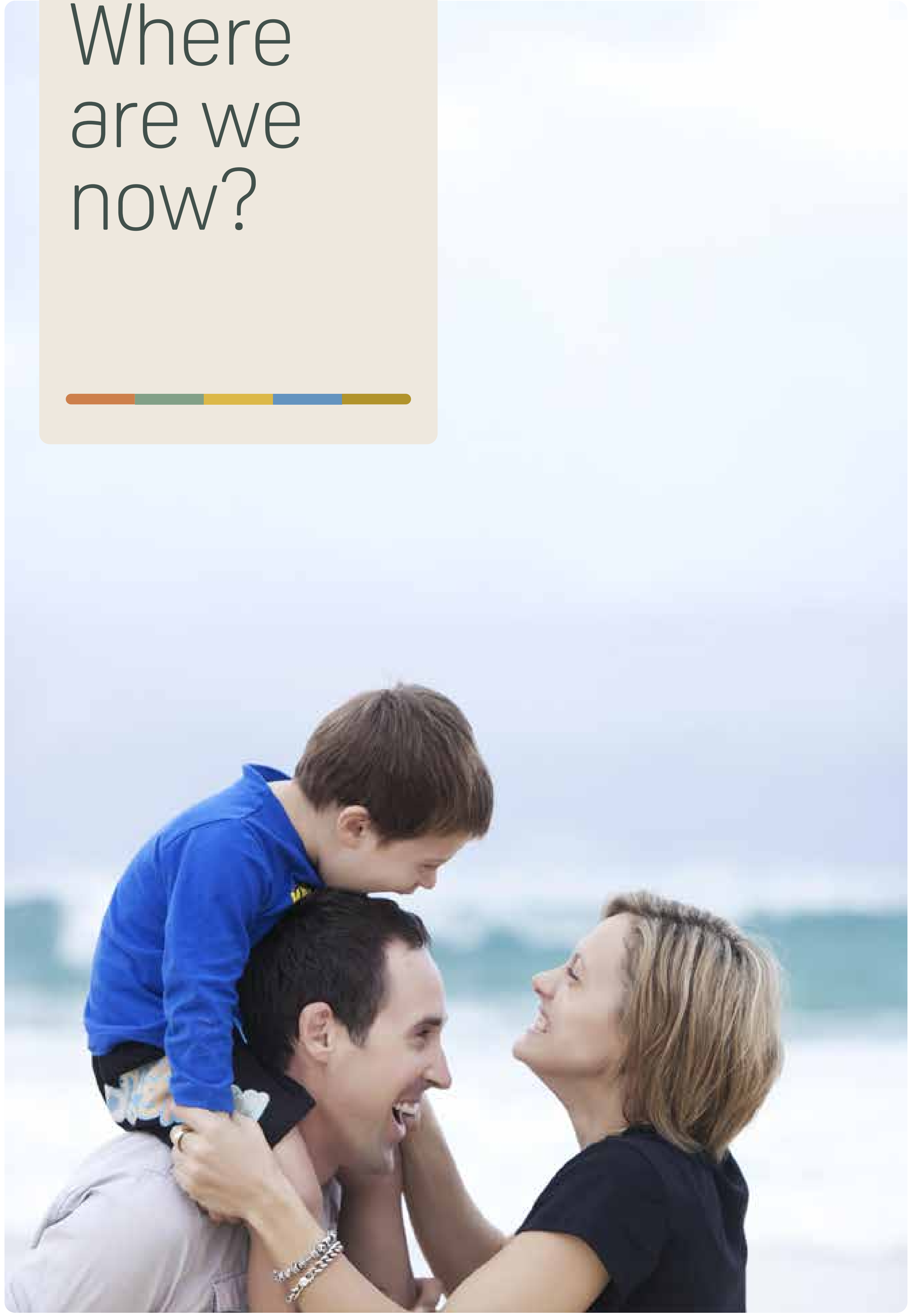
MidCoast 2035: Plan on a Page

Our Vision | Together we can make the MidCoast *even better*

The 'Plan on a Page' is an overview of where we want to be as a community in 10 years' time (our Vision and Community Outcomes) and how we will get there (Our Strategies). Turn to page 30 for more detail.

Our Community Outcomes – where we want to be in 10 years' time	Our Strategies – how we will get there
Our Wellbeing • We are a community where everyone is safe and can live a healthy, active life. • We support each other, and feel we belong. • We respect and celebrate our Aboriginal heritage, diverse cultures and histories, and value creativity in all its forms.	**W-1** - Improve public safety and the community's ability to prepare and respond to emergencies. **W-2** - Support the physical and mental health, and wellbeing of our community. **W-3** - Help everyone connect and take part in community life, particularly those who face challenges with social isolation. **W-4** - Acknowledge, respect and learn from our Aboriginal community to build trust and move forward together. **W-5** - Foster opportunities for artistic, cultural and creative expression, participation and celebration.
Our Natural Environment • Our natural environment is healthy and safeguarded for future generations. • We enjoy the lifestyle that our natural surroundings provide us. • We minimise our impact on the environment, and we can adapt to a changing climate.	**NE-1** - Protect our native flora, fauna and local ecosystems. **NE-2** - Protect and improve the health of our coastlines, waterways, wetlands and water catchments. **NE-3** - Manage our waste and reduce waste to landfill. **NE-4** - Conserve our natural resources and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. **NE-5** - Manage risks to our environment and communities from climate change and natural disasters.
Our Places & Infrastructure • Our towns and villages are attractive and engaging places to live. • We all have a safe place to call home, and we can grow without losing what we love about living here. • We have clean, reliable water and can travel safely and easily around the MidCoast.	**PI-1** - Provide safe, accessible and well-maintained community facilities, and vibrant streetscapes and public open spaces. **PI-2** - Deliver housing to meet demand including social, affordable and accessible housing options. **PI-3** - Respect the unique character, history and cultural heritage of our towns and villages, significant places and the natural environment. **PI-4** - Provide safe, secure and affordable water and sewerage services. **PI-5** - Provide a safe, reliable and well-maintained road and broader transport network with options for active and shared travel.
Our Economic Prosperity • The MidCoast is an ideal place to work, live, visit, and invest. • We all benefit from a diverse and resilient local economy that provides the businesses and services we need. • There are employment opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. Our young people can build a vibrant career right here. • Our workforce is ready for today's and tomorrow's employers.	**EP-1** - Support and develop local businesses and attract new businesses across a range of industries. **EP-2** - Develop and promote the MidCoast as a top destination for visitors, conferences and events. **EP-3** - Develop, attract and retain a skilled and diverse workforce.
Our Leadership • We are engaged in our future and collaborate to make positive change for the MidCoast. • We have confidence and trust in our elected representatives and community leaders. • Decisions are evidence-based and informed by our input. Decisions also balance the interests of current and future generations. • Together, all levels of government can deliver the facilities and services we need. • Our Council is financially sustainable.	**L-1** - Inform, engage and involve the community in projects and decision-making. **L-2** - Build our ability to deliver community outcomes through capacity building, growing partnerships, and advocating for funding, services and enabling infrastructure. **L-3** - Provide open and transparent leadership with a focus on clear decision-making processes and ongoing communication with the community. **L-4** - Deliver services to the community with a focus on customer service, efficiency, continuous improvement and long-term financial health.

Where are we now?



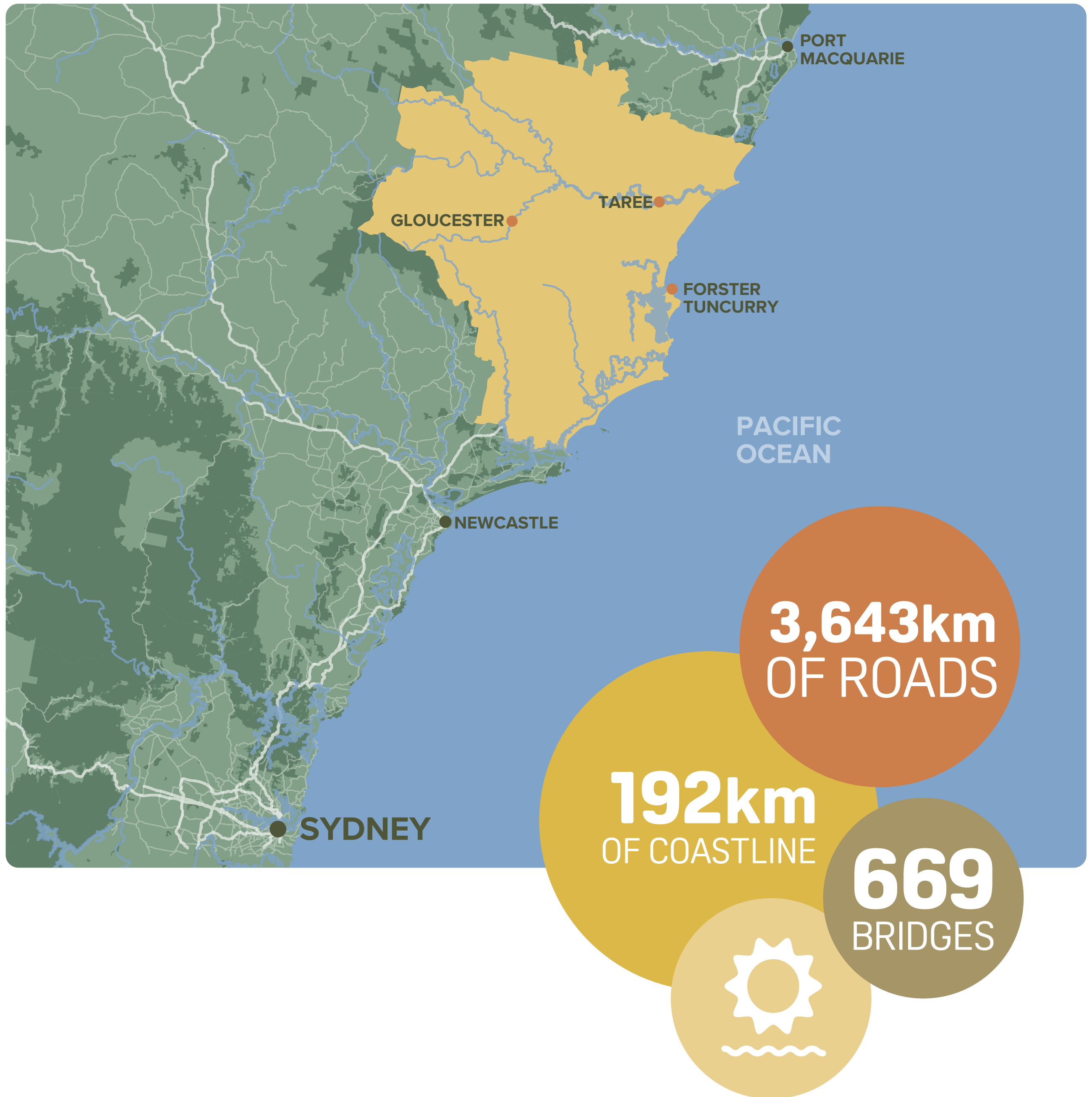
Our region

The MidCoast region is one of the largest Local Government Areas by land mass in NSW.

Our region on the mid-north coast of NSW spans an area of more than 10,000km^2. It covers over 30% of the Hunter region and 1.25% of NSW. The Biripi and Worimi people are the traditional owners of the land.

Our region is both large and diverse. It stretches from the Pacific Ocean in the east to the Great Dividing Range's escarpment to the west. There are vast national parks and green spaces in between.

The MidCoast is ideally located. It is around 3 hours' drive north of Sydney and 1.5 hours north of Newcastle via the Pacific Highway. The North Coast Rail Line connects Gloucester, Wingham and Taree to Sydney and Brisbane. Our road network exceeds 3,600km. As a comparison, the distance by road between Sydney and Perth is 3,848km. The Pacific Highway, The Bucketts Way, Thunderbolts Way and The Lakes Way are key routes for freight and tourism through our area.



Our natural environment

Our environment is known for its pristine waterways, striking landscapes and natural treasures

The region includes the Manning River Valley and the beautiful triple lake system of the Wallis, Smiths, and Myall Lakes (our own Great Lakes). Our lands are watered by 38 rivers, and 28 beaches dot our coastline. We can lay claim to having the tallest single drop waterfall in NSW - Ellenborough Falls with a drop of 200m.

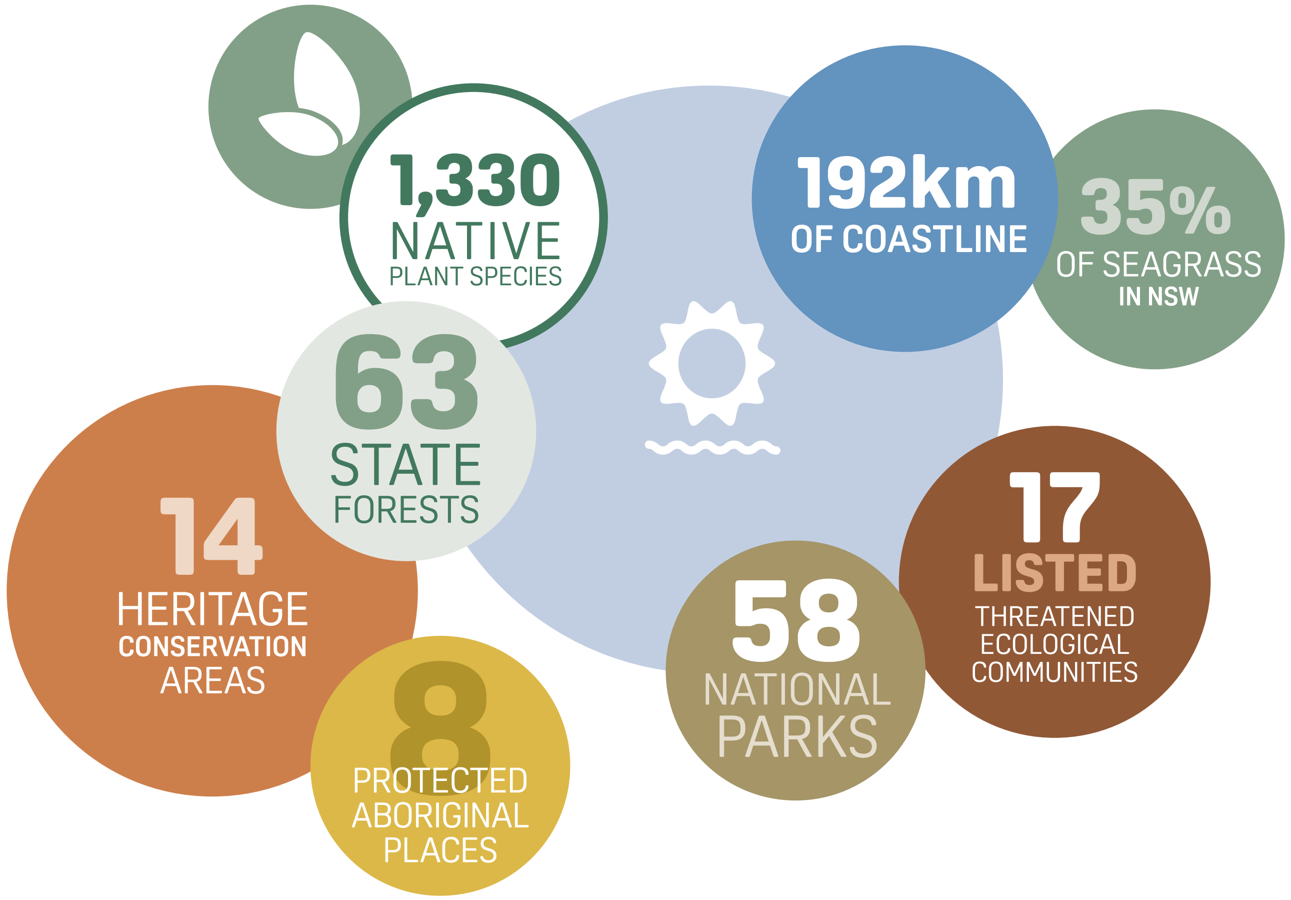
In the west of our region lie farmland, and the rugged, forested ranges of the Woko and Tapin Tops National Parks. The Barrington Tops National Park is part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia and is recognised as a World Heritage Area.

We have five wetlands of national significance including the Myall Lakes wetland, which is also internationally recognised.

Our landscape has a range of diverse habitats for both plants and animals, due to the different climates that exist across the MidCoast. Our region is home to many of the State's threatened plants and animals. It has species found nowhere else in the world, like the Manning River Helmeted Turtle and the Tuncurry Midge Orchid.

The recent natural disasters in the MidCoast have shown how vulnerable the area's natural environment is to extreme weather. These events have damaged local wildlife, ecosystems, and increased soil erosion and water pollution. To recover and adapt, we need to focus on conservation, restoring habitats, and sustainably managing our resources.

Our natural environment is a key contributor to our lifestyles, livelihoods, and wellbeing. Protecting it is an important focus, especially as we face more challenges in the future.



Where we live

We live in 195 towns, villages, and rural locations, across the MidCoast. Each has its own unique character and qualities.

We have two main population centres, Taree, and Forster-Tuncurry. Taree offers a range of services and facilities that are used across our region. These include the Manning Base Hospital, schools, sporting and entertainment facilities.

Forster-Tuncurry is ideally located between the coast and lakes. It is a popular spot for tourists and retirees. This has led to many shops, entertainment venues, and services being established in this area for both residents and visitors.

Rural and coastal centres support the main centres. Some, like Hallidays Point, Harrington and Old Bar are 'satellite suburbs' for the two main centres. Others are more self-reliant as they are further away from the larger centres. These centres include Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest, Gloucester and Wingham.

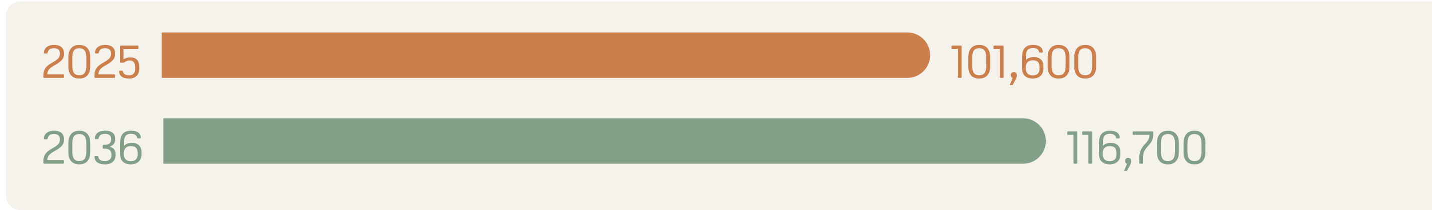
Our rural centres, like Gloucester and Wingham, are vital to the economy and local industry with their significant contributions from the agriculture and timber industries.

Older towns and villages like Taree, Gloucester and Stroud have an historic charm. They showcase European heritage in their town centres and older neighbourhoods. Early buildings and facilities like factories and other industrial buildings, local halls, memorials and railway stations provide a view into the past.

Who we are and how we are changing

The MidCoast is home to over 100,000 people. Our population is growing ...

It is estimated that around 101,600 people will be living in the MidCoast in 2025. By 2036, we expect an additional 15,100 people will be living here. Most of this growth is expected in or near our coastal villages and in the planned housing areas in North Tuncurry and Brimbin.

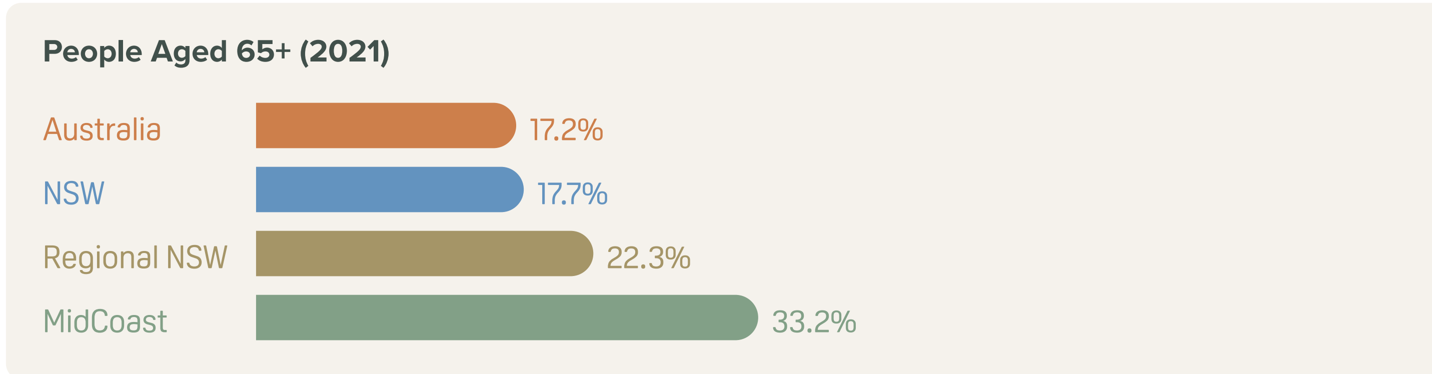


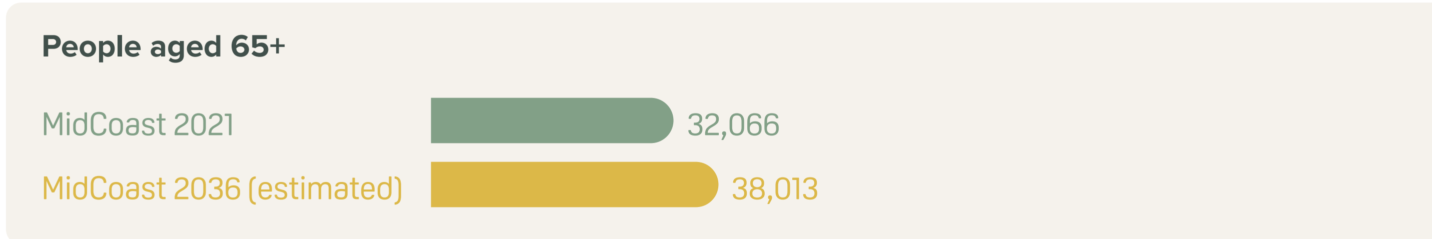
... and ageing

The MidCoast is a popular spot for retirees. Many move here from the Central Coast and Greater Sydney for a sea or tree change. We are also living longer. As a result, people aged over 55 made up over 45% of our population in 2021. The largest age group in the MidCoast in 2021 was 70 to 74 year-olds. We estimate that the number of people aged over 65 will grow by almost 19% from 2021 to 2036.

The median age of our population is 54 years, well above the National and State medians of 38 and 39 years. This makes the MidCoast population one of the oldest in NSW. The highest median age of 62 years is in the Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest community where 57% of people are aged over 55. By comparison, in Taree, only 35% of people are in this age group.

Our ageing community adds diversity and valuable experience to our community. It also strengthens our volunteer base. However, an ageing community also has implications for the delivery of health, housing and other services.





An estimated 3,000 people are living with dementia in the MidCoast. This ranks us 10th out of 128 Local Government Areas in NSW. In 30 years, it is expected that 2,360 more people will have dementia in the MidCoast.[1]

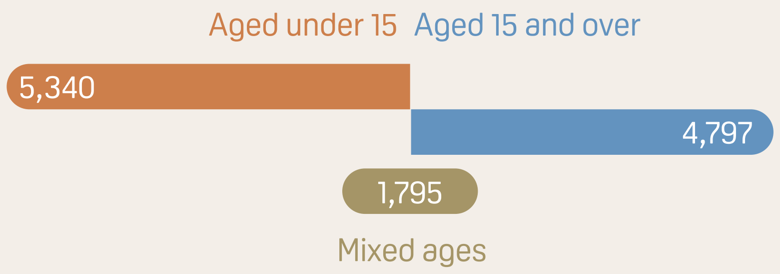
Note: The United Nations usually defines an ageing population as people aged 60 and over. However aging rates vary across individuals. So, it is hard to set a specific old age threshold. We have shown data relating to those aged 65+ years which recognises the age when residents can already or are close to being able to access the Age Pension – currently set at 67 years.

Our region is a popular place for raising young children ...

Families are an important and valued part of our community. Around 28% (almost 12,000) of households across the MidCoast include children.

15% of MidCoast population aged 0-14 years [2021]

Households with children [2021]

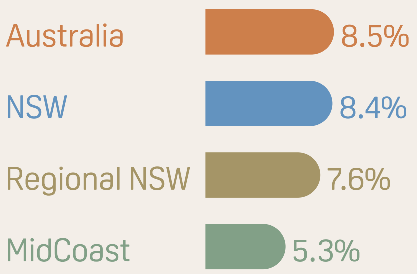


... however, we have a low percentage of young adults in our area

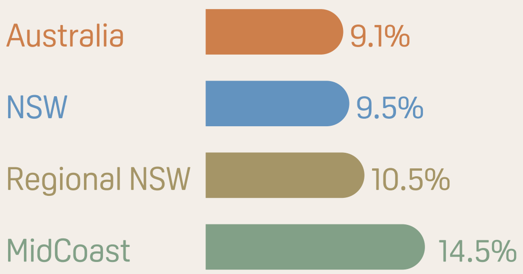
Less than 6% of our population is aged 18-24 years. This is less than the averages for Regional NSW, NSW, and Australia. Young people can struggle to find well-paying jobs in the region due to the lack of positions available that match their skills and aspirations. Educational opportunities in the region are improving; however, young people may find it hard to access vocational training or higher education opportunities without traveling long distances. This can limit their ability to gain the skills needed for better employment. They may need to leave the region for better tertiary education and job opportunities.

More young people aged 15-24 in the MidCoast are not working or studying compared to other parts of Australia.

People aged 18-24 (2021)



15-24 year-olds not engaged in the workforce or education (2021)



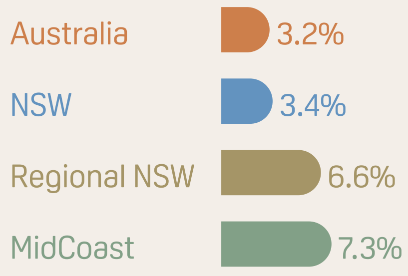
We have a significant and young Aboriginal population ...

Our region is home to two main Aboriginal groups: the Biripi in the north and the Worimi in the south and west. Gathang is the common traditional language for both peoples.

In our community 7.3% of the population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This is more than double the averages for NSW and Australia. Taree has the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who make up over 12% of the population there.

Over 51% of our Aboriginal population are under 24 years old, while just under 18% are over 55. In contrast, 45% of the total MidCoast population is aged over 55.

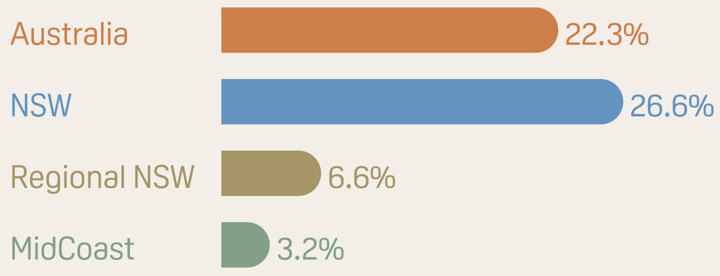
People who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (2021)

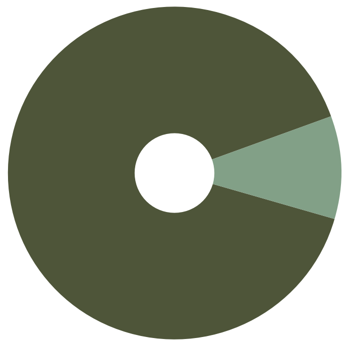


... and we have a small but diverse mix of cultures within our community

MidCoast has fewer immigrants and less cultural diversity than Regional NSW and NSW generally. Most residents were born in Australia. Around 1,900 people speak a language other than English at home.

Use a language other than English at home





10.1% of MidCoast population born overseas

Birthplace of non-English speakers (top 5 countries, 2021)	Languages other than English spoken at home (top 5 languages, 2021)
India	German
Philippines	Nepali
Nepal	Mandarin
China	Malayan
Germany	Thai

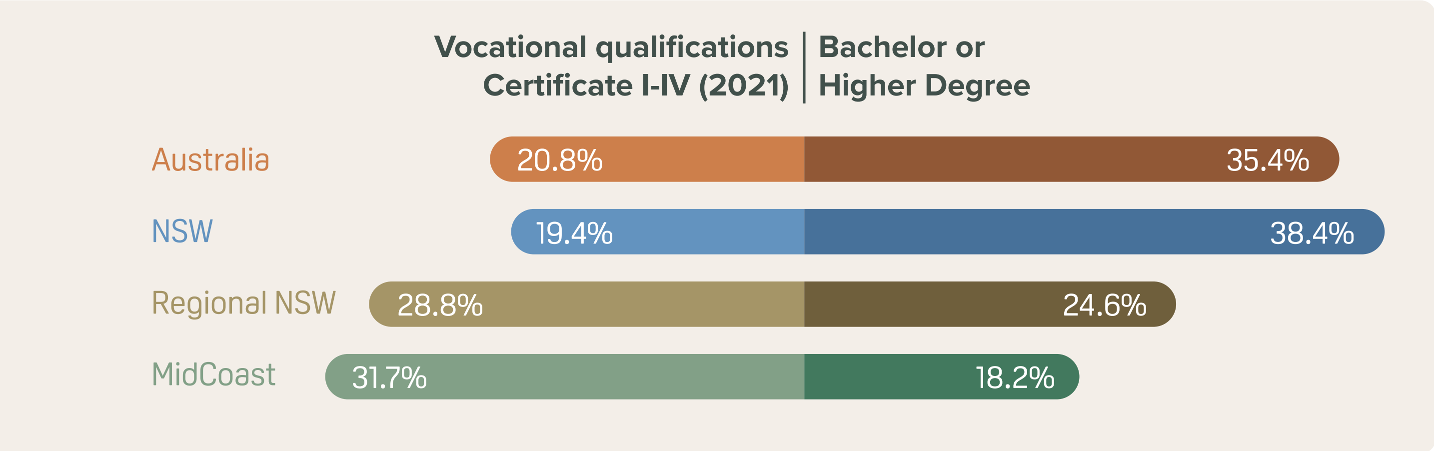
We have relatively low levels of university education ...

More people in low-income households work as labourers in the MidCoast than in any other job. In the future however there is likely to be a significant decline in demand for an unqualified labour force.

Projections produced by Victoria University for Jobs and Skills Australia show that over the next ten years, more than nine out of ten new jobs expected to be created will require post-secondary qualifications.[2] Around 44% of jobs will require a vocational education and training (VET) qualification, and around half (48%) will require a bachelor's degree or higher qualification.

Overall, 63.0% of workers who live in the MidCoast (across all industries) hold educational qualifications, and 33.7% have no qualifications. This compares with 70.7% and 27.0% respectively for NSW.

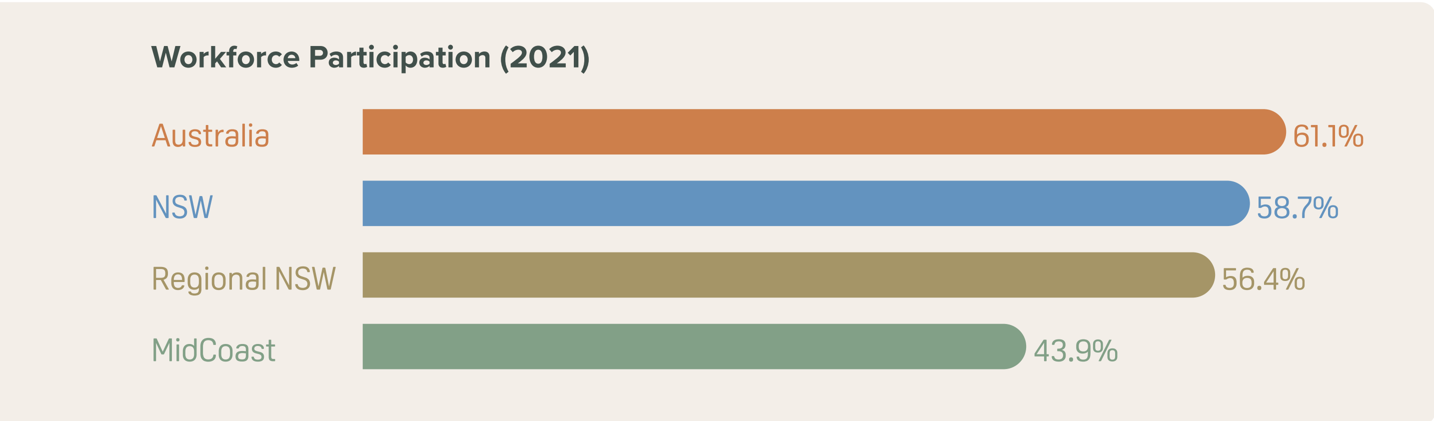
Over 30% of resident workers in the MidCoast have vocational qualifications (from Certificate I – IV). This is relatively high compared to other benchmarks. However, this contrasts with a low proportion of workers with university degrees.



... and fewer people in the workforce compared to other regions ...

In 2021, 6.1% of the labour force was unemployed, compared with 4.6% for Regional NSW.

There was also a lower proportion of people aged 15-64 who were employed or actively looking for a job compared to other areas.



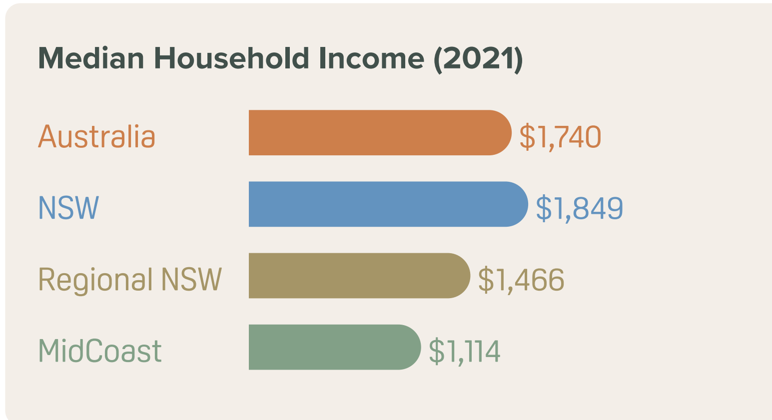
A lower proportion of us also work full-time in the MidCoast (48%) compared to Regional NSW with 55%.

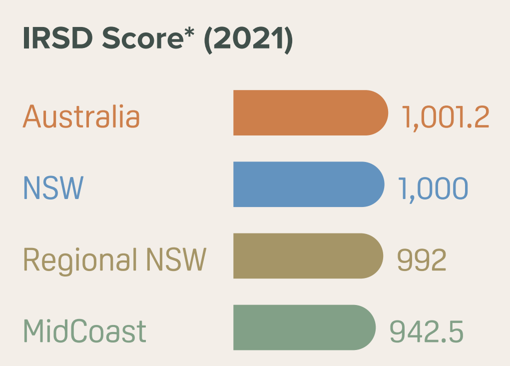
... which contribute to socio-economic challenges

The MidCoast has many retirees, fewer people working, and a smaller number of workers with university degrees. Because of this, our household incomes are lower compared to other areas.

These factors contribute to a measure of the MidCoast's socio-economic disadvantage called the IRSD*. It ranks the MidCoast as the 28th most disadvantaged Local Government Area in NSW (out of 128). Hallidays Point/Diamond Beach is the most advantaged place in the MidCoast. It has an IRSD score of 1033.9. Taree has the lowest IRSD score at 856.9.

These socio-economic characteristics of the MidCoast mean that access to jobs, further education and affordable housing are important priorities for our community.





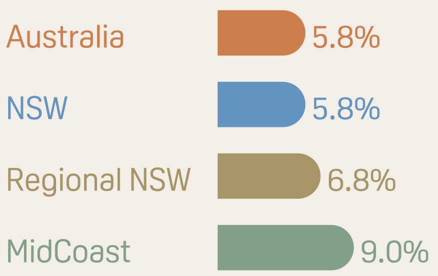
** The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) is a general socio-economic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area. IRSD only includes measures of relative disadvantage. A low score indicates relatively greater disadvantage. For example, an area could have a low score if there are: many households with low income, or many people without qualifications, and many people in low-skilled occupations. A high score indicates a relative lack of disadvantage. For example, an area may have a high score if there are: few households with low incomes, few people without qualifications, few people in low skilled occupations.*

We have people who need support to live a full and active life ...

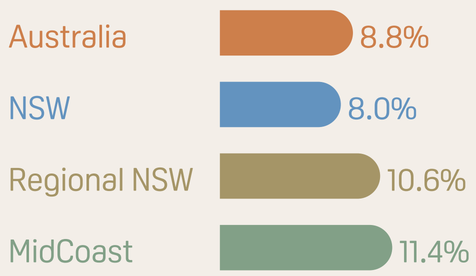
Nine percent of our population report that they need assistance in their day-to-day lives. This means that we have more people living with a disability than the average for Regional NSW, NSW, and Australia. Additionally, over 40% of us are living with one or more long-term health conditions.

The MidCoast also has a higher proportion of people who self-report a mental health condition than elsewhere, but this varies across the Local Government Area ranging from a low of 8.6% in Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest to a high of 14.3% in Taree.

People in need of assistance (2021) **



People with a mental health condition (2021)



***The data collected by the ABS relies on self-reporting and subjective assessment*

... but we are a caring community

In 2021, over 11,500 people in our community reported giving unpaid help to someone with a disability, a long-term illness, or the elderly. This represents 14.1% of the population aged over 15, a slight increase from 2016 (13.7%).

We also value volunteering. Around one in six people reported doing some kind of voluntary work in 2021. This is similar to the rate for Regional NSW but is lower than in 2016 when just over one in five people reported doing voluntary work. This is reflected across NSW and Australia and may be a continued impact of lockdowns and distancing measures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which prevented many people from undertaking their usual volunteering activities in the community.

How we Live

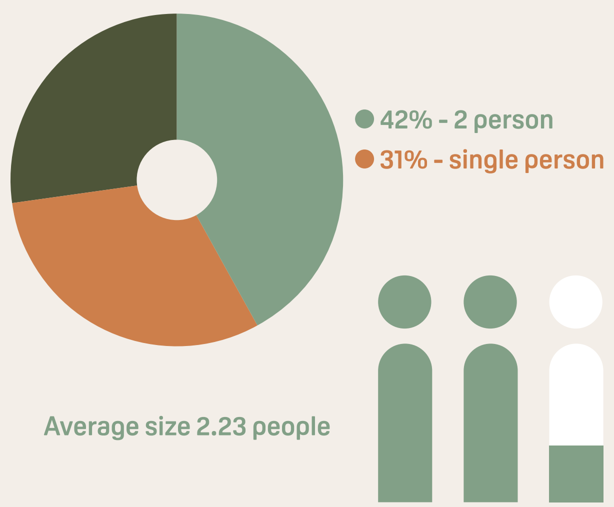
We are living with fewer people in bigger houses

Over 70% of us live either alone or with one other person and this trend is expected to continue. Around 80% of our homes are standalone dwellings. Medium-density and high-density housing is concentrated in Forster where 13% of homes are of this type.

The most common dwelling is a separate three-bedroom house. The number of homes with four or more bedrooms is also increasing.

This indicates a growing mismatch between households and dwellings. For example, older people living alone in large family homes.

Households (2021)



We will need more homes and more diverse types of homes over the next 10 years ...

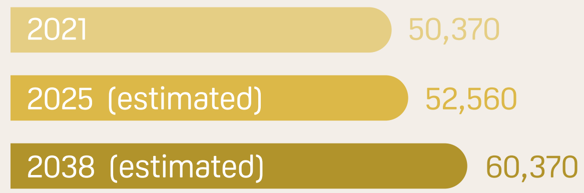
Our housing needs are as diverse as our community and will continue to change as our population grows. It is estimated we will need around 7,700 more homes by 2036. This includes separate houses, medium-density homes and high-density homes.

As a holiday destination, some of our coastal villages have high numbers of unoccupied dwellings due to the many holiday homes. For example, over 37% of homes in Pacific Palms were unoccupied on census night in 2021.

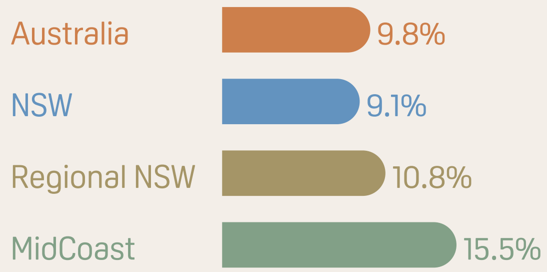
In recent years, tourism accommodation has also changed. More people are using online booking services to rent their homes to visitors, which means that there is a lower availability of long-term rental housing.

To support our growing population of over 65's we also need adaptable and accessible housing to enable people to 'age in place.'

Homes



Unoccupied private dwellings (2021)

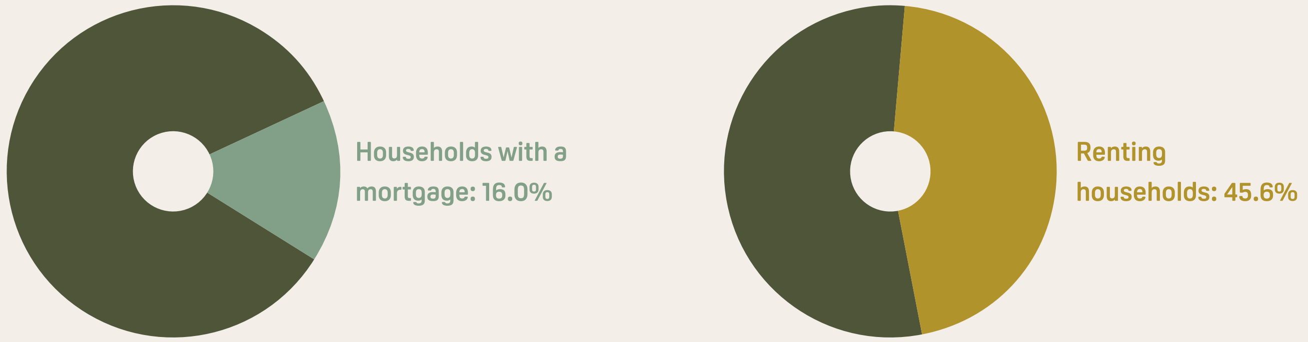


... including options which are more affordable

In 2021, it was estimated that 3,500 households in the MidCoast were not living in appropriate housing on census night. This is 8.5% of all households. These residents were either living in severely overcrowded homes or experiencing homelessness* or housing stress. Housing stress means they were spending more than 30% of their income on rent or mortgage repayments.

**The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines homelessness as people living in impoverished dwellings, tents or sleeping out, living in supported accommodation for the homeless, people staying temporarily with other households, people living in boarding houses and other temporary lodgings, and people living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.*

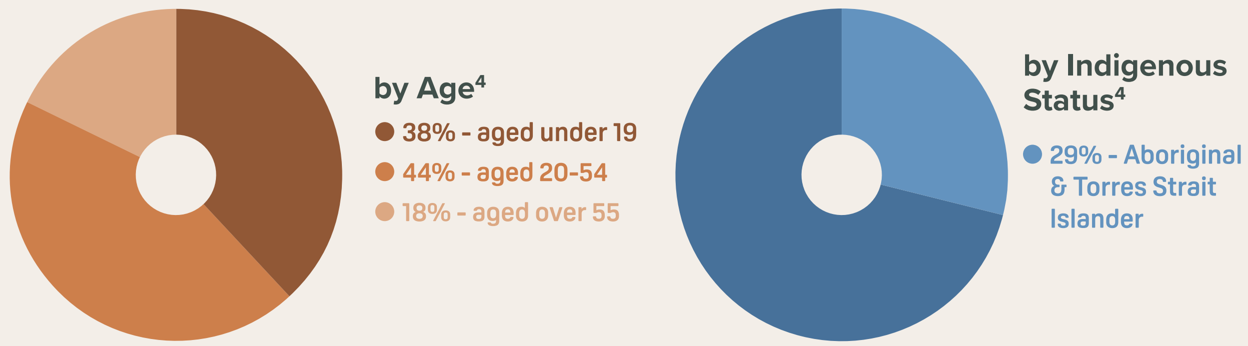
Households experiencing housing stress (2021)



In 2021, there were 296 people who were homeless in the MidCoast. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and children and young people under 19 years were the most vulnerable. Another 301 people were living in crowded dwellings, caravan parks, or other types of non-permanent housing. This is known as marginal housing.

Number of people street sleeping (2024)[3]

Homelessness



In September 2024, there were over 850 households waiting for social housing in the MidCoast.[5] Over 110 of these were applications for priority housing. Priority housing aims to meet the urgent needs of applicants who require long-term assistance. To be eligible for priority housing, applicants must be in urgent need (eg due to homelessness or risks to the safety or mental health of the applicant, children or other household members).

The expected waiting time for a house in Taree and Forster for general social housing applications as of June 2023 was from five years to over ten years depending on the size of the property needed.[6]

Expected times for general applicants (2023)	Forster/Tuncurry	Taree
For a studio/1-bedroom property	5-10 years	5-10 years
For a 2-bedroom property	10+ years	5-10 years
For a 3-bedroom property	10+ years	5-10 years
For a 4+ bedroom property	10+ years	10+ years

It is estimated that we will need to build 200-300 social and affordable homes each year to 2041 to meet the needs of the lowest income households in the MidCoast.[7]

Where we work

Employment in the MidCoast is largely service based ...

Our largest industry is Healthcare and Social Assistance. This is mainly driven by our growing ageing population. Over 45% of us work in health, construction, and retail. Together, these three industries add nearly $1.25 billion to the MidCoast's economy.

The Education and Training industry also employs over 2,800 people.

... with our rural and coastal landscapes supporting a range of primary industries ...

One fifth of the MidCoast's registered businesses and around 1,700 people are employed in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry. The key primary industries locally are dairy, beef, timber, poultry farming, fishing, and oyster farming. The dairy sector employs more people in the MidCoast than in any other Local Government Area across the state.[8]

... and our diversity of visitor experiences driving growth in tourism

The region is also a key holiday destination. In summer, tourists flock to enjoy the region's diverse landscapes, including our pristine coastline, beaches, coastal lakes, lagoons, and National Parks. Visitors to the MidCoast spend around $880 million* per year here. The Accommodation and Food Services industry which serves this sector generates over 2,300 local full-time jobs.

* This an average over the 2 years to YE 23

** The Gross Regional Product (GRP) is the total market value of all the goods and services produced in the region over a year.

Where do we want to be in 10 years' time?

What we said

Community engagement is at the heart of developing *MidCoast 2035.*

Since our last Community Strategic Plan, *MidCoast 2032*, was developed, we have "had our say" on a diverse range of projects and plans for the MidCoast.

In July 2023, over 400 of us gave feedback via the MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey. We identified what we love about living here and shared our priorities for the MidCoast for the next 10 years.

In a 2024 community check-in, over 500 of us shared our thoughts about the MidCoast and our hopes for its future. We gave feedback on whether our vision in *MidCoast 2032* was still relevant. We also talked about the issues that we want to address now and into the next 10 years.

The following is a summary of our feedback.

What we love about living in the MidCoast

93% of us rate our quality of life in the MidCoast as "good to excellent"[9]

What we said is important to us and what we want for the future

Our Environment

- We value the contribution our environment makes to our lifestyle
- We want easy access to natural areas for recreation
- We are concerned about water conservation and water security
- We want to protect our environment for future generations

Community

- We recognise that community connections are even more important given recent events
- We want to give support to those who find it difficult to connect
- We want to keep our community safe and lower our crime rate
- We want more activities for our young people

Our Council

- We want transparency and accountability
- We want strong leadership
- We want decisions that reflect community views
- We want to be more informed and involved
- We want evidence-based decision-making
- We want improved financial management
- We want value for money for our rates

Development

- We want to see long-term planning for housing and infrastructure
- We want to protect our scenic views
- We want to avoid over-development
- We want to preserve and protect our environment and heritage

Arts, Heritage & Culture

- We recognise that arts and culture are important to our lifestyle and economy
- We want to learn more about Aboriginal heritage and culture
- We want to promote our heritage-listed and historically significant places
- We would like to see more creativity and culture in our public and community spaces

Resilience

- We need to plan for demands on our resources
- We want to be prepared for storms, floods, and bushfires

Community Facilities

- We love our libraries
- We want co-located facilities for better safety and connectivity
- We want our community facilities to be more accessible and well-maintained
- We want more sporting facilities

Recreation

- We want more invested in maintaining our parks and beaches
- We want better access to our natural environment for recreation

Transport

- We want improvements to our roads
- We want safer roads
- We want more shared pathways and cycleways
- We want better access to public transport

Local Economy

- We want inclusive growth where benefits flow to everyone
- We want access to more health and medical facilities/services across the MidCoast
- We want a resilient and adaptable economy
- We want support for local jobs and businesses
- We want to attract businesses to the MidCoast
- We want education pathways for a range of skills and industries
- We want a wider range of job opportunities especially for our young people

Housing

- We want more housing and more diverse housing including affordable and social housing
- We want to help address homelessness

Our high priority areas for the next 10 years

Out of everything we said is important to us, we identified the following things as our top priorities for the next 10 years.[9] These are shown in order of priority.

1. IMPROVING ROADS AND SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE (eg parking, bridges)
2. IMPROVING COMMUNITY SERVICES/FACILITIES (eg medical, aged care, disability, youth)
3. INCREASING EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES
4. IMPROVING HOUSING SUPPLY AND AFFORDABILITY
5. IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE (eg footpaths, cycleways)
6. IMPROVING THE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF MIDCOAST COUNCIL
7. SERVICING A GROWING POPULATION AND MANAGING DEVELOPMENT
8. MAINTAINING AND UPGRADING OUR TOWNS AND VILLAGES
9. PRESERVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND MANAGING CLIMATE CHANGE
10. IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY AND REDUCING CRIME RATE

Our challenges

If we understand our main challenges, we can focus on the most important problems. Then we can find ways to work together for a better future.

Key issues we need to consider in planning for our community include:

Ageing population

An older population means we will need different homes and health services. The shape of our economy and the diversity of our community will also change.

Fair access to services across the MidCoast

Our Local Government Area is large, with most services in Taree and Forster. It is hard to get to important places like health facilities without a car or public transport.

Environmental and resilience challenges

Recently, we have faced drought, bushfires and storms which have damaged both our natural and built environments. These events and environmental risks, such as sea-level rise, will continue to affect our way of life. We need to be prepared to ensure we can withstand future events and recover quickly.

Ageing assets

The MidCoast's large area means we have significant public assets like roads, water infrastructure and community facilities. The assets that MidCoast Council is responsible for alone, are valued at over $5 billion. A sizeable portion of our region's assets are coming to the end of their life or need to be maintained to extend their life. It is financially challenging to build new infrastructure and maintain the infrastructure we already have with the resources that are available.

Technological change

The world we live in is rapidly changing. Innovative technologies will likely impact us in a range of ways. They will change how we travel, work, and build our homes and businesses. The growing use of AI and automation, for example, will create both opportunities and challenges that we need to manage for our benefit.

Financial sustainability

Our wish list is long for ways to improve the MidCoast. But we also have competing priorities and limited resources. As a community we must make sustainable financial decisions, which deliver the best outcomes for the whole of our community within the resources available.

Population growth

One of our biggest challenges is the tension that comes from a growing population. While a growing population creates more job opportunities and strengthens the economy, it can also impact on the things we love about living in the MidCoast – its rural, quiet and relaxed lifestyle. Building the services and infrastructure we need for a growing population, like more houses, roads and community facilities can have harmful effects on our natural environment. This extra infrastructure can also change the uniqueness and character of our towns and villages.

Bringing it all together

We love living in the MidCoast. Our places and our community matter to us. We know what we love about living here. We know what we want for its future, and what our priorities are. We are also aware of the challenges and tensions we face and are committed to addressing these together.

What we love

- Our natural environment
- Our sense of community

What we want

- More housing (including affordable housing)
- Better roads and more transport options
- More facilities (particularly medical)
- A stronger and more diverse economy

Our Vision

Together we can make the MidCoast even better

Our Community Outcomes

To achieve our vision, we will focus on five key areas. Each area has a community outcome that describes what we want the MidCoast to be like in the future

Our Wellbeing

We are a community where everyone is safe and can live a healthy, active life. We support each other, and feel we belong. We respect and celebrate our Aboriginal heritage, diverse cultures and histories, and value creativity in all its forms.

Our Natural Environment

Our natural environment is healthy and safeguarded for future generations. We enjoy the lifestyle that our natural surroundings provide us. We minimise our impact on the environment, and we can adapt to a changing climate.

Our Places & Infrastructure

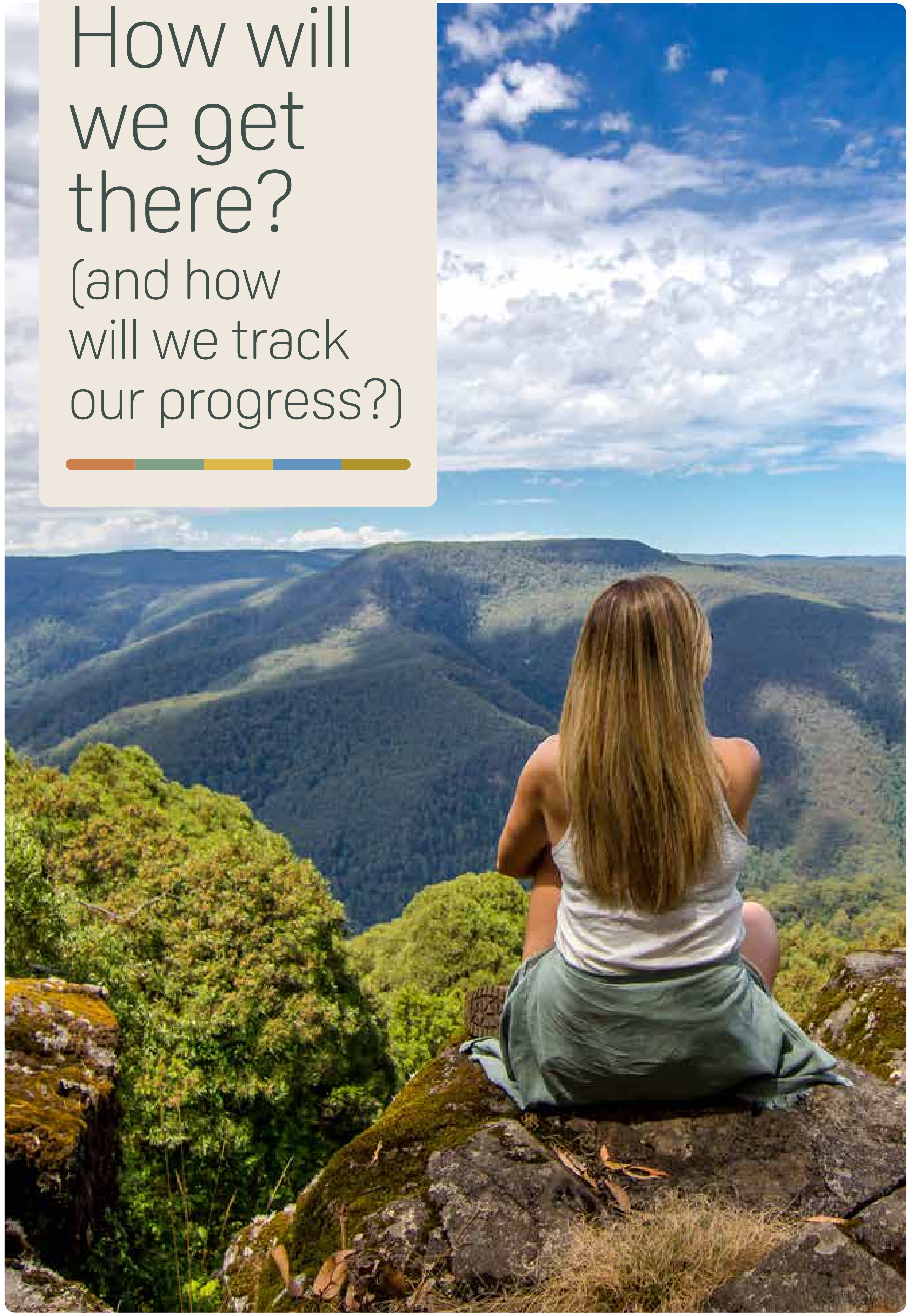
Our towns and villages are attractive and engaging places to live. We all have a safe place to call home, and we can grow without losing what we love about living here. We have clean, reliable water and can travel safely and easily around the MidCoast.

Our Economic Prosperity

The MidCoast is an ideal place to work, live, visit, and invest. We all benefit from a diverse and resilient economy that provides the businesses and services we need. There are employment opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. Our young people can build a vibrant career right here. Our workforce is ready for today's and tomorrow's employers.

Our Leadership

We are engaged in our future and collaborate to make positive change for the MidCoast. We have confidence and trust in our elected and community leaders. Decisions are evidence-based and informed by community input. Decisions also balance the interests of current and future generations. Together, all levels of government can deliver the facilities and services we need. Our Council is financially sustainable.



How will we get there?

(and how will we track our progress?)

Achieving our vision for the MidCoast

MidCoast 2035 identifies our hopes and priorities for the MidCoast's future. It also sets out a plan for how we will achieve them and track our progress.

The following information helps to explain how to read our plan, which is set out from pages 38 to 81.

Our Vision for the MidCoast

outlines the kind of place we want the MidCoast to be and the community we aim to have in the long term.

A

Focus Areas

are the five areas that together will contribute to us achieving our vision for the MidCoast. Together these five areas address the Quadruple Bottom Line. The focus areas are our *Wellbeing, Natural Environment, Places and Infrastructure, Economic Prosperity, and Leadership.* The focus areas do not stand alone. They support each other to achieve our vision for the MidCoast.

B

Community Outcomes

support the vision. They describe the 'big picture' results we want to see for our community for each of the five Focus Areas. These outcomes reflect the community's values and guide the Community Strategic Plan's strategies.

They help answer the question, "Where do we want to be in 10 years' time?"

C

Challenges and Opportunities

We must know the challenges and opportunities in each focus area to achieve our goals. They will inform the strategies and actions we take in the future.

D

Strategies

describe at a high level what we will do to support the achievement of the Community Outcomes. The strategies describe what we will do, through our community's services, facilities, projects and investments to move us towards our goals.

They help answer the question, "How will we get there?"

Actions*

are the specific activities and projects that support the strategies.

**We do not show specific actions in MidCoast 2035. The actions that contributors will take appear in their own plans and documents.*

E

MidCoast contributors and the roles we play

To deliver on our vision for the MidCoast, we must build and grow strong partnerships and work together. Each of us can bring our unique skills, knowledge and capabilities to deliver benefits for the MidCoast.

Individuals – This includes residents, rate payers and visitors.

Business and Industry Groups – These include peak bodies and chambers of commerce. They provide a collective voice for businesses and industries to develop our local economy.

Not for Profit Organisations – These include Community, Arts, Environmental, Sporting and Volunteer Groups and non-government organisations. These groups represent their special interest areas and provide opportunities for individuals to come together, participate and advocate for their group.

Local Government – MidCoast Council is responsible for a wide range of services for the MidCoast Local Government Area. Council services include: local and regional roads, footpaths, and cycleways; water supply and sewerage; stormwater and drainage; waste management, including rubbish collection and recycling; recreation and cultural facilities, including parks, sporting fields, swimming pools, and libraries; environmental care programs; land use planning; building approvals and inspections; domestic animal regulation; and environmental health.

State Government – The MidCoast Local Government Area is part of the Myall Lakes, Port Macquarie, Port Stephens and Upper Hunter State electorates. The NSW Government is responsible for major transport, including main roads, railways, and public transport; state marine infrastructure; vehicle registration; health, including hospitals and nursing; education and schools; emergency services, including police, fire, and ambulance; public housing and rental assistance; electricity, mining, and agriculture; consumer affairs; prisons; and forests.

Federal Government – The MidCoast Local Government Area is part of the Lyne Federal electorate. The Federal Government is responsible for national issues that affect all Australians, such as defence, trade and commerce, census and statistics, postal and telecommunication services, quarantine, foreign policy, currency, taxation, copyright, and immigration.

ROLE / CONTRIBUTOR	Individuals	Business & Industry Groups & Not-for-profit orgs	Local Govt (MidCoast Council)	State Govt	Federal Govt
Owner – owns the Community Strategic Plan and holds people accountable for delivering it.	●	●			
Custodian – writes the Community Strategic Plan on behalf of all of us.			●		
Advocate – represents our needs to decision-makers.	●	●	●	●	
Capacity Builder – mentors us to develop skills that help us meet our goals.	●	●	●	●	●
Leader – mobilises us to achieve our vision.	●	●	●	●	●
Provider – provides local infrastructure, services, facilities, and programs to meet community needs.		●	●	●	●
Regulator – makes sure that we follow laws and regulations.			●	●	●

F

Measuring and reporting on our progress

It is important we monitor our progress over time, so we know whether we are making a difference.

We have indicators for each strategy to help measure how effective each strategy is. We also have indicators which track our progress towards our long-term Community Outcomes.* All indicators reflect our community's profile and are influenced by everyone in the community and all levels of government.

We have identified a baseline measure for each indicator which tells us where we are now. Where possible we have provided a relevant benchmark for each measure. We have also identified a desired trend for the measures (increase, decrease or maintain).

On behalf of the community, MidCoast Council will regularly report back on the community's progress towards achieving our Vision and Community Outcomes.

The State of the MidCoast Report will be published every four years to provide a status update on how our community is tracking against the goals we set ourselves in this MidCoast 2035 plan. State of the MidCoast Reports are available on MidCoast Council's website.

** A baseline measure shown as TBD indicates that data is not currently available for the MidCoast LGA. In some cases a new measure may need to be developed. It is anticipated in both cases these will be finalised within the first 12 months of the lifetime of the Plan.*

G

Actions we each can take

As individuals, we can all contribute to great outcomes for our community. We have listed examples here but of course there may be others.

H

Links to State and regional priorities

MidCoast 2035 describes what we aspire to. The requirements of the NSW Government also influence what needs to be done to secure our future.

MidCoast is in the Hunter region. The Hunter Regional Plan 2041 is a 20-year plan for the area's future. It helps the NSW Government and local councils coordinate their planning. This ensures the region has the facilities needed for people living, working and visiting the region.

MidCoast 2035 generally aligns with the objectives of the Hunter Regional Plan. The relevant objectives are shown for each Community Outcome.

Other relevant State and regional strategies and plans include:

- NSW Government Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+
- NSW Government Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030
- NSW 2040 Economic Blueprint
- NSW Water Strategy
- NSW Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041
- NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2042
- NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- MidCoast Regional Economic Development Strategy
- Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy
- Hunter Regional Transport Plan

To learn more about these strategies and plans and how *MidCoast 2035* links to them, please see Appendix 1 – Linking *MidCoast 2035* to State and regional plans on pages 84 and 85.

How to read this plan

A

B

As a community, where do we want to be in 10 years time?

C

Our Wellbeing

Community Outcome

We are a community where everyone is safe and can live a healthy, active life.

We support one another, and feel we belong.

We respect and celebrate our Aboriginal heritage, diverse cultures and histories, and value creativity in all its forms.

Challenges

- Ensuring equitable access to community and medical/health services across the MidCoast
- Limited funding for cultural and community development
- High levels of relative social disadvantage in parts of the MidCoast
- Meeting the needs of an ageing community

Opportunities

- Enhance the role of arts and culture in our community
- Embrace cultural diversity

D

Working together, how will we achieve this outcome?

E

Who can contribute to this strategy?

Strategy W-1

Improve public safety and our community's ability to prepare and respond to emergencies.

CONTRIBUTORS include
NSW Department of Communities and Justice, MidCoast Council, NSW Environment Protection Authority, NSW Health, NSW Police, NSW Reconstruction Authority, NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), NSW State Emergency Services (SES), Red Cross, Surf Lifesaving NSW.

F1

How will we track the effectiveness of this strategy?

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Crime rates against person Includes murder, attempted murder and manslaughter, assault (domestic violence related and non-domestic violence related) and sexual offences (including sexual assault and sexual touching)	1,450.0 per 100,000 (2023-24)	1,426.6 per 100,000 (Regional NSW)	Decrease	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research[10] (Monthly)
Crime rates against property Includes robbery, break and enter (dwelling), break and enter (non-dwelling), motor vehicle theft, stealing from motor vehicle, stealing from retail store, other stealing offences and malicious damage to property	2,952.5 per 100,000 (2023-24)	3,170.7 per 100,000 (Regional NSW)	Decrease	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research[10] (Monthly)
Children and young people reported at risk of serious harm % of the total children and young people population who appeared in Risk of Serious Harm (ROSH) reports	14.1% (2022-23)	-	Decrease	NSW Department of Communities and Justice – Child Protection and Out of Home Care key statistics[11]

F2

How will we track our progress towards achieving our desired outcome?

Community Outcome Measures

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (Year/Period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Sense of belonging Survey participants' perception of their sense of belonging based on their level of agreement with the following statements: I feel welcome here; I feel part of my community; and I feel like an outsider here. *1 = low sense of belonging to 7 = high sense of belonging*	5.6 out of 7 (2023)	5.5 out of 7 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Community wellbeing Survey participants' perception of the wellbeing of their community *0 = lo... ...llbeing to 7 = high level...*	TBD	TBD	TBD	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)

G

What 10 things can individuals do to support this outcome?

H

ACTIONS WE CAN EACH TAKE:

- **Community safety** - Join local community safety programs or neighbourhood watch groups.
- **Mental health awareness** - Promote mental health resources and support networks.
- **Healthy lifestyle** - Encourage physical activities and healthy eating habits within your community.
- **Community events** - Organise or participate in local events, such as markets, or sports activities.
- **Volunteer** - Offer your time to local charities, schools, or community centres.
- **Support indigenous businesses** - Buy from and promote Indigenous-owned businesses.
- **Cultural education** - Attend workshops or events that educate about Aboriginal and other cultures

LINKS TO THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2041:

Objective 2: Support the right of Aboriginal residents to economic self-determination.

Our Wellbeing

Community Outcome

We are a community where everyone is safe and can live a healthy, active life.

We support one another, and feel we belong.

We respect and celebrate our Aboriginal heritage, diverse cultures and histories, and value creativity in all its forms.

Challenges

- Ensuring equitable access to community and medical/health services across the MidCoast
- Limited funding for cultural and community development
- High levels of relative social disadvantage in parts of the MidCoast
- Meeting the needs of an ageing community

Opportunities

- Enhance the role of arts and culture in our community
- Embrace cultural diversity

Strategy W-1

Improve public safety and our community's ability to prepare and respond to emergencies.

CONTRIBUTORS include
NSW Department of Communities and Justice, MidCoast Council, NSW Environment Protection Authority, NSW Health, NSW Police, NSW Reconstruction Authority, NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), NSW State Emergency Services (SES), Red Cross, Surf Lifesaving NSW.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Crime rates against person Includes murder, attempted murder and manslaughter, assault (domestic violence related and non-domestic violence related) and sexual offences (including sexual assault and sexual touching)	1,450.0 per 100,000 (2023-24)	1,426.6 per 100,000 (Regional NSW)	Decrease	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research[10] (Monthly)
Crime rates against property Includes robbery, break and enter (dwelling), break and enter (non-dwelling), motor vehicle theft, stealing from motor vehicle, stealing from retail store, other stealing offences and malicious damage to property	2,952.5 per 100,000 (2023-24)	3,170.7 per 100,000 (Regional NSW)	Decrease	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research[10] (Monthly)
Children and young people reported at risk of serious harm % of the total children and young people population who appeared in Risk of Serious Harm (ROSH) reports	14.1% (2022-23)	-	Decrease	NSW Department of Communities and Justice – Child Protection and Out of Home Care key statistics[11] (Annual)
Safety Satisfaction of survey participants with how safe they feel *0 = completely dissatisfied to 100 = completely satisfied*	83.4 (2023)	78.9 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Emergency preparedness % of survey participants who have had a household discussion in the past year about what to do if an emergency occurs	45% (2022)	-	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Community resilience Survey participants' agreement with the statement "This community copes pretty well when faced with challenges" *1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree*	2.0 (2023)	2.4 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)

Strategy W-2

Support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our community.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Aged Care Services, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Hunter New England Health, headspace, Liquor and Gaming NSW, Manning Great Lakes Community Health Action Group, Manning Valley Liquor Consultative Committee, MidCoast Council, NSW Health.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Life expectancy at birth Average number of years from birth a person may be expected to live	82.0 years (2022)	82.9 years (2022)	Increase	ABS Census QuickStats (5-yearly)[13]
Chronic health conditions % of the community who report having one or more of the following health conditions: arthritis, asthma, cancer (including remission), dementia (including Alzheimer's), diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes), heart disease (including heart attack or angina), kidney disease, lung condition (including COPD or emphysema), mental health condition (including depression or anxiety), stroke with one or more long-term health conditions	42.6% (2021)	37.0% (Regional NSW)	Decrease	ABS Census QuickStats (5-yearly)[13]
Mental health condition % of the community who report having a mental health condition	11.4% (2021)	10.6% (Regional NSW)	Decrease	ABS (Region Summary)[14] (5-yearly)
Self-harm Rate of intentional self-harm hospitalisations	105.6 per 100,000 (2021-22)	79.5 per 100,000 (NSW)	Decrease	NSW HealthStats by LGA[15] (Annual)
Alcohol and drug issues Rate of alcohol and other drug-related hospitalisations	1,355.4 per 100,000 (2021-22)	1,211.2 per 100,000 (NSW)	Decrease	NSW HealthStats by LGA[15] (Annual)
Weight and obesity issues Rate of overweight and obesity-attributable hospitalisations	740 per 100,000 (2021-22)	721 per 100,000 (NSW)	Decrease	NSW HealthStats by LGA[15] (Annual)
Access to general health services Survey participants' rating of access to general health services *1 = very poor to 7 = very good*	3.5 out of 7	3.8 out of 7 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Access to mental health services Survey participants' rating of access to mental health services *1 = very poor to 7 = very good*	TBD	TBD	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Access to specialist health services Survey participants' rating of access to specialist health services *1 = very poor to 7 = very good*	2.9 out of 7	3.0 out of 7 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)

Strategy W-3

Help everyone connect and take part in community life, particularly those who face challenges with social isolation.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Community groups, community service organisations, cultural groups, Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services/Migrant Settlement Services, MidCoast Council, MidCoast Council Libraries, Multicultural NSW, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Office of the Children's Guardian, Office of the Ageing and Disability Commissioner, sporting groups, U3A, volunteer organisations.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Community involvement Survey participants' involvement in community activities Includes community events such as farmers markets, community festivals; meetings/events held by local clubs/groups eg Lions, CWA; and sports groups or teams *1 = low levels of involvement to 7 = high levels of involvement*	3.0 out of 7 (2023)	3.3 out of 7 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Volunteer participation The proportion of the population who reported spending time doing unpaid voluntary work for an organisation or group in the 12 months prior to Census night	15.7% (2021)	15.5% (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS Census via .id social atlas[16] (5-yearly)

Strategy W-4

Acknowledge, respect and learn from our Aboriginal community to build trust and move forward together.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Local Aboriginal Land Councils, MidCoast Council, Aboriginal language groups, Aboriginal artists and cultural groups.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Indicators will be developed in partnership with the Aboriginal community	TBD	TBD	TBD	

Strategy W-5

Foster opportunities for artistic, cultural and creative expression, participation and celebration.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Arts Mid North Coast, community arts groups, local artists, venues, festivals and event organisers, Create NSW, Manning Art Gallery, Manning Entertainment Centre, MidCoast Council, MidCoast Council Libraries, NSW Department of Creative Industries, Tourism Hospitality and Sport.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Creative and cultural opportunities % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that there is a good range of opportunities for cultural and artistic activities and expression	49% (2023)	47% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)*	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)

** The Micromex Regional Benchmark is composed using survey results from 47 regional councils.*

Community Outcome Measures

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Sense of belonging Survey participants' perception of their sense of belonging based on their level of agreement with the following statements: I feel welcome here; I feel part of my community; and I feel like an outsider here. *1 = low sense of belonging to 7 = high sense of belonging*	5.6 out of 7 (2023)	5.5 out of 7 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Community wellbeing Survey participants' perception of the wellbeing of their community *0 = low level of wellbeing to 7 = high level of wellbeing*	TBD	TBD	TBD	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)

ACTIONS WE CAN EACH TAKE:

- **Community safety** - Join local community safety programs or neighbourhood watch groups
- **Mental health awareness -** Promote mental health resources and support networks
- **Healthy lifestyle -** Encourage physical activities and healthy eating habits within your community
- **Community events -** Organise or participate in local events, such as markets, or sports activities
- **Volunteer -** Offer your time to local charities, schools, or community centres
- **Support indigenous businesses -** Buy from and promote Indigenous-owned businesses
- **Cultural education** - Attend workshops or events that educate about Aboriginal and other cultures
- **Support local artists** - Attend local art shows, performances, and exhibitions
- **Creative workshops** - Participate in or organise workshops that encourage artistic expression
- **Cultural celebrations** - Celebrate cultural diversity by participating in festivals and cultural events

LINKS TO THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2041:

Objective 2: Support the right of Aboriginal residents to economic self-determination

Our Natural Environment

Community Outcome

Our natural environment is healthy and safeguarded for future generations.

We enjoy the lifestyle that our natural surroundings provide us.

We minimise our impact on the environment, and we can adapt to a changing climate.

Challenges

- Water security for our community as rainfall patterns change
- Managing our waste as our population grows and legislation lags available technology
- Managing the risks of climate change
- Preserving our natural areas/vegetation as we build more houses

Opportunities

- Embrace innovative technologies for waste and resource management
- Community education and action

Strategy NE-1

Protect our native flora, fauna and local ecosystems.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Hunter Local Land Services, Hunter Regional Weeds Committee, landowners, Manning Coastcare, MidCoast 2 Tops Landcare Connections, MidCoast Council, NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Public conservation reserves Area and % of land that is within a public conservation reserve	292,788.29ha 29.1% (November 2024)	-	Increase	MidCoast Council internal data (Ongoing updates)
Permanent private land conservation Area and % of land that is under private land conservation via conservation agreements, biobanking agreements and biodiversity stewardship agreements	14,046.37ha 1.4% (November 2024	-	Increase	MidCoast Council internal data (Ongoing updates)
Conservation land use zone Area and % of land that is in a conservation land use zone (includes C2 Environmental Conservation and C3 Environmental Management zones)	51,056.98ha 5.1% (November 2024)	-	Increase	MidCoast Council internal data (Ongoing updates)
Condition of natural area reserves % of Council's 109 Natural Area Reserves which are in 'good' or better condition	53%	-	Increase	MidCoast Council internal data (Ongoing updates)
Vegetation loss Woody vegetation land cleared per annum for agriculture, infrastructure, native forestry and plantation forestry (ha)	33.8 ha (2022)	-	Decrease	Statewide Landcover and Tree Study (NSW Government)[17] (Annual)

Strategy NE-2

Protect and improve the health of our coastlines, waterways, wetlands and water catchments.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Commercial and recreation fishing community, Dunecare, NSW Environment Protection Authority, farmers, Manning Coastcare, Manning Landcare, MidCoast Council, Hunter Local Land Services, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, NSW Fisheries, oyster farmers.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Waterway health % of waterways that are graded B and above (i.e. at least most of the indicators measured meet all the trigger values for most of the year) for the following monitored waterways: Bombah Broadwater, Browns Creek, Charlotte Bay, Cooloongolook Estuary, Dawson River Estuary, Farquhar Inlet, Ghinni Ghinni Creek, Kapinga Estuary, Karuah Estuary, Lansdowne Estuary, Lower Manning Estuary, Lower Myall Estuary, Mid Manning Estuary, Mid Wallamba Estuary, Myall Lakes, Pipers Creek, Smiths Lake, The Branch Estuary, Upper Manning Estuary, Wallamba Cove, Wallis Lake	62% (2023)	-	Increase	MidCoast Annual Waterway Report Card[18] (Annual)

Strategy NE-3

Manage our waste and reduce waste to landfill.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Construction industry, NSW Environment Protection Authority, Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils, MidCoast business community, MidCoast Council, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, waste industry.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Average waste generated per household Calculated by dividing the total weight of waste collected via kerbside collection services (measured as kg per week arriving at MidCoast waste facilities) by the number of households serviced within the region	18.3kg/household/week (3-year average)	TBD	Decrease	NSW Environment Protection Authority Waste Data Surveys (Annual)
Kerbside recycling rate % of the total waste presented for kerbside collection that is recycled	44.1%	TBD	Increase	NSW Environment Protection Authority 2021-22 Local Government Waste and Resource Recovery Data Report[19] (Annual)
% of total waste that is diverted from landfill Calculated by dividing the total amount of material diverted from landfill (either through co-mingled recycling, garden organic recovery or other waste recovery operations) by the total waste received at MidCoast waste facilities from all sources	37.4%	TBD	Increase	NSW Environment Protection Authority 2021-22 Local Government Waste and Resource Recovery Data Report[19] (Annual)
Organic waste recovery Tonnes of organic waste disposed to landfill Calculated by multiplying the total residual waste disposed to landfill multiplied by the proportion of that material that is compostable	10,600 tonnes per annum	TBD	Decrease	NSW Environment Protection Authority 2021-22 Local Government Waste and Resource Recovery Data Report[19] (Annual)

Strategy NE-4

Conserve our natural resources and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Community organisations (eg Farmers for Climate Change), business community, Essential Energy, MidCoast Council, Motoring Associations, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Renewable energy retailers, Water NSW.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Water consumption Average annual residential water demand expressed as kL per property	132.06 kL/property (2022-23)	154.59 (NSW median)	Decrease	Water NSW Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Recycled water As a % of urban water supplied	7.63% (2022-23)	4.97% (NSW median)	Increase	Water NSW Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Greenhouse gas emissions Greenhouse gas emissions for the MidCoast Local Government Area for the following sectors: stationary energy (electricity and gas), transport, agriculture and land use, waste, fugitive emissions and industrial processes and product use (IPPU)	1,011 kt (2022-23)	N/A	Decrease	Snapshot Climate Report for MidCoast[21] (Annual)
Solar PV take-up Percentage of households with solar PV panels	44.7% (June 2024)	36% (NSW)	Increase	Australian Photovoltaic Institute[22] (Monthly)
Transition to Electric Vehicles Proportion of total passenger vehicle registrations that are for Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) not including hybrid vehicles or plug-in hybrid vehicles	0.46% (October 2024)	1.5% (NSW)	Increase	Transport for NSW Registration Snapshot Report[23] (Monthly)
EV charging infrastructure Number of EV charging locations across the region This includes publicly accessible Level 1 and Level 2 charging stations and high-power fast charging stations (Level 3), such as CCS, CHAdeMO, or Tesla Superchargers	33 (November 2024)	-	Increase	PlugShare[24] (Ongoing updates)

Strategy NE-5

Manage risks to our environment and communities from climate change and natural disasters.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, MidCoast Council, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, NSW Reconstruction Authority, RFS, SES.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Additional indicators to be developed in line with NSW Government's NSW Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.[25] Examples could include: • Number of people hospitalised due to heat stress • Number of days of poor air quality due to bushfires • Number of properties and critical infrastructure at significant risk from heatwaves, floods, bushfires, storms and coastal erosion	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Community Outcome Measures

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Environmental health Perception of survey participants of problems with the following: water quality in rivers, lakes or waterways, soil erosion, poor soil health other than soil erosion eg soil compaction, pest fish species eg carp; loss of vegetation (trees, shrubs); declining numbers of native animals or birds; increasing problems from invasive weeds; environmental degradation in general; feral animals eg pigs, goats, wild dogs, rabbits; and declining numbers of native fish *1 = poor environmental health to 7 = good environmental health*	TBD	TBD	TBD	University of Canberra Community Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Biodiversity loss Number of plants, mammals, frogs, reptiles, sea turtles, birds, insects and fish that are identified as threatened species	102 species (2024)	-	Decrease (but not because of extinction)	Schedules from the Fisheries Management Act, Biodiversity Conservation Act, Federal Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (Annual)
Protection of the natural environment % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that the environment is respected and protected	44% (2023)	55% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)*	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Attractive natural places Survey participants' agreement with the statement "There are attractive natural places in the community" *1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree*	TBD	TBD	TBD	University of Canberra Community Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)

ACTIONS WE CAN EACH TAKE:

- **Plant native species** - Choose native plants for the garden to support local wildlife
- **Reduce plastic use** - Minimise single-use plastics to prevent pollution in waterways
- **Participate in cleanups** - Join local beach and river clean-ups to remove litter and debris
- **Recycle and compost** - Separate recyclables to reduce landfill and compost organic waste
- **Repair and reuse** - Fix broken items and repurpose materials instead of discarding them
- **Bulk buy** - Purchase items in bulk to reduce packaging waste
- **Energy efficiency** - Use energy-efficient appliances and light bulbs and unplug devices when not in use
- **Conserve water** - Implement water-saving practices at home, such as fixing leaks and using water-efficient appliances
- **Sustainable transportation** - Walk, cycle, carpool or use public transport to reduce carbon emissions
- **Community involvement** - Participate in local environmental groups and initiatives to build community resilience

LINKS TO THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2041:

Objective 6: Conserve heritage, landscapes, environmentally sensitive areas, waterways and drinking water catchments

Objective 7: Reach net zero and increase resilience and sustainable infrastructure

Our Places & Infrastructure

Community Outcome

Our towns and villages are attractive and engaging places to live.

We all have a safe place to call home, and we can grow without losing what we love about living here.

We have clean, reliable water and can travel easily and safely around the MidCoast.

Challenges

- Maintaining the identity of our communities as our population grows
- Distance between settlements is a challenge to connecting communities
- Limited public transport options
- Balancing funding to maintain our existing infrastructure while delivering new infrastructure
- Maintaining our growing number of open spaces
- Ever-increasing price of housing and lack of affordable housing stock and housing options

Opportunities

- Embrace innovative technologies for waste and resource management
- Community education and action
- Multi-purpose use of public facilities and spaces

Strategy PI-1

Provide safe, accessible and well-maintained community facilities, vibrant streetscapes and public open spaces.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Crown Lands, development community, MidCoast business community, MidCoast Council, NSW Department of Education, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW State Forests, sporting and community groups, volunteer groups.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Feeling safe using public facilities % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that they feel safe using public facilities	60%	68% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Accessible parking Total number of accessible parking spaces	284	-	Increase	MidCoast Council internal data (Ongoing updates)
Environment and surrounds Survey participants' agreement with the statement "I like the environment and surroundings I live in" *1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree*	6.6	6.0 (Regional NSW)	Maintain	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)

Strategy PI-2

Deliver housing to meet demand including social, affordable and accessible housing options.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Community Housing Providers, development community, MidCoast Council, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Housing stress % of households in rental stress (>30% of income spent on rent)	38.2% (2021)	28.1% (Regional NSW)	Decrease	ABS Census via .id housing monitor[26] (5-yearly)
Demand for affordable housing % of all households with an unmet need for affordable housing	5.4% (2021)	5.0% (Regional NSW)	Decrease	ABS Census via .id housing monitor[26] (5-yearly)
Demand for social housing Number of social housing applicant households on the NSW Housing Register for the Tea Gardens, Taree, Forster/Tuncurry and Wingham Allocation Zones	853 (September 2024)	-	Decrease	NSW Department of Communities and Justice Social housing waiting list data[5] (Monthly)
Housing diversity % of dwellings that are medium or high density Medium-density dwellings include townhouses, terraces, villa units and semi-detached dwellings, flats in 1 and 2 storey blocks and flats attached to houses High-density dwellings include flats or apartments in 3 or more storey blocks	14.7% (2021)	15.2% (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS Census via .id housing monitor[26] (5-yearly)
Home ownership % of households who fully own their dwelling	46.0% (2021)	36.3% (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS Census via .id social atlas[16] (5-yearly)

Strategy PI-3

Respect the unique character, history and cultural heritage of our towns and villages, significant places and the natural environment.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Development community, heritage groups, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, MidCoast Council, NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Heritage % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that heritage sites are protected and maintained	59% (2023)	73% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Managing urban development Community satisfaction with managing urban development	New measure to be developed	TBD	TBD	TBD

Strategy PI-4
Provide safe, secure and affordable water and sewerage services.

CONTRIBUTORS include
MidCoast Council, Water NSW.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Water supply health incidents Number of health incidents per 1000 properties connected to the water supply	0 (2023)	0	Maintain	Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Water quality Drinking water meets the 2011 Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for e-coli (100%) and chemical (95%) compliance	E-coli 100% Chemical 98.5% (2023)	-	Maintain	Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Reliability of water supply Water breaks per 100km of mains	10.15 (2022-23)	12.56	Decrease	Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Affordability of water supply Cost of residential water supply maintains a reasonable price point - typical residential bill per year per residential property	$794.42 (2022-23)	$667.01 (Average for Office of Local Government Group 5)	Hold steady	Your Council[27] (Annual)
Sewerage treatment Number of health incidents per 1000 properties connected to sewerage services	0 (2023)	0	Maintain	Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Quality of sewerage treatment % of effluent samples that are compliant with required concentration limits	99.29% (2023)	-	Maintain	Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Reliability of sewerage services Number of sewer overflows per 100km of pipe installed	1.62	0.79 per 100km (NSW median)	Decrease	Local water utility performance report[20] (Annual)
Affordability of sewerage treatment Cost of residential sewerage services maintains a reasonable price point – typical residential bill per year per connected property	$1,049.60 (2022-23)	$965.86 (Average for Office of Local Government Group 5)	Hold steady	Your Council[27] (Annual)

Strategy PI-5

Provide a safe, reliable and well-maintained road and broader transport network with options for active and shared travel.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Bicycle NSW, bus operators, e-bike operators, Community Transport, NSW Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, MidCoast Council, Transport for NSW.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Road Safety Number of road crashes per annum resulting in a moderate or serious injury or fatality The number of crashes resulting in a fatality is shown in square brackets	176 [4] (2023)	-	Decrease	Transport for NSW LGA Crashes Summary[28] (Annual)
Cyclist and pedestrian safety Number of road crashes per annum resulting in a moderate or serious injury or fatality to a cyclist or pedestrian The number of crashes resulting in a fatality is shown in square brackets	15 [0] (2023)	-	Decrease	Transport for NSW LGA Crashes Summary[28] (Annual)
Safe and efficient travel % of the community who agree or strongly agree that traffic systems provide for safe and efficient traffic flow	42% (2023)	-	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Active and shared travel % of population who travel to work by walking only, bicycle or public transport (train or bus)	4.3% (2021)	4.1%	Increase	ABS Census via .id economic profile[30] (5-yearly)
Public transport % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that public transport is adequate for their needs	29% (2023)	32% (Micromex Regional Benchmark) Group 5)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Provision of bike paths % of survey participants who are at least somewhat satisfied with the provision of bike paths	54% (2023)	71% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Provision of footpaths Community satisfaction with the provision of footpaths	New measure to be developed	TBD	TBD	TBD

Community Outcome Measures

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Landscape and Aesthetic Index The community's perception of the attractiveness of the landscape they live in based on their level of agreement with the following statements: I like the environment and surrounds I live in; there are attractive buildings/homes in my community; and there are attractive natural places in my community eg parks, bushland *1 = low attractiveness to 7 = very high attractiveness*	TBD	TBD	TBD	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Urban vitality and lifestyle % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that there is urban vitality and a good lifestyle quality in the region	46% (2023)	68% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Homelessness Rate of homelessness per 10,000 people The number of homeless people is shown in square brackets. "Homelessness" includes those living in impoverished dwellings, tents or sleeping out, living in supported accommodation for the homeless, people staying temporarily with other households, people living in boarding houses and other temporary lodgings, and people living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	30.6 per 10,000 people [296] (2021)	43 per 10,000 people	Decrease	ABS Census via Homelessness NSW Dashboard[4]
Managing growth Community satisfaction with managing urban and population growth	New measure to be developed	TBD	TBD	TBD

ACTIONS WE CAN EACH TAKE:

- **Community involvement** - Participate in local clean-up and maintenance events for parks and public spaces
- **Advocate for accessibility** - Support initiatives that improve accessibility for people with disabilities
- **Report issues -** Use local government apps or hotlines to report maintenance issues in public areas
- **Support affordable housing projects** - Advocate for and support local affordable housing developments
- **Volunteer** - Help with organisations that build or renovate homes for those in need
- **Education** - Learn about housing policies and share information to raise awareness
- **Participate in planning meetings** - Attend local council meetings to voice support for sustainable development
- **Support heritage conservation** - Advocate for the preservation of historical sites and buildings
- **Educate on water issues** - Raise awareness about the importance of water conservation and quality
- **Advocate for sustainable infrastructure** - Support initiatives for safer bike lanes, footpaths, and public transport improvements

LINKS TO THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2041:

Objective 5: Plan for 'nimble' neighbourhoods, diverse housing and sequenced development
Objective 6: Conserve heritage, landscapes, environmentally sensitive areas, waterways and drinking water catchments
Objective 9: Sustain and balance productive rural landscapes

Our Economic Prosperity

Community Outcome

The MidCoast is an ideal place to work, live, visit, and invest.

We all benefit from a diverse and resilient economy that provides the businesses and services we need.

There are employment opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. Our young people can build a vibrant career right here.

Our workforce is ready for today's and tomorrow's employers.

Challenges

- Low supply of "ready for sale" residential and employment land
- Retention of our young people
- Meeting skill gaps
- Lack of industry diversity
- Lack of a local face-to-face university campus and clear pathways for youth employment

Opportunities

- Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship
- Support the developing creative sector
- Activate our town centres
- Attract population driven businesses (retail, personal services, service industries)
- Encourage different business models (eg social enterprise)
- Look for industry sectors outside of the big three of health, construction and retail
- Increase the number of employing (rather than sole trader) businesses

Strategy EP-1

Support and develop local businesses and attract new businesses across a range of industries.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Aboriginal Development Organisations, Business NSW, MidCoast Business Chambers of Commerce, MidCoast Council, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, peak industry bodies, Regional Development Australia (Mid North Coast).

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Gross Regional Product (GRP) Total value of goods and services produced in the MidCoast economy per annum ($m)	$4,791m (2022-23)	-	Increase	National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NEIR) via .id economic profile[30] (Annual)
Contribution of the MidCoast to the NSW economy Gross Regional Product as a share of the NSW Gross State Product	0.65% (2022-23)	-	Increase	National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NEIR) via .id economic profile[30] (Annual)
Number of businesses Total number of businesses across all industries	7,484 (2023)	-	Increase	ABS Region Summary: MidCoast[14] (Annual)
Business Growth Net annual business growth (entries less exits)	66 per annum (2023)	-	Increase	ABS Region Summary: MidCoast[14] (Annual)
Employing Businesses % of businesses across all industries employing 1 or more people	39.5% (2023)	-	Increase	ABS Region Summary: MidCoast[14] (Annual)

STRATEGY EP-1 CONTINUED OVER

Strategy EP-1 continued

Support and develop local businesses and attract new businesses across a range of industries.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Industry diversity via the Industry Entropy Index which is informed by the relative employment per industry *1 = a lack of industry diversity to 2.94 = maximum diversity (for 19 industry sectors)*	2.69 (2023)	2.79 (Regional NSW)	Increase	Calculated from NEIR estimates via .id economic profile for 19 industry sectors[30] (Annual)
Number of local jobs Total number of jobs across all industries located in the region	35,546 (2023)	-	Increase	National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NEIR) via .id economic profile[30] (Annual)
Residents' business and services needs met % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree with the statement "Shops and services in shopping areas meet residents' needs"	52% (2023)	50% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Availability of work opportunities % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree with the statement "The local economy provides a wide range of work opportunities"	39% (2023)	29% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)

Strategy EP-2

Develop and promote the MidCoast as a top destination for visitors, conferences and events.

CONTRIBUTORS include

Destination NSW, Destination North Coast, Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils, MidCoast Council, NSW Tourism Association, Tourism Australia, tourism operators.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Annual visitation Number of overnight domestic and international visitors per annum	1.22m (2023-24)	-	Increase	Tourism Research data survey via .id economic profile[30] (Annual)
Visitor Spend Average overnight spend by domestic and international visitors ($)	$564 (2023-24)	-	Increase	Tourism Research data survey via .id economic profile[30] (Annual)

Strategy EP-3

Develop, attract and retain a skilled and diverse workforce.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Jobs and Skills Australia, NSW Department of Education, Registered Training Providers, Secondary Schools, Taree Universities Campus, TAFE NSW, Universities, MidCoast Connect, MidCoast Business Chambers of Commerce, SafeWork NSW.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Unemployment rate The proportion of the resident labour force (those in work or looking for work and aged over 15) who are looking for work	4.1% (June 2024)	3.4% (Regional NSW)	Decrease	ABS and Centrelink data via .id economic profile[30] (Quarterly)
Labour force participation rate The labour force as a percentage of the total population Labour force participants are defined as those people aged 15 years and over who, in the week prior to Census night, have a full time or part time job, or who did not have a job but were actively looking for and available to start work	43.9% (2021)	56.4% (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS via .id economic profile[30] (5-yearly)
Youth engagement % of 15-24 year-olds who are engaged in employment, education or training	85.5% (2021)	89.5% (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS via .id economic profile[30] (5-yearly)
Aboriginal employment gap ratio The ratio of the Aboriginal employment rate to non-Aboriginal employment rate Employed persons is the sum of full-time, part-time and employed but away from work	92.5% (2021)	94.8% (NSW)	Increase	ABS Census All persons QuickStats[13] and ABS Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats[31] (5-yearly)
Workers with a vocational qualification % of the workforce who have attained a Certificate III, Certificate IV, diploma or advanced diploma	39.4% (2021)	36.8% (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS via .id economic profile[30] (5-yearly)
Workers with a university degree % of the workforce who have attained a University Qualification (bachelor's degree or above)	19.1 (2021)	17.8% (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS via .id economic profile[30] (5-yearly)
Availability of education and training opportunities % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree with the statement "There are good education and training opportunities available"	49% (2023)	39% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)

Community Outcome Measures

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Recommend the community as a good place to live Survey participants' level of agreement with the statement "I would recommend my community to others as a good place to live" *1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree*	5.6 out of 7 (2023)	5.2 out of 7 (Regional NSW)	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Community economic wellbeing Survey participants' perception of the economic wellbeing based on their level of agreement with the following statements: there are plenty of jobs available around here at the moment; and local businesses in this town are doing pretty well at the moment *1 = low level of community economic wellbeing to 7 = high levels of community economic wellbeing*	3.2 out of 7 (2023)	3.9 out of 7	Increase	University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey[12] (Annual)
Index of Relative Social Disadvantage A measure of the economic and social conditions of people in an area A low score means more disadvantage, while a high score means less disadvantage	942.5 (2021)	982.0 (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS Census via .id social atlas[16] (5-yearly)
Distribution of social disadvantage Gap between the highest and lowest levels of Relative Social Disadvantage across communities in the MidCoast	177.0 (2021)	-	Decrease	ABS Census via .id social atlas[16] (5-yearly)
Household income Median weekly household income ($)	$1,114 (2021)	$1,466 (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS Census via .id social atlas[16] (5-yearly)
Low-income households % of total households who are earning less than $800 per week (before tax)	34.7% (2021)	26.0% (Regional NSW)	Decrease	ABS Census via .id social atlas[16] (5-yearly)
Population below the poverty line Proportion of the community below 50% of the national median income	43.1% (2021)	30.73% (Hunter region)	Decrease	ABS Census data via the Hunter SDG Dashboard – No Poverty[32] (5-yearly)
Gender pay gap Difference in pay between men and women (people aged 15+) Gender pay gap is calculated as (male average earnings - female average earnings) / male average earnings	17.5% (2021)	31.4% (Hunter region)	Decrease	ABS Census data via Hunter SDG Dashboard – Gender equality[32] (5-yearly)
Number of young people in the region Proportion of the MidCoast's population aged 18-24 years (to give an indication of the retention of young people)	5.3% (2021)	7.6 (Regional NSW)	Increase	ABS (Region Summary)[14] (5-yearly)

Community Outcome Measures continued

ACTIONS WE CAN EACH TAKE:

- **Shop locally** - Support local businesses by shopping at farmers' markets, local shops, and using local services
- **Promote local products** - Share and promote local products and services on social media
- **Invest in community projects** - Participate in or fund local community projects and initiatives
- **Volunteer for events** - Help organise or volunteer at local events and festivals
- **Promote tourism** - Share experiences and photos of local attractions on social media to attract visitors
- **Support local tourism businesses** - Use and recommend local tour operators, hotels, and restaurants
- **Mentorship programs** - Participate in or support mentorship programs to help develop local students and young professionals
- **Continuous learning** - Engage in lifelong learning and encourage others to do the same by attending workshops and courses
- **Support vocational training** - Advocate for and support vocational training programs that align with local industry needs
- **Promote inclusivity** - Advocate for inclusive hiring practices and support diversity in the workplace

LINKS TO THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2041:

Objective 2: Support the right of Aboriginal residents to economic self-determination

Objective 8: Plan for businesses and services at the heart of healthy, prosperous and innovative communities

Objective 9: Sustain and balance productive rural landscapes

Our Leadership

Community Outcome

We are engaged in our future and collaborate to make positive change for the MidCoast.

We have confidence and trust in our elected representatives and community leaders.

Decisions are evidence-based and informed by community input. Decisions also balance the interests of current and future generations.

Our Council is financially sustainable. Together, all levels of government deliver the facilities and services we need.

Challenges

- Engaging with hard-to-reach groups
- Ensuring engagement is representative of the whole community
- Balancing community expectations with availability of funding
- Co-ordination across the three levels of government
- Skills shortages
- Managing risks (eg climate risks, cyber risks)

Opportunities

- Collaborate across the public and private sectors

Strategy L-1

Inform, engage and involve the community in community projects and decision-making.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Media outlets, MidCoast Council, MidCoast Council advisory groups, local, state and federal government elected representatives and agencies.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Community engagement The total number of participants involved in Council-led community engagement activities per annum	8,625 (2023-24)	-	Increase	MidCoast Council Annual Report (Annual)
Consideration of community views % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that Council adequately considers community concerns and views when making decisions	19% (2023)	25% (Micromex Regional Benchmark)	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)
Participation in MidCoast Council public forums The total number of speakers from the community at Public Forums held prior to MidCoast Council meetings	69 (2023-24)	-	Increase	MidCoast Council internal data (Ongoing updates)
Community involvement % of survey participants who agree or strongly agree that we are an active community where people get involved in local issues and activities	New measure to be developed	TBD	TBD	TBD

Strategy L-2

Build our ability to deliver community outcomes through capacity building, growing partnerships, and advocating for funding, services and enabling infrastructure.

CONTRIBUTORS include
Business community, community organisations, community service organisations, Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils, MidCoast Council, local, state and federal government elected representatives and agencies, volunteer organisations.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Effectiveness of local groups and organisations % of survey participants who agree that local groups and organisations are good at getting things done	56% (2022)	-	Increase	Early Insights for More Resilient Communities Dashboard[33] (Annual)
Internet access % of survey participants who report having at least good access to reliable, high-speed internet access in the region	33% (2022)	-	Increase	Early Insights for More Resilient Communities Dashboard[33] (Annual)
Mobile phone reception % of survey participants who report having at least good mobile phone reception in the region	31% (2022)	-	Increase	Early Insights for More Resilient Communities Dashboard[33] (Annual)

Strategy L-3

Provide open and transparent leadership with a focus on clear decision-making processes and ongoing communication with the community.

CONTRIBUTORS include
MidCoast Council, local, state and federal government elected representatives.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Access to local government information Number of formal Government Information Public Access (GIPA) requests completed per annum and % processed within legislated guidelines and timeframes (shown in square brackets) *Please refer to Appendix 2 - Glossary of Terms for further information on GIPA Requests*	78 [100%] (2023-24)	-	Maintain processing completion rates	MidCoast Council Annual Report (Annual)
Access to local government information Number of informal Government Information Public Access (GIPA) requests completed per annum	1,521 (2023-24)	-	-	MidCoast Council Annual Report (Annual)

Strategy L-4

Deliver services to the community with a focus on customer service, efficiency, continuous improvement and long-term financial health.

CONTRIBUTORS include

MidCoast Council, MidCoast Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, NSW agencies and service providers, NSW Audit Office, NSW Office of Local Government.

MEASURES

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
MidCoast Council's operating performance ratio Council's achievement in containing operating expenditure within operating income	3.33% (2023-24)	-	Maintain above 0.00%	MidCoast Council Annual Report[34] (Annual)
MidCoast Council's debt service cover ratio Availability of operating cash to service debt including interest, principal and lease payments	4.16x (2023-24)	-	Maintain above 2.0x	MidCoast Council Annual Report[34] (Annual)
MidCoast Council's infrastructure backlog ratio Infrastructure backlog in proportion to the total written down value (the value of an asset after accounting for depreciation, reflecting the asset's present worth) of Council's infrastructure The calculation of this ratio is based on a cost to bring Council assets to a condition rating of good – level 2 rather than satisfactory – level 3	10.04% (2023-24)	4.71 (NSW average 2022/23)	Decrease to less than 2.00%	MidCoast Council Annual Report[34] (Annual)
MidCoast Council's building and infrastructure renewal ratio Rate at which assets are being renewed against the rate at which they are depreciating Renewal is defined as the replacement of existing assets to equivalent capacity or performance capability, as opposed to the acquisition of new assets	115.6% (2023-24)	114.93% (NSW average 2022/23)	Maintain > 100%	MidCoast Council Annual Report[34] (Annual)
Governance and administration expenditure per capita Amount of money spent by MidCoast Council on governance and administrative functions for each resident in the region Includes costs related to salaries of elected officials and administrative staff, office supplies, and operational costs; expenses related to community consultations, public meetings, and communication with residents and costs associated with compliance, planning, and regulatory activities that ensure the council meets its legal obligations	$261.25 (2022-23)	$347.89 (OLG Group 5 - Regional Town/City)		Your Council[27] (Annual)
Contact with MidCoast Council % of survey participants who were satisfied or very satisfied with the way their contact with MidCoast Council was handled	47% (2023)	-	Increase	MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey[9] (3-yearly)

Community Outcome Measures

Indicator	MidCoast Baseline (year/period)	Comparative Measure (if available)	Desired Trend	Data Source (frequency of data collection)
Confidence in community leadership % of survey participants who agree that "whatever the problem is, someone takes the lead and sorts it out"	42% (2022)	-	Increase	Early Insights for More Resilient Communities Dashboard[34] (Annual)

ACTIONS WE CAN EACH TAKE:

- **Attend meetings** - Participate in local council and state agency meetings and public forums to stay informed and voice opinions
- **Share information** - Use social media and community boards to share updates and information about local projects
- **Volunteer** - Join community advisory boards or committees to directly contribute to decision-making processes
- **Fill out surveys** - Take the time to complete surveys distributed by the council or local organisations
- **Engage online** - Use online platforms to provide feedback and engage in discussions about community projects
- **Network** - Build relationships with local organisations, businesses, and government representatives
- **Collaborate on projects** - Partner with other groups to work on community projects and initiatives
- **Advocate for partnerships** - Support policies and initiatives that encourage collaboration between various organisations
- **Hold leaders accountable** - Participate in local elections and hold elected officials accountable for their actions
- **Provide feedback** - Offer constructive feedback on council services and operations to help identify areas for improvement

LINKS TO THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2041:

None applicable

Being accountable

On behalf of the community, MidCoast Council will regularly report back on the community's progress towards achieving our Vision and Community Outcomes.

The State of the MidCoast Report will be published every four years to provide a status update on how our community is tracking against the goals we set ourselves in this *MidCoast 2035* plan. State of the MidCoast Reports are available on MidCoast Council's website .

Appendices

Appendix 1
Linking *MidCoast 2035* to State and regional plans

The priorities of the NSW Government influence what we need to do in the MidCoast. Through the delivery of its strategies, *MidCoast 2035* will contribute to achieving the goals of the following key State and regional plans.

	Our Wellbeing	Our Natural Environment	Our Places and Infrastructure	Our Economic Prosperity	Our Leadership
Hunter Regional Plan 2041	■	■	■	■	■
NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2042		■	■	■	
NSW Future Transport Strategy		■	■	■	
Hunter Regional Transport Plan			■	■	
NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041		■	■	■	
NSW Government Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030		■	■	■	■
NSW Water Strategy		■	■		
Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy		■	■		■
NSW Government Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+	■		■	■	■
NSW 2040 Economic Blueprint			■	■	
MidCoast Regional Economic Development Strategy		■	■	■	■
NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan	■		■	■	

HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2041

Developed in 2022, this Strategy is the NSW Government's 20-year blueprint for the Hunter's future. It focuses on the economy, environment, communities, housing, and jobs.

NSW STATE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2022-2042

This Strategy assesses infrastructure problems and solutions. It provides recommendations to grow the State's economy, enhance productivity and improve living standards for the NSW community.

NSW FUTURE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Future Transport outlines Transport for NSW's vision and sets the direction for the future of mobility in NSW. It outlines a vision to deliver safe, healthy, sustainable, accessible, and integrated passenger and freight journeys.

HUNTER REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN

This Plan is a blueprint for the future and a strategic direction for the delivery of major projects in the Hunter region over the next 20 years.

NSW WASTE AND SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS STRATEGY 2041

This Strategy outlines actions to deliver on the State's long-term objectives to transition to a circular economy.

NSW GOVERNMENT'S NET ZERO PLAN STAGE 1: 2020-2030

This Plan is the State's foundation for action on climate change, with a goal to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

NSW WATER STRATEGY

This Strategy is the first 20-year water strategy for all of NSW. It aims to improve the security, reliability, quality and resilience of our water resources over the long term. It sets the priorities and outlines the plan to deliver on these outcomes.

GREATER HUNTER REGIONAL WATER STRATEGY

This Strategy is designed to manage the region's water needs over the next 30 years. The Strategy outlines options to improve water security within the Greater Hunter.

NSW GOVERNMENT CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN 2025+

This is the State's plan to deliver infrastructure to strengthen the depth and quality of our cultural sector.

NSW 2040 ECONOMIC BLUEPRINT

The 2040 Blueprint sets the direction for NSW economic success in a changing world. It makes recommendations about where to focus efforts for NSW to become Australia's first trillion-dollar state by 2030 and its first two trillion-dollar state after 2040.

MIDCOAST REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (REDS)

The REDS guides policy and investment decisions to enhance resilience and drive sustainable, long-term economic growth in the MidCoast Local Government Area.

NSW DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2021-2025 (DIAP)

This four-year Plan provides the blueprint for improving outcomes for people with disability across NSW. It aligns with Australia's Disability Strategy and our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Appendix 2 – Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Values: The traditional beliefs and practices of Aboriginal people, including important plants and animals, special places, and ways to show respect for others.

Active Transport: Any form of physical activity whose primary purpose is getting from one place to another.

Advocate: To speak up or argue for something, like a cause or idea.

Affordable housing: Housing options that are priced within reach for low to moderate-income households.

Assets: Things of value that a person or organisation owns, like property or money.

Biodiversity: The variety of living things, including different plants, animals, and tiny organisms, as well as the ecosystems they create.

Climate change: Long-term changes in the average weather in a region or the whole Earth, often caused by activities that release greenhouse gases.

Community: All the people in an area, including residents, business owners, workers, visitors, and local government.

Community buildings: Community buildings include public toilets, halls, community centres, men's sheds, surf lifesaving clubs, sporting buildings, showground buildings, libraries, MidCoast Council operational buildings, an art gallery and entertainment centre.

Community outcomes: Statements that guide plans for improving the community.

Crown land: Land that is owned by the State, managed through the NSW Crown Land Management Act (2016). The land often managed on behalf of the State by local government or other authorities and organisations; such as showgrounds and parks.

Culture: The creative activities and expressions of a place, including arts, music, traditions, and events that reflect its history and identity.

Ecosystem: All the plants and animals that live in a particular area together with the complex relationship that exists between them and their environment.

Environment: The environment is everything around us that affects how we live. It includes the:

- Natural Environment: This is made up of things like air, water, land, and plants and animals.
- Social Environment: This includes the people and culture around us, like family, friends, and community.
- Physical Environment: This refers to buildings, roads, and other structures we see in our surroundings

Flora: The plants found in a particular area.

Fauna: The animals found in a particular area.

Financial sustainability: This means having enough money to meet all financial needs and maintain services and assets.

Government Information (Public Access) Requests: Members of the public may request access to government agencies and Council to provide access to certain information that it holds. The GIPA Act provides for government bodies to release information publicly on its website (called open access information), in response to an informal request for access or in response to a formal application for access. Certain restrictions do apply to the type of information you can view and receive a copy of. For more information refer to information from the NSW Information and Privacy Commission[35] or information request guidelines[36] available on MidCoast Council's website.

Gross Regional Product (GRP): The total value of all goods and services produced in a region in one year.

Homelessness: People living in poor conditions including in tents or sleeping out, living in supported accommodation for the homeless, people staying temporarily with other households, people living in boarding houses and other temporary lodgings, and people living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

Housing affordability: A measure of how affordable housing is for people based on their income.

Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD): A measure that shows the economic and social conditions of people in an area. The IRSD is derived from attributes such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, jobs in relatively unskilled occupations, overcrowded dwellings and households with jobless parents, as well as other variables that broadly reflect disadvantage. Relatively low index values reflect relatively disadvantaged areas.

Indicators: Measures used to track progress toward community outcomes.

Impacts: The long-term effects of a program on society, the economy, or the environment.

Infrastructure: Built structures like roads, bridges, buildings, water supply systems, sewers, and other facilities.

Monitoring: A planned process of regularly collecting, analysing, and reporting data, and then acting on that information.

Native species: Plants or animals that are originally from a specific area, like New South Wales, or that naturally belong to a local region.

Public open space and/or open space: Public open space refers to land that local governments manage for public use, including both crown land and land owned by the council. This space is available for recreation and leisure activities. Examples of public open spaces include parks, sports fields, beaches and coastal reserves.

Recreational assets: include playgrounds, wharfs/jetties, boat ramps, ocean baths, picnic shelters and barbeques, sporting facilities, skateparks and parkland.

Resilience: The ability of people, communities, and systems to survive and adapt to challenges, such as ongoing issues (like lack of affordable housing) and sudden events (like natural disasters).

Sewer assets: Includes sewage treatment plants, recycled water treatment plants, pump stations, network pressure and gravity mains (pipes).

Social Housing: Affordable housing provided by the government or organisations for people in need.

Socio-economic disadvantage: A situation where individuals or groups have less access to resources and opportunities, often due to low income, education, or employment.

Sustainable development: Development that meets the needs of today without harming the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Strategies: Plans for how to achieve each community outcome.

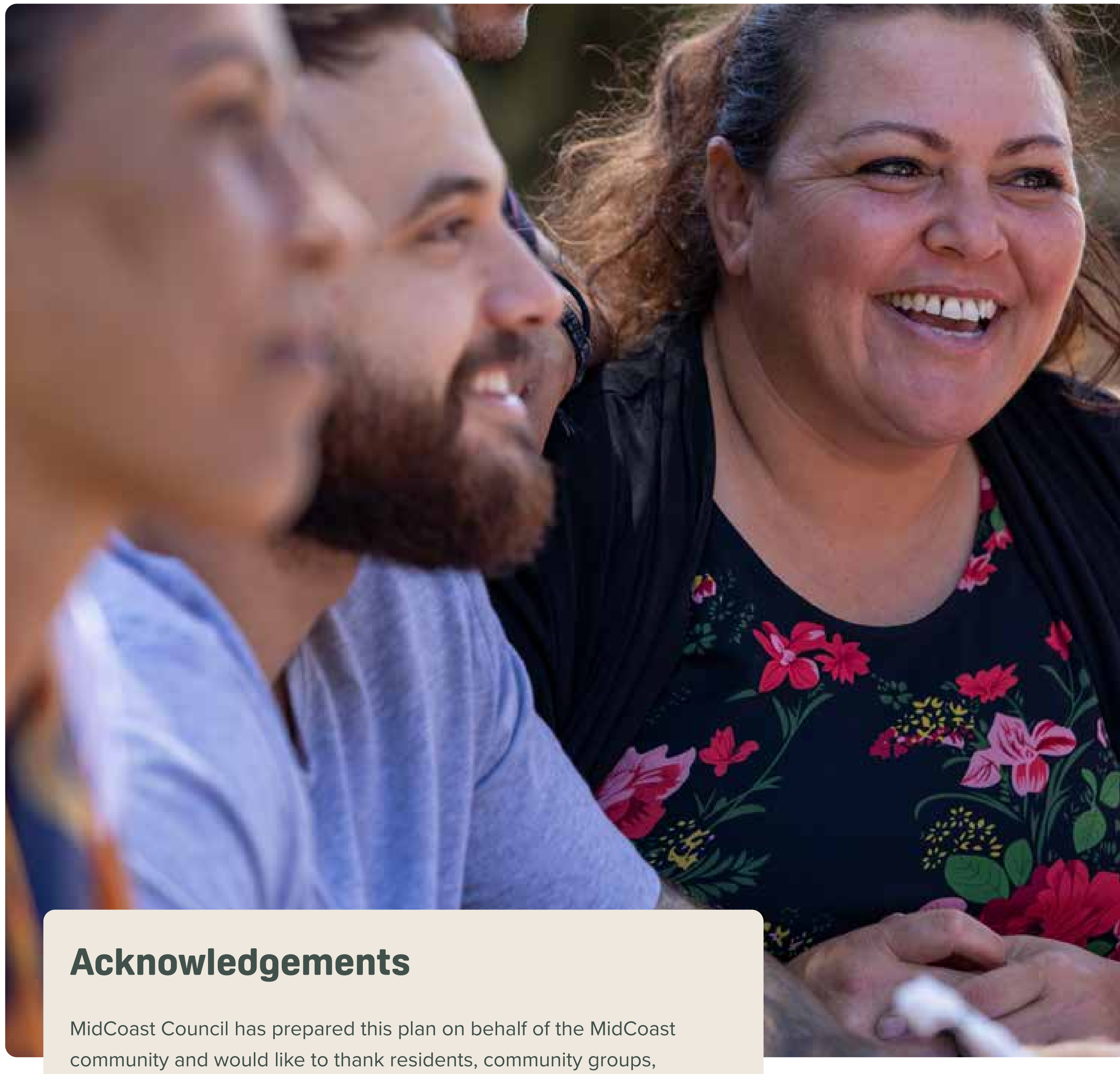
Water assets: Include treatment plants, pump stations, dams and reservoirs, bores and aquifers and network mains (pipes).

Vision: The community's hopes for how they want the MidCoast to look and feel in 10 years.

Appendix 3 - References

Except where shown below, data was obtained from the MidCoast Community Profile from .id informed decisions.

1. Dementia Australia - Dementia Prevalence Data 2024-2054
2. Australian Treasury - Filling Skills Needs and Building our Future Workforce Ch. 5
3. NSW Department of Families and Community Services - NSW Statewide Street Count Technical Paper
4. Homelessness NSW - Housing and Homelessness Dashboard
5. NSW Department of Communities and Justice - Social Housing Waitlist Data August 2024
6. NSW Department of Families and Community Services - Social housing expected waiting times
7. University of NSW City Futures Research Centre - Housing Need Dashboard
8. NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - AgTrack - Agricultural and Land Use Dashboard
9. Micromex - MidCoast Community Satisfaction Survey (2023)
10. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research - Crime Statistics by LGA
11. NSW Department of Communities and Justice - Child Protection and Out of Home Care Data Local Government Area Heat Maps
12. University of Canberra (2023) - Regional Wellbeing Survey Results and Reports
13. Australian Bureau of Statistics - Mid-Coast 2021 Census All persons QuickStats
14. Australian Bureau of Statistics - MidCoast Region Summary
15. HealthStats NSW - MidCoast LGA location overview
16. .id informed decisions - MidCoast Council social atlas
17. NSW Government SEED Portal (The Central Resource for Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data in NSW) Statewide Landcover and Tree Study (SLATS) Dashboard
18. MidCoast Council - Waterway and Catchment Report Card
19. NSW Environment Protection Authority - 2021-22 Local Government Waste and Resource Recovery Data Report
20. Water NSW - Local Water Utility Performance Report
21. Snapshot Climate - MidCoast LGA NSW Snapshot 2022 FY
22. Australian Voltaic Institute - Mapping Australian Voltaic Installations
23. Transport for NSW - Registration Snapshot Report
24. PlugShare - Find Electric Vehicle Charging Locations Near You
25. NSW Government - NSW Climate Change Adaptation Strategy
26. .id informed decisions - MidCoast Council housing monitor
27. NSW Office of Local Government - MidCoast - Your Council NSW
28. Transport for NSW - LGA Crashes Summary
29. MidCoast Council - Asset Management Data as reported for 2024 in the Asset Conditions Survey
30. .id informed decisions - MidCoast Council economic profile
31. Australian Bureau of Statistics - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats 2021
32. Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils - Hunter Region SDG Dashboard
33. Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Southern NSW Innovation Hub and University of Canberra - Early Insights for More Resilient Communities Dashboard - MidCoast
34. MidCoast Council – MidCoast Council Annual Reports
35. NSW Information and Privacy Council - Fact Sheet - Your right to access government information
36. MidCoast Council - Information Request (GIPA Request) Guidelines



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MIDCOAST 2035

Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035