



2016-17

ANNUAL REPORT

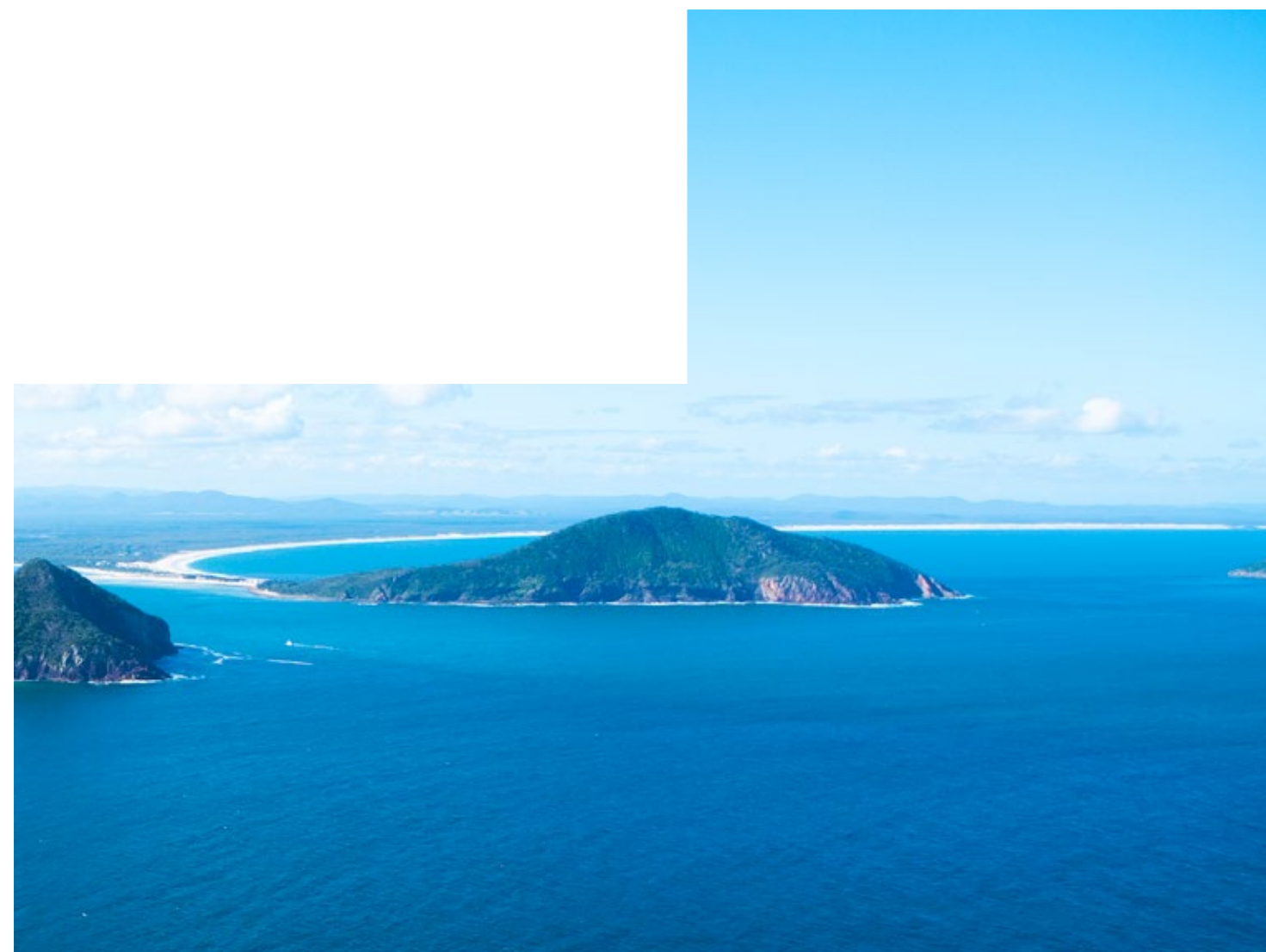
Volume Three



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL

End of Term Report 2012-2017

PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL
END OF TERM REPORT
2012 - 2017



Port Stephens Council 2012-2017

End of Term Report

Introduction


This **End of Term Report** has been prepared under Section 428 and Essential Element 1.10 of the *Local Government Act 1993*. Port Stephens Council is required to prepare a report on the progress on implementation of the Community Strategic Plan that must be presented at the final meeting of an outgoing council.¹

This report from the outgoing council should measure the implementation and effectiveness of the Community Strategic Plan in achieving its social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives over the past four years.² This report has been prepared using recommended format for the report – a 'state of the LGA' style, which uses measurement indicators to show change over time.

This is the third report of its type to be prepared for the Port Stephens Local Government Area (LGA), the second version having been tabled and subsequently adopted with Council's Annual Report 2015-2016. Every four years at the conclusion of the term of a council a new report will be prepared. Please note that this is a snapshot of the LGA as a whole, with measures of progress against goals that the community of Port Stephens wants to see achieved for its community. The role of Council – aside from being the reporting agency – is to advocate on its community's behalf to other levels of government; and to document in this report the contributions it has made since the last report towards the achievement of those goals.

Methodology

 *In preparing the End of Term Report Council should indicate its own contribution to the outcomes for the community compared to the Community Strategic Plan as well as those of other agencies' and community contributions.³ Council's contribution is shown throughout the Report in a blue frame.*

 Where other agencies have lead or contributed significantly to outcomes these are shown throughout the Report in an orange/red frame.

Using the themes and strategic directions in the Community Strategic Plan Port Stephens 2023, this Port Stephens 2012-2017 End of Term Report has identified data from publicly available, credible sources as well as Council's own records.

This Report uses graphical and tabular illustrations to visually represent performance data. The frequency of when the data are collected for each measure varies. Some data are measured monthly, or more frequently, others each quarter or annually with some relying on collections such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics' census data which are collected every five years. There is often a lag in the time between the collection period and the reporting time. There are almost no measures that absolutely correlate to the term of the current Council of Port Stephens.

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Disclaimer

Port Stephens Council End of Term Report 2012-2017© was prepared in June 2017 as an information source only and represents a compilation of the best available data at the time of preparation.

Despite our best efforts, Port Stephens Council makes no statements, representations or warranties about the accuracy, completeness or reliability of any information contained in the report. The Council disclaims all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages and costs you might incur as a result of the information being inaccurate or incomplete in any way, and for any reason.

¹ Guideline 1.10 Local Government Act 1993

² Ibid. 1.11

³ Ibid. 1.11

The Port Stephens Local Government Area is a large and complex society with a diverse population and a range of environments, businesses and recreational attributes. This Report does not claim to cover all aspects of the LGA but it is hoped that it is generally representative of the area and its people at a point in time. For example, every attempt has been made to identify groups within the LGA that have contributed to outcomes for the community; however some may not have been included. It is hoped that reading this Report will trigger feedback to ensure that future reports trend towards being more inclusive.

Data provided from external sources is the latest available at the time of writing this Report (June 2017). Similarly Council's own data do not represent the final information for financial year ended 30 June 2017 for either budgetary or operational performance but represents the latest information available.

Community Strategic Plan Indicators

At the beginning of each Theme a table presents measures that were established at the commencement of the Community Strategic Plan process and adopted in 2013 by the Council elected in September 2012. The table uses a 'traffic light' colour-code to demonstrate progress in achieving strategic goals:

Community Indicator	Outcome
Indicator	Progress is negative
Indicator	Progress is on track or acceptable
Indicator	Progress is above what was expected
Indicator	No meaningful data available

Report Coverage

This End of Term Report relates specifically to the Port Stephens Local Government Area. Most data sources define this LGA as being in the Hunter Region, although some refer to it as the Lower Hunter Region. Others such as the tourism data place the LGA in the Mid-North Coast Region.

Map 1: Location – Port Stephens LGA



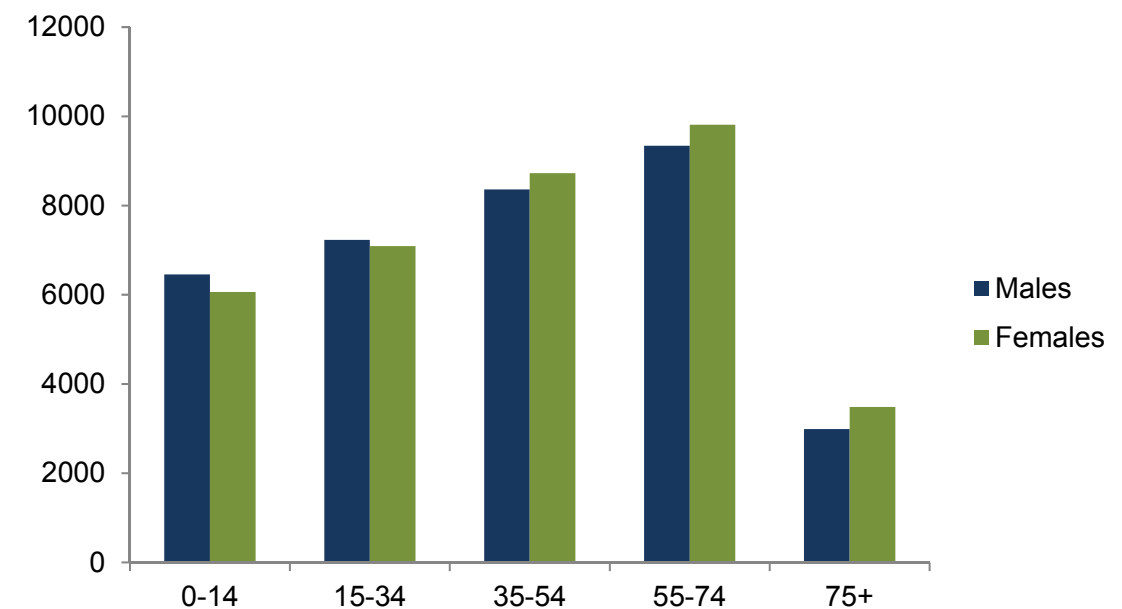
Port Stephens – A great lifestyle in a treasured environment

Our Citizens

The Australian Bureau of Statistics⁴ estimated that the population of the Port Stephens LGA as at Census 2016 was 69,556 people of whom 49.4% were males and 50.6% were females.

Table 1: Port Stephens LGA Population by Age and Gender

Port Stephens LGA - Population by Age and Gender Census 2016



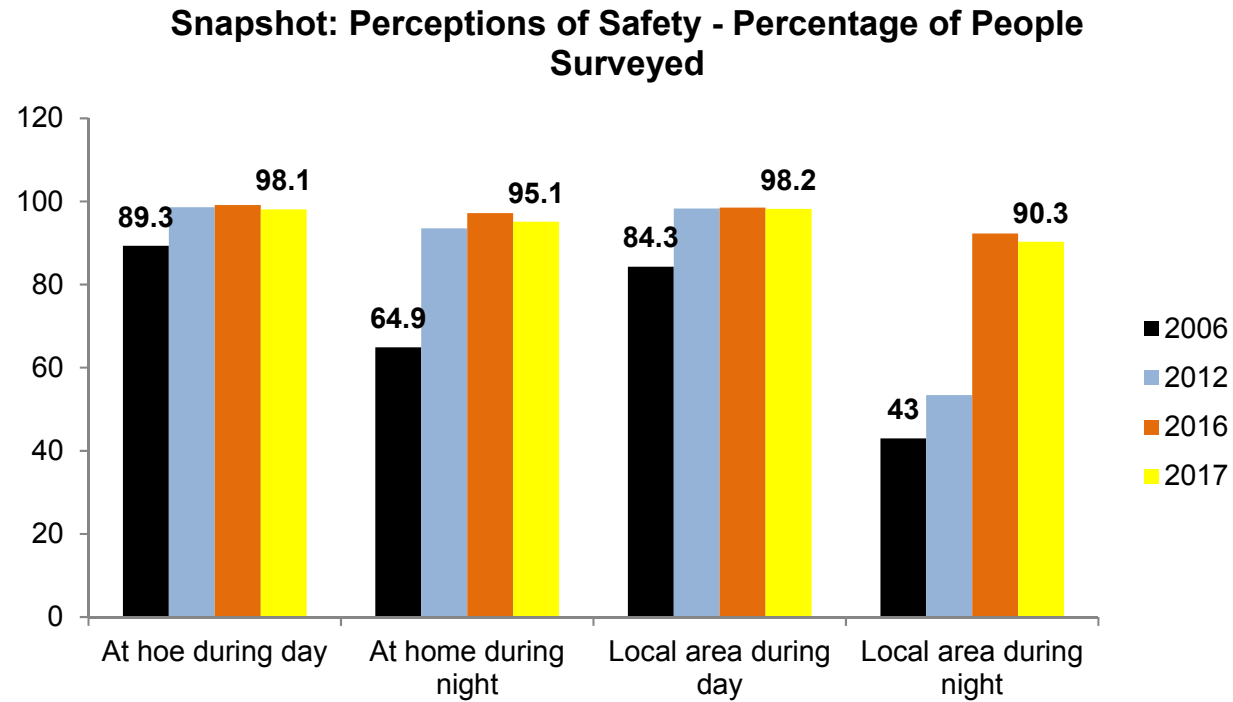
Community Strategic Plan Theme: Community Safety

Goal: A community where people feel safe.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Perceptions of Safety.	There has been further improvement in people feeling safe.
Level of Crime.	The number of serious crimes has reduced significantly.
Road Safety.	Decline in accidents, injuries and fatalities since 2010.

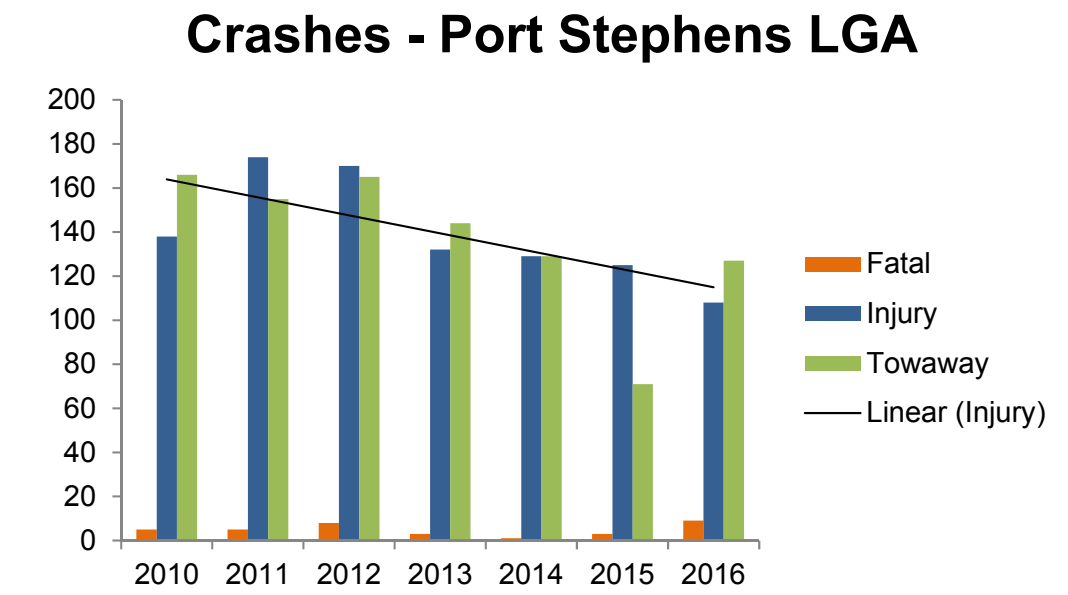
⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016.

Personal Safety⁵

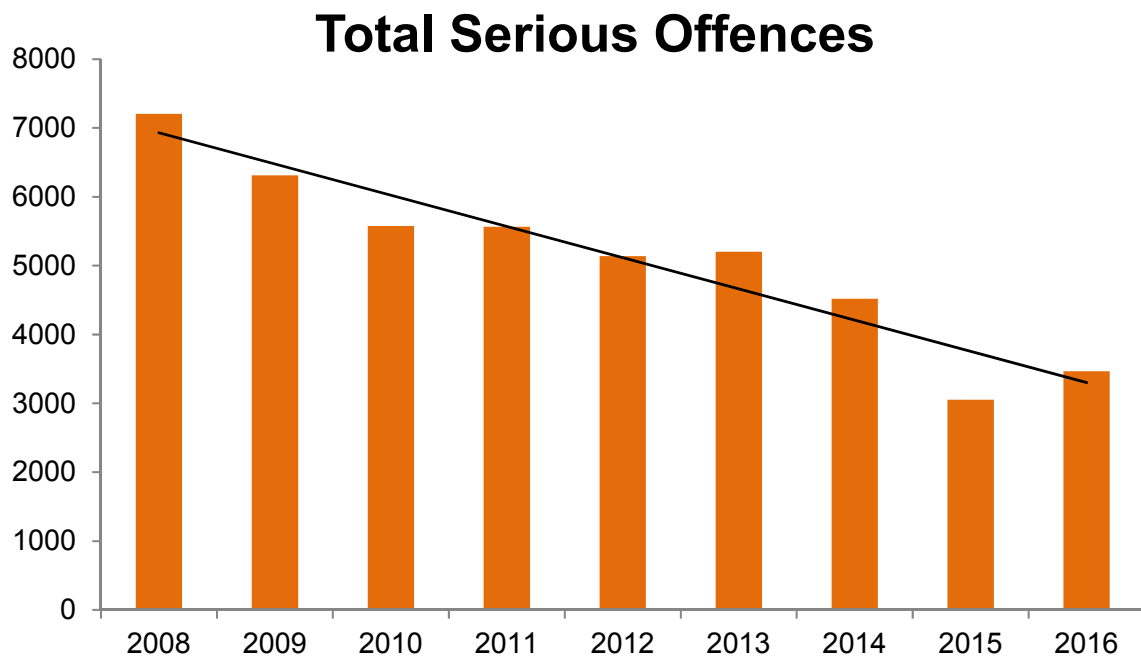


Graph 1: Perceptions of Personal Safety

Road Safety⁷



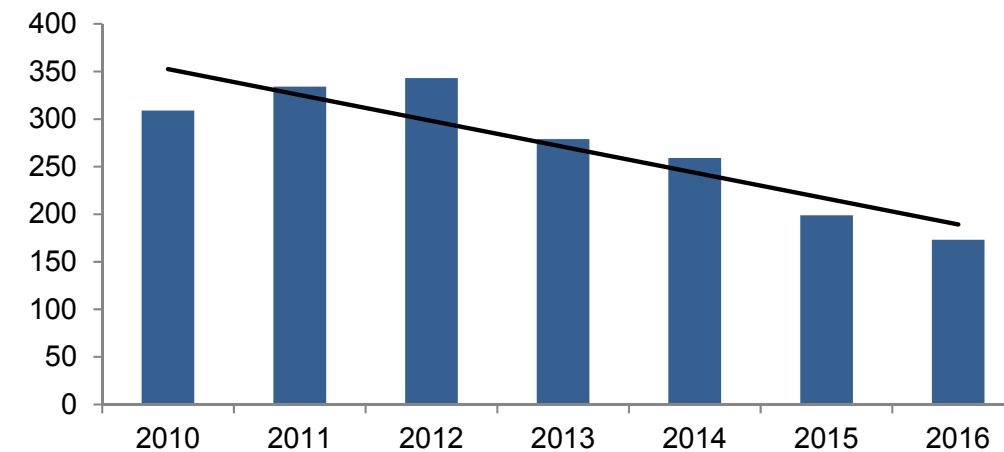
Crime Statistics⁶



Graph 2: Crime Statistics – Serious Offences

For the Port Stephens LGA the number of what the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research classifies as the 17 most serious crimes continues to decline.

Trend - Total Road Crashes Port Stephens LGA

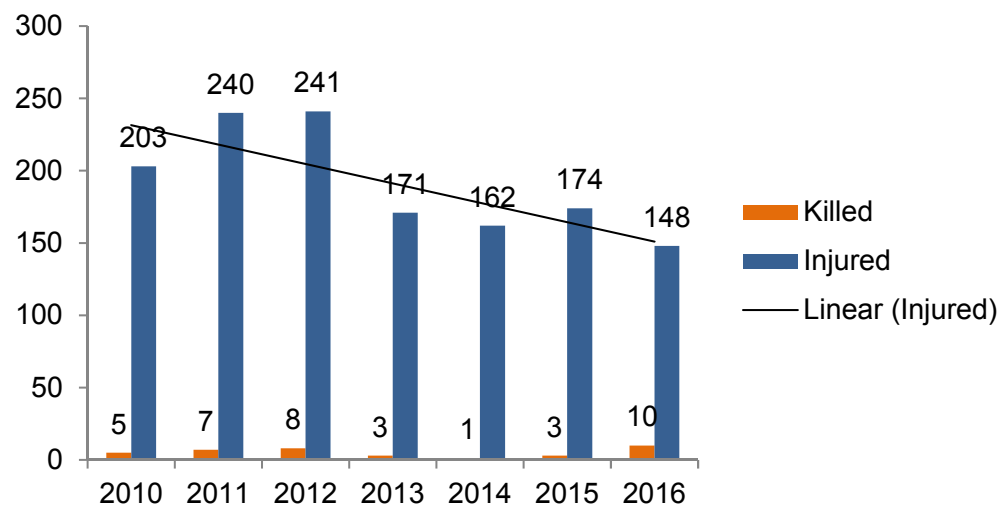


⁵ Port Stephens Council Customer Survey 2016

⁶ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/pages/bocsar_crime_stats

⁷ Source: NSW Transport <http://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/aboutthecentre/localgovernment/index.html>

Casualties - Port Stephens LGA



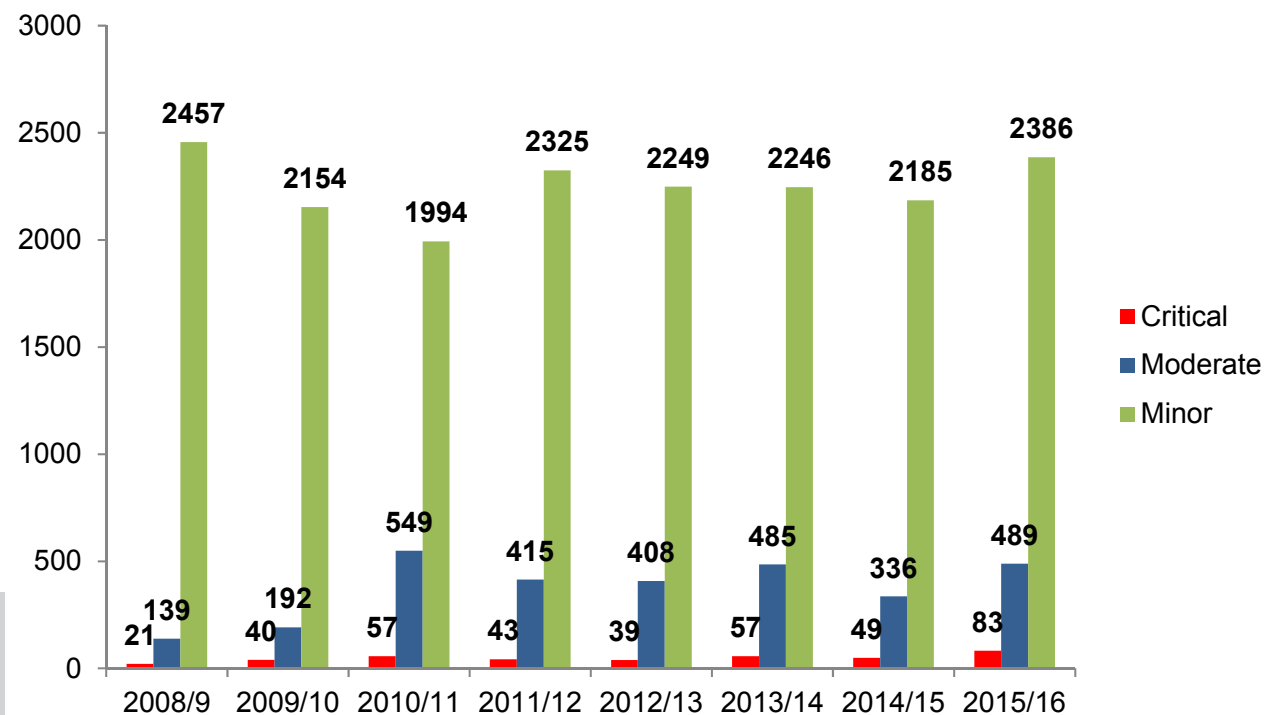
Community and Public Safety

Council's Rangers and Health and Building Surveyors provide a range of services for our community that cover littering, companion animal services, health inspections, parking, fire safety and building inspections, swimming pool safety and much more. Incidents are categorised as critical, moderate or minor and are recorded in Council's Customer Request Management system.

In 2013 Council adopted its Crime Prevention Policy 2013-2017; and provided in kind support to NSW Police in the development and implementation of the 'Steal from Motor Vehicle' operation over the Christmas period that was considered very successful in reducing the incidence of this type of criminal activity.

Graph 3: Community Safety and Compliance

Community Safety & Compliance Incidents 2008-2016



The Group Manager Facilities and Services as the Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) convenes two meetings a year of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC). These are held on the first Thursday in February and August.

During the April 2015 storms, the LEMC convened an additional four meetings to coordinate emergency responses.

Commencing 2015 Council also sponsors the Lower Hunter Emergency Management Committee (LHEMC) meetings. These include Maitland, Dungog, Cessnock and Port Stephens councils with two meetings held each year.

In August 2015 on behalf of Council the General Manager signed with Acting Superintendent Port Stephens Local Area Command (PSLAC) Guy Flaherty a newly executed memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Council and PSLAC.



Areas addressed in the MoU include cooperation between the two agencies on community safety and crime prevention education and initiatives, information sharing of data and statistics, enforcement tasks, health and safety, road closures, compliance assistance, and event and alcohol management.

Council:

- maintained 100% of asset protection zones that reduced the risk of fires spreading from Council property;
- commenced hazard reduction works on East Seaham Road, a heavily vegetated stretch of gravel road, to improve road user safety and an economic link between the rural towns of Seaham and Clarence Town;
- ensured the safety of 934,847 beach users by providing 5,082 hours of paid life guard services and 2,048 volunteer life guard service hours;
- introduced a road safety focus through the Government's Black Spot funding program;
- achieved 5% annual growth in fire safety program inspections, leading to increased public safety, awareness and additional income for Council;
- provided ranger services at the second most cost effective rate in the region; customer satisfaction with ranger service is 70% - high for a regulatory role;
- attracted \$540,000 in funding through the Federal Government Black Spot program.

Our Citizens

Community Strategic Plan Theme: Ageing Population

Goal: Improve facilities and services for an ageing population.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Access to assisted living.	New Commonwealth system in place to streamline access to assisted living.
Access to aged care facilities.	No change to current supply of aged care facilities but plans by one provider for more places.

In 2006 16.9% of the citizens of Port Stephens were aged 65 years and over.⁸ In 2011 19.3% of our citizens were aged 65 years and over.⁹ By 2016 the percentage had increased to 22.9%.¹⁰

The majority of the services and facilities for seniors are provided by the Commonwealth and State governments and Council's role has been to advocate on behalf of its ageing population.

The Commonwealth government introduced changes to aged care in Australia with the vision of creating a more sustainable aged care system for future generations. A national package of aged care reforms commenced in 2012, with the first major changes implemented on 1 July 2013.

NSW Health is working with the Commonwealth government to implement the Aged Care Reforms, organising aged and community care services for older people that better meet their changing needs, and offering greater choice and involvement in the way these services are delivered. NSW Health is committed to supporting people to access the services they need to live in their own homes and maintain their independence as they get older.

My Aged Care is the central point of access for aged care services and information in Australia. A website and contact centre provides information and referrals for clients and their carers to be assessed for aged care services. More information can be found at www.myagedcare.gov.au or by calling the My Aged Care contact centre on 1800 200 422.

From 1 July 2015:

- My Aged Care became fully operational and now conducts registration and screening of referrals for assessments by Regional Assessment Services (RAS) for referral to entry-level Home Support Services (CHSP) or comprehensive assessments by Aged Care and Assessment Teams (ACATs) for referral to residential aged care, Home Care Packages and Transitional Aged Care.
- The Commonwealth Home and Community Care (HACC) Program has transitioned to the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP).

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census

⁹ Department of Health & Ageing Population Estimates

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census

Between 1 July and 31 December 2015 ACATs transitioned to full My Aged Care functionality.

In addition to My Aged Care, the Port Stephens LGA has support services for seniors such as:

- Social support
- Health
- Education
- Domestic assistance
- Nursing

There are numerous senior service providers in the Port Stephens area providing:

- Integrated Living
- Aged care facilities
- Senior citizens
- Centrelink
- Church groups

Within the Port Stephens LGA permanent aged care places are provided by:

- Opal Raymond Terrace
- Calvary Tanilba Bay
- Uniting Care Salamander Bay
- Regis The Gardens, Corlette
- Bill King Aged Care, Fingal Bay
- Harbourside Haven Nursing Home and Hostel, Shoal Bay

These facilities may also provide respite (low care) and respite (high care) services depending upon availability.

Outside the LGA but within close proximity are many other facilities in the Maitland and Newcastle LGAs, as well as at Tea Gardens and Hawk's Nest.

There are volunteering opportunities to assist seniors including:

- Meals on Wheels
- Neighbour Aid
- Social Visiting

A full list of available services for ageing can be found at:

<http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/community/community-directory/ageing>

In 2013 Council was successful in obtaining an Aged Friendly Community grant of \$21,000 which assisted the development of the Ageing Strategy adopted in 2016.

Port Stephens Council operated Community Options – a service which brokered in-home and other respite aged care. The service was formally closed on 30 June 2015. Council was able to find alternative providers for all its remaining clients.

Our Citizens

Community Strategic Plan Theme: People with Disabilities

Goal: Improve the built environment, advocate and provide services for people with disabilities.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Options was closed due to staff funding no longer being available. Ngioka Centre - Council is working with agencies under the NDIS.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme commenced with pilot programs across a number of States and has been progressively rolled out since 2013. It was fully operational in Port Stephens from July 2016.

There are no data available specifically noting the demographics of people with disabilities within the Port Stephens LGA. However the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers¹¹ shows that almost 4.3 million (18.3 per cent) Australians reported having disability. This Survey also identified that 50.7% of people over 65 years live with a disability. Extrapolating these figures and applying to Port Stephens' population means that:

- 12,892 people in the LGA have some form of disability;
- of those 7,682 are people aged over 65 years.

It is well known that significantly higher levels of disability, especially mobility impairment occur in older age groups. Based on these estimates, the number of people currently residing in Port Stephens with some form of disability is likely to grow to over 23,000 people by the year 2031.¹²

In the Port Stephens LGA there are support services for people with disabilities such as:

- Accommodation
- Rehabilitation
- Events and activities
- Social support
- Personal care
- Education and employment

There are numerous disability service providers in Port Stephens including:

- Disability Services Australia
- Port Stephens Disability Services
- Lifestyle Solutions
- Eagleton Ridge Respite Centre
- Integrated Living

- Maiwel Group

There are many lifestyle opportunities in all areas of Port Stephens such as:

- Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA)
- Sailability Port Stephens
- Meals on Wheels
- Social Support
- Education

A full list of available services for citizens with disability needs is available at:

<http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/community/community-directory/disability>

In 2014 Council developed and adopted a Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2014-2018. The DAP was developed after extensive community consultation, which identified the key challenges facing people with disabilities in the Port Stephens LGA. These are:

- Housing
- Health
- Employment
- Lack of localised services.

Respondents indicated that Port Stephens Council should prioritise the following as the best way Council can consider people with disabilities in the Port Stephens LGA (in ranking order from most important to least):

- Improved physical access in the built environment (eg parking, shops, toilets, footpaths);
- Advocacy (eg lobbying for improvements in Council and in the general community);
- Employment (eg Council employment opportunities);
- Information and localised awareness initiatives (eg community events).

Port Stephens Council operated Community Options – a service which brokered in-home and other respite disability care. The service was formally closed on 30 June 2015. Council was able to find alternative providers for all its remaining clients.

During 2015-2017 Council:

- reviewed the Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan in conjunction with its engineering and design staff;
- reviewed Council's Disability Action Plan referencing the National Disability Insurance Scheme reporting requirements now documented to ensure compliance;
- implemented the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Council supplies a garbage bin (blue dot) service to people with disabilities living at home. This service is available on a weekly basis to residents who apply for the service.

¹¹ 4430.0.10.001 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: First Results, 2015 (29 April 2016)

¹² Port Stephens Council Disability Action Plan 2014-2018 p4

Council's Ngioka Horticultural and Therapy Centre provided for disability groups who accessed the Centre to be involved in the production of local native plants for the Council and Landcare conservation. They also conducted arts and crafts programs. Ngioka Centre was accredited for the NDIS. In 2017 a review of the Centre has led to recommendations for Council to cease to be the operator of the Centre and for a lease arrangement to be made with other providers.

Picture: Clients working at Ngioka Centre



Approximately 30% of the library resources budget was allocated to large print, talking books and audio navigators. These items form an important part of the collection and are especially relevant for elderly and sight impaired customers. In 2014-2015, Library Services upgraded to the current model audio navigator, of which there are now 20 available for customers to borrow.

In 2014 Council obtained a grant of \$14,000 to assist with the relocation of the War Memorial at Apex Park, Nelson Bay to improve access to the Memorial for people with disabilities.

In the same year Council obtained funding of \$100,000 towards establishing a centralised parking area in the Raymond Terrace CBD, comprising accessible parking and taxi spaces.

Council provides planning, policy and assessment services including:

- disability access appraisals on relevant development applications;
- 'Safer by Design' appraisals on relevant development applications;
- social planning advice for re-zonings and planning proposals.

Council's Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan is the source document for funding access through the Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grant program.

Our Citizens

Community Strategic Plan Theme: Children

Goal: Children have safe places to play, learn and grow.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Access to services and support.	Services and support for children were maintained between 2012 and 2017.
Access to child care.	Increase in number of child care centres.
% of children reaching Australian Early Childhood Index targets.	Significant increase in three of five categories; no change in the other two categories.

Table 2: Demographics - Children¹³

Aged 0 – 14 years	Number	% total population
Children 2006	12,581	20.8
Children 2011	12,631	19.5
Children 2016	12,520	18.0

Services and Facilities for Children – Child Care

There are 37 Child Care Centres in the Port Stephens LGA¹⁴, including child care, kindergarten, preschools, learning development centre, early childhood learning centre, long day care and family day care. This is an increase of six centres since the last report in 2012.

Port Stephens Council operates the following child care services catering to between 800 and 900 families annually:

- Medowie Before and After School Care
- Raymond Terrace Before and After School Care
- Mobile Preschool
- Raymond Terrace Vacation Care
- Medowie Vacation Care
- Newcastle Family Day Care
- Port Stephens Family Day Care

Through a tender process in 2013 Council engaged a community-based provider to deliver services for children at its Medowie Child Care Centre.

¹³ Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

¹⁴ Source: <http://www.echildcare.com.au/>

Children's Progress

The table below shows the outcomes for Port Stephens in the Australian Early Childhood Development Index 2012 and 2015 (latest available data).¹⁵

Table 3: Australian Early Childhood Development Index

AEDC domain	2012 Developmentally on track		2015 Developmentally on track		2012-2015 change in percent on track	Critical difference	Significant change
	(Number of children)	(Percentage of children - %)	(Number of children)	(Percentage of children - %)			
Physical health and wellbeing	582	69.0	628	78.8	9.8	2.4	Significant increase
Social competence	634	75.1	645	80.9	5.8	1.9	Significant increase
Emotional maturity	683	80.9	645	80.9	0.0	2.0	No significant change
Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	721	85.4	693	87.2	1.7	2.0	No significant change
Communication skills and general knowledge	596	70.6	632	79.3	8.7	2.2	Significant increase

There are 21 primary schools in Port Stephens and 5 high schools (3 government schools and two private) and the two private schools provide primary school years K-6.

Access to Education – Enrolments in Port Stephens LGA Schools¹⁶

Table 4: Port Stephens Schools - Enrolment

SCHOOL - Primary	YEAR/S	ENROLMENTS 2015	SCHOOL - High	YEAR/S	ENROLMENTS 2015
Anna Bay Public School	K-6	320	St Brigid's Primary School	K-6	410*
Bobs Farm Public School	K-6	97	St Michael's Primary School	K-6	305*
Fern Bay Public School	K-6	36	Tanilba Bay Public School	K-6	550
Grahamstown	K-6	352	Tomaree Public	K-6	416

¹⁵ Source: <http://maps.aedi.org.au/lga/nsw/16400>

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au/>

SCHOOL - Primary	YEAR/S	ENROLMENTS 2015	SCHOOL - High	YEAR/S	ENROLMENTS 2015
Public School			School		
Hinton Public School	K-6	89	Wirreanda Public School	K-6	570
Iona Public School	K-6	64			
Irrawang Public School	P - 6	254			
Karuah Public School	K-6	116			
Medowie Public School	K-6	352*			
Millers Forest Public School	k-6	42			
Mount Kanwaray Public School	K-6	26			
Raymond Terrace Public School	K-6	389	Hunter River High School	7 - 12	743
Salt Ash Public School	K-6	82	Irrawang High School	7 - 12	700
Seaham Public School	K-6	201	St Philip's Christian College	K-12	706*
Shoal Bay Public School	K-6	>400	Tomaree High School	7 - 12	1250
Soldiers Point Public School	K-6	351*	Medowie Christian School	K-12	390*

* Asterisk denotes latest figures available 2014 or earlier.

Full details of Council's Children's Services can be found at <http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/childrens-services>

Services and Support for Children in the Port Stephens LGA

Council's Community Directory has an extensive list of services and support for children: <http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/community/community-directory>

In addition to child care and before/after school care, services and support for children in the Port Stephens LGA has many other formats such as guidance/support for families and parents, and children's activities such as play groups. Support services include those shown below:

- Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services
- Raymond Terrace Neighbourhood Support Centre
- Catholic Care
- Smith Family – Communities for Children, and Learning for Life
- Thou Walla Family Centre (at Irrawang Primary School)

- Gan Gan Centre (Anna Bay Primary)

The Port Stephens Council Activity Van is a mobile preschool that serves communities where there are insufficient children to establish a permanent preschool at this time.

Port Stephens Council Activity Van



Communities for Children funding continued to support the Words on the Street early literacy program until its cessation on 30 December 2014. In 2014 for example, 165 adults including parents, grandparents and carers, and 141 children aged 0-12 years attended a range of children's literacy programs, activities and events as part of Words on the Street.

Library Services offer regular weekly Story Time and Read and Rhyme sessions, which are often fully booked.

Special themed holiday programs are run in July, October, December and April each year and are always well attended.

Our Citizens

Community Strategic Plan Theme: Young People

Goal: Young people have safe and appropriate places to learn, develop and interact.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Access to education and training.	Increase in enrolments commensurate with increase in population of young people.
Access to employment.	Council initiatives increased employment opportunities.

Table 5: Demographic Statistics - Young People

Aged 15 – 24 years	Number	% total population ¹⁷
Young People 2006	8015	11.70
Young People 2011	7584	8.70
Young People 2016	7642	11.0

Education and Training

There are five **high schools** (three government schools and two private).

Table 6: Enrolments - High Schools

SCHOOL - High	YEAR/S	ENROLMENTS 2015
Hunter River High School	7 - 12	743
Irrawang High School	7 - 12	700
St Philip's Christian College	K-12	706*
Tomaree High School	7 - 12	1250
Medowie Christian School	K - 12	390

*Latest available 2014

The NSW Department of Education and Training operates a TAFE at Tomaree.

Services and facilities for young people include:

- Raymond Terrace Neighbourhood Centre
- Catholic Care
- Samaritans Police Citizens Youth Club
- Various Job Network providers
- Service Clubs – eg Lions Leadership Camp, Rotary Scholarships
- WEA programs targeting young people
- Adult education – ACE Tomaree Community Education
- YMCA Youth Gym and various programs

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics

- Irrawang High School Marching Band
- Various church fellowship groups for young people
- Girl Guides Australia and Scouts Australia Troops
- Beacon Foundation – high school students

The Port Stephens Council Youth Strategy 2015-2018 was adopted by Council at its meeting of 11 November 2014. Short to medium term actions contained within the strategy are being implemented by staff from Council's Community Development and Engagement team, in consultation with young people. This has included promoting the Mayoral Scholarships program, boosting the profile of Council's trainee and cadet program and facilitating the ongoing connection between Council and the Youth Advisory Panel.

Young people have been engaged in a range of ways over the period including:

- The Pitch, multimedia used as a tool for young people from two high schools on Tomaree Peninsula to capture views and ideas of young people on the future planning and development of the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore. Students presented their multimedia presentations in a debate style contest in the Council Chambers.
- Participating in the quarterly forum of education, training and industry representatives facilitated by the Hunter Valley Youth Express.

Council also employed a consultant who completed a study of existing pathways to education, training and employment. The Study identified gaps and opportunities for Council to consider.

The Skate Parks Plan was completed as part of the Long Term Infrastructure Plan project and was incorporated into the 2017-2027 Strategic Asset Management Plan. This needs analysis has assessed the location and number of skate parks provided throughout the local government area and detailed where new skate parks may be required while also showing which skate parks may no longer be required.

Council recognised the need for an amenity for young people in the west of the LGA. The Wallalong Skate Park is a fantastic facility which attracts users from all around the local area and was constructed in 2014. It has a great skate bowl and street components plus sheltered seating.

Council invested \$100,000 to make significant improvements to and expand the Nelson Bay skate park in Neil Carroll Park. The design incorporated a radical plan for a new bowl, ramps and a rail. This skate park is a great addition to Nelson Bay recreation facilities for residents and visitors.

Access to Employment

Research conducted by Port Stephens Council in 2013 to prepare the Council's Youth Strategy identified that young people felt there were no local jobs, that public transport and getting a driver's licence were expensive, and that even if undertaking further study young people would need to have a part time job¹⁸

Of an estimated total workforce of 22,689 people working in Port Stephens LGA, 17.08% are in the age group 15 – 24 years.¹⁹ This represents 46.68% of all members of that age group. However it is assumed that most of those working are of post-secondary age since from 2010 State government policy requires students to remain at high school to complete Year 12, meaning that employment would be largely those over 17 years old.

In 2009-2010 Port Stephens Council introduced five Mayoral Scholarship awards for post-secondary study. The Scholarships assist students with the associated costs of study.

Since that first year the program has grown considerably and the number of scholarships offered has risen to 10. There have been a further fifty-two (52) young people assisted to realise their ambitions in post-secondary study.

Apprentice, Trainee and Cadet Strategy

In 2014 Port Stephens Council launched its Apprentice, Trainee and Cadet Strategy. The Strategy was developed for Council to better engage, manage and support its Apprentices, Trainees and Cadets.

The goal was to promote positive experiences both for the employee and Council to maximise the success of the training.

At the end of its first year Council received 528 quality applications for nine available positions. Council has increased its return on investment and gained valuable and valued staff. The benefits to staff, the organisation and the wider community have increased as Council is proactive in addressing youth unemployment as well as enhancing its own Talent Management Strategy.

The success of this strategy has been recognised by the **Local Government Excellence Awards for Workforce Excellence** which we won in 2015.



¹⁹ Source: <http://www.economicprofile.com.au/portstephens/workers/work-in/age>

¹⁸ Port Stephens Council Youth Strategy 2015-2018 Part B Research (p19)

Our Citizens

Theme: Community Planning & Partnerships

Goal: The Community is a partner in developing the future of the Local Government Area.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Port Stephens community believes it has a say in decisions that affect them (Council only – as data not available for other levels of government).	Council only: increase from 47.4% in 2012 to 76.1% in 2017.

Council engages with the community of Port Stephens to plan facilities and to advocate on behalf of its citizens to other levels of government and service providers.

Planning Facilities and Services

In 2015 Council created a new unit – Community Development and Engagement – and appointed senior practitioners to create a new paradigm for consultation and engagement with the people of Port Stephens.

A member of that unit has specific responsibility to work with the Facilities and Services Group of Council to capture the community's views and inputs to specific projects, and to assist to prioritise future works and development of facilities and services.

The unit also has specialists dedicated to engagement of young people; and specialist service providers. The unit convenes the Council's Youth Advisory Panel; and the Interagency Network of social services providers into the LGA – both government and non-government organisations.

Council convenes the Aboriginal Strategic Committee 11 times a year to advise on matters of particular concern to the aboriginal community of Port Stephens.²⁰

In 2014 Council recruited a full time volunteer coordinator to lead over 850 community volunteers. Satisfaction with volunteering for Council achieved 84.6% in the survey of volunteers conducted in April 2014. Volunteer numbers continue to increase.

There are over 40 community committees of volunteers established under Sections 355 and 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993* who are involved in the care, assistance and management of Council's facilities, services and events. Please refer to the table below.

Bi-monthly rounds of safety inductions are completed for new and renewing volunteers. Numbers of volunteers continue to increase across all committees.

²⁰ Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council and Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council have membership along with the Mayor and some senior staff.

Port Stephens Council Committees (355c) for facilities planning and service delivery - as at November 2016

Committee	Purpose
Anna Bay, Birubi Pt Reserves, Hall and Tidy Towns Committee	To assist Council in the management of Anna Bay Hall. To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Birubi Point Cultural Heritage Advisory Panel	To advise Port Stephens Council on the management plan required to protect the Worimi cultural and spiritual heritage and enhance the environment of the Birubi Point Crown Reserve and Birubi Point Aboriginal Place.
Boat Harbour Parks and Reserves Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Bobs Farm Public Hall Committee	To assist Council in the management of Bobs Farm Hall.
Corlette Headland and Hall Committee	To assist Council in the management of Corlette Hall.
Corlette Parks, Reserves and Landcare Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Fern Bay Public Hall, Reserves and Tidy Towns Committee	To assist Council in the management of Fern Bay Hall. To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Financial Assistance Community Grants Panel	To make recommendations to Council on applications received through the Grants process.
Fingal Bay Parks and Reserves Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves.
Hinton School of Arts, Parks and Foreshore Committee	To assist Council in the management of Hinton School of Arts.
Karuah Hall Committee	To assist Council in the management of Karuah Community Centre Committee.
Karuah Tidy Towns, Parks Reserves and Wetlands Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Lemon Tree Passage Parks and Reserves Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to parks in Lemon Tree Passage.
Mallabula Community Centre Committee	To assist Council in the management of Mallabula Community Centre.
Mallabula Parks and Reserves Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Mambo Wanda Wetlands, Reserves and Landcare Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).

Committee	Purpose
Medowie Community Centre Committee	To assist Council in the management of Medowie Community Centre.
Medowie Tidy Towns and Cycleway Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Nelson Bay Senior Citizens Hall Committee	To assist Council in the management of Nelson Bay Senior Citizens Hall.
Nelson Bay West Parkcare Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Ngioka Centre Business Advisory Panel	To assist in the care and management of the Ngioka Centre (a facility to provide for education and therapy focusing on people with a disability and disadvantaged people).
Port Stephens Adult Choir Committee	To promote, organise and train the Port Stephens Choir. To develop a sense of community identity and belonging by involving participants in community cultural projects.
Port Stephens Australia Day Celebrations Coordinating Committee	To coordinate the annual celebration of Australia Day in Port Stephens in line with recommendations from the Australia Day Council.
Port Stephens Sister Cities Committee	To promote positive and ongoing relationships between international communities providing opportunities for cultural exchange.
Port Stephens Community Band Committee	To promote, organise and train the Port Stephens Community Band. To develop a sense of community identity and belonging by involving youth and adults in community cultural projects.
Port Stephens Heritage Advisory Committee	This committee is run by Council and supported by funds from the Heritage Office. Community members meet to raise and make recommendation on local heritage issues.
Port Stephens Native Flora Garden Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Raymond Terrace Parks, Reserves and Tidy Towns Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Raymond Terrace Senior Citizens Hall Management Committee	To assist Council in the management of the Raymond Terrace Senior Citizens Hall.
Salt Ash Community Hall, Reserves and Tennis Court Committee	To assist Council in the management of Salt Ash Community Hall and Tennis Courts. To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Seaham School of Arts and Community Hall Committee	To assist Council in the management of Seaham School of Arts and Seaham Community Hall.
Seaham Park and Wetlands Committee	To assist Council in the management, maintenance and improvements to the Park.

Committee	Purpose
Section 94 Panel	Oversee the allocation of Section 94 contributions.
Shoal Bay Beach Preservation Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Soldiers Point-Salamander Bay Tidy Towns and Landcare Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Tanilba Bay Parks, Reserves, Foreshore and Hall Committee	To assist Council in the management of Tanilba Bay Hall. To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
Lemon Tree Passage Old School Centre Committee	To assist Council in the management of Tilligerry Community Centre and surrounds.
Tomaree Cemeteries Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to cemeteries on Tomaree Peninsula.
Tilligerry Tidy Towns and Landcare Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to designated parks and reserves (as per map included in committee constitution).
West Ward Cemeteries Committee	To undertake maintenance and improvements to cemeteries in West Ward.
Williamtown Public Hall Committee	To assist Council in the management of Williamtown Hall.
Strategic Arts Committee	To assist Council to review cultural and arts grants and make recommendations to Council

There are six sports councils that collaborate to plan and manage Council's sporting facilities.

Medowie Sports Council
Port Stephens Sports Council
Raymond Terrace Sports Council
Rural West Sports Council
Tilligerry Sports Council
Tomaree Sports Council

In addition the Salt Ash Sports Ground Committee provides advice and assistance to Council in the management and development of the Salt Ash Sports Ground.

Advocating for Facilities and Services

Port Stephens Council convenes the Port Stephens Interagency, a forum of more than 200 representatives of service providers across the Hunter Region that meets four times each year. Its focus is on sharing data to plan coordinated delivery of social and other support services to the Port Stephens community.

Councillors and senior executives of Council also participate in or belong to a number of regional committees and groups that work collaboratively on planning, service provision and monitoring.

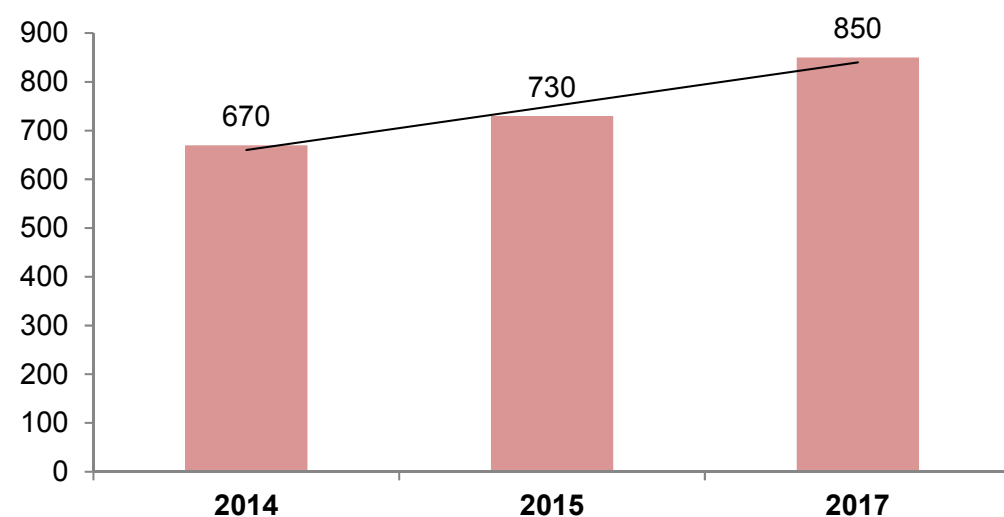
Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee
Port Stephens Community Safety Precinct Committee	To provide a forum for local community members, service providers, businesses and the police to discuss issues and appropriate strategies relating to crime and community safety. ** Attendees will be by invitation only, one representative will be invited by the Police from each peak body/organisation eg Hunter Water Corporation/Housing NSW). Council will hold two positions, one will be Community Planner Crime, and the other will be the Mayor or his/her representative if unable to attend.
Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management Implementation Committee	Responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Port Stephens Council Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management.
Public Libraries NSW Association	Country Public Libraries Association constitution requires a Councillor representative. This Association provides support for country public libraries. The Joint Library Advisory Committee's constitution also requires a Councillor representative in line with the Newcastle Regional Library agreement.
Gloucester Coal Seam Gas Project – Community Consultative Committee	The purpose of the Committee is to provide a forum for representatives to discuss the Project with the Company (Lucas Energy).
Hexham Swamp-Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project Steering Committee	The purpose of the Committee is to oversee the project at the Hexham Swamp Kooragang Wetland. The Committee is a sub-committee of the Catchment Management Authority. Term: 3 years from 27 November 2012.
Hunter Councils	To discuss regional issues in the Hunter.
Hunter Water Corporation Community Consultative Committee	This committee is an advisory committee to Hunter Water Corporation. Note: Cr Nell is appointed to this Committee by Hunter Water Corporation.
Joint Regional Planning Panel	To consider development applications referred to the Panel under the legislation for development applications for the Port Stephens Local Government area. The Panel comprises of three State members and two Councillors. The term is for three years for each Panel member, commencing July 2009 and re-appointed in July 2012.
Karuah Working Together Inc.	The Committee is a peak group comprising representation of key organisations, businesses and industry representatives in Karuah. The Committee is responsible for ensuring community and economic development activities are coordinated in accordance with local needs, trends and opportunities in accordance with Council's Economic Development Strategy and as specified in the Karuah Strategic Plan.
Local Development Committee	Local Traffic Committee (see 65) providing advice to Council on development.

Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee
Local Traffic Committee	This is an RTA-based committee which allows Council to have delegated authority to install or remove regulatory sign posting on public roads.
Lower Hunter Bushfire Management Committee	The committee is a legislative requirement and is to discuss direction across local government areas and across agencies in regard to bushfire management.
Lower Hunter Zone Liaison Committee	To review the progress of the Service Level Agreement between Port Stephens Council and the NSW Rural Fire Service in the Local Government Area.
Lower Tilligerry Floodplain Risk Management Committee	To oversee the Flood Studies for the Tilligerry Creek catchment.
Marine Parks Advisory Panel Ministerial Appointment	Community Consultative Committee regarding the Marine Park in Port Stephens.
Medowie Floodplain Management Committee	This Committee provides advice and recommendations to Council.
Nelson Bay Community College	This committee is an advisory committee for adult education.
Newcastle Airport Partnership Company No. 3 Pty Ltd	Special purpose vehicle for the part ownership of Newcastle Airport.
Newcastle Airport Partnership Company No. 4 Pty Ltd	Special purpose vehicle for the part ownership of Newcastle Airport.
Newcastle Airport Partnership	The partnership is responsible for the development and management of Newcastle Airport and related infrastructure.
Port Stephens Council Depot redevelopment committee	To explore the options available for redevelopment of the Council depot at Raymond Terrace.
Port Stephens Economic Development Advisory Panel	Act as a communication and advisory mechanism to Council on relevant Economic Development issues. Oversee the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy. 2012 ED Strategy review has occurred.
Port Stephens Holiday Park Trust	To act as Trust Managers of the Crown land and Holiday Parks.
Port Stephens Transport Forum	The Transport for NSW convenes these forums which have been established in most LGAs throughout NSW. It provides the opportunity for local transport providers (eg community transport, bus and taxi operators) and local residents to discuss local and regional transport related issues and to formulate appropriate strategies to more effectively improve the delivery of existing public transport services in meeting the community's transport needs.
Port Stephens Domestic Violence Committee	To raise the awareness of the issues surrounding domestic violence and enhance service provision to victims by developing and maintaining effective interagency strategies. Note: Council staff are no longer regularly attending this Committee following outcomes of sustainability review of Council's social planning service package.
Port Stephens East Local Health Committee	To ensure that the population of the Tomaree Peninsula has appropriate access to a suitable baseline level of health services and facilities to meet their existing and future health needs.

Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee
Port Stephens West Local Health Committee	To ensure that the population of the Western area of Port Stephens (ie east of Tomaree Peninsula) has appropriate access to a suitable baseline level of health services and facilities to meet their existing and future health needs.
Port Stephens/Myall Lakes Estuary and Coastal Zone Management Committee	This Committee includes representatives from Great Lakes Council and is responsible for long term planning for the estuary and the coastline.
Williams River Floodplain Risk Management Committee	To oversee the Flood Studies for the Williams River catchment including Dungog shire.
Williamtown Consultative Committee Forum	
Worimi Conservation Lands Board of Management Ministerial Appointment	To oversee the management of the lands owned by the Aboriginal owners and leased back to the NSW Government.
General Manager's Performance Review Panel	To conduct evaluation of the performance of the General Manager.

Community members serve in many capacities on Council's Committees (355c Committees, sports council delegates, sporting club volunteers and library assistants) and numbers have increased in the last four years. In 2011 across the Port Stephens LGA there were 8,652 volunteers working for a variety of organisations.²¹ The number has increased to 10,145 in 2016.²²

Council Volunteers - Number



²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2011

²² ibid 2016

Our Lifestyle

Theme: Arts and Culture

Goal: Port Stephens has a vibrant cultural life.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Access to cultural activities.	Increase in the number of events, increase in Council funds available to support cultural activities.
Increase in access for people to learn Aboriginal language and culture.	Increase through Murrook programs.
Increase in the number of Aboriginal culturally significant objects and places protected.	Due to the sensitive nature of Aboriginal culturally significant objects and places data as to increases in protection are not specifically available.

Council's role is one of facilitator and enabler of local cultural development and activity by way of planning, connecting people, administration and access to venues and cultural places, providing small grants and promotion. In the case of public libraries Council is a cultural provider. At the core of Council's involvement in cultural business are the arts and creativity, Aboriginal culture, heritage and history, architecture and design, festivals and events.

In Port Stephens, culture is reflected in general ways of life of the place as well as unique cultural lifestyles in each town, village or locality as practiced by diverse groups in the community.

Culture is also reflected in our value systems, traditions and beliefs including in arts and creativity, heritage and history, architecture and design, festivals and events. In Port Stephens, our culture embraces Worimi Aboriginal culture in both its tangible and intangible forms where culture is based on the idea of 'country' and is represented in its history and heritage as well as in its living culture. Local culture can also be influenced by aspects of the distinctive coastal and rural environment, education and learning, the media, cultural tourism and accessible leisure activities.²³

Many sites and areas of significance to Aboriginal people are located within Port Stephens, including shell middens, scarred trees, occupation and ceremonial sites and places of spiritual value. The exact location of the various sites is restricted information. In the area stretching from Wallis Lake to Newcastle there are 37 recorded Ceremonial Sites (stone arrangements, bora grounds, carved trees and burial sites), 115 recorded campsites (mia mia, scarred tree, open campsite, shelter with deposit, well, fish trap, abraded grooves and quarries) and over 100 middens.

Port Stephens is also home to the Murrook Aboriginal Culture Centre, and to the Worimi and Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

The Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council lands touch the western boundary of the LGA.

²³ Port Stephens Council Cultural Plan 2015-2018

In a display of unity and reconciliation, Council unanimously supported the declaration of an Aboriginal Place on Council land at Soldiers Point. Worimi Elders and leaders worked tirelessly with Council staff and representatives from the Office of Environment & Heritage to develop a Plan of Management for the Aboriginal Place that would protect Aboriginal cultural values and enable current and future uses of the land to continue.

The result was the announcement by the Minister for Heritage that the Soldiers Point Aboriginal Place was declared on 7 June 2016. This declaration brings to a close 35 years of lobbying and collaboration by members of the Worimi community and is the beginning of a new way of thinking and working on community land for Council.

Non-Aboriginal cultural heritage in Port Stephens includes historic villages, heritage conservation areas at Raymond Terrace, Tipperary Hill and Hinton, rural landscapes, significant early residences such as Tomago House and Tanilba House, lighthouses, churches, cemeteries, war memorials, courthouses, schools, shipwrecks, archaeological remains such as the Irrawang Pottery site, cottages and early subdivisions such as Henry Halloran's 1930s development at Tanilba Bay.

There have been significant growth and development in the range of cultural events held across the LGA. These include highly regarded annual celebrations such as Australia Day as well as festivals with a local focus eg Summer Festival, Nelson Bay; festivals with a wider appeal eg Karuah Blue Grass Music Festival and emerging arts festivals including Nelson Bay Sculpture Festival and Lemon Jam at Lemon Tree Passage. New events included King Street Heritage Festival, Riverside Multicultural Fiesta, Tilligerry Festival, and COWS – Celebration of Words and Stories.

Council also actively supports the showcasing of local talent including through art exhibitions linked to the school education system as well as the provision of an art space at the new Raymond Terrace Library.

The three s355 cultural committees – the Strategic Arts and Culture committee, the Heritage Advisory committee and the Aboriginal Strategic committee have been actively involved in the development of the Port Stephens Cultural Plan 2015-2018 and will continue to have a critical role supporting cultural development in Port Stephens.

For a list of heritage and cultural organisations please visit:

<http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/community/community-directory/heritage-and-culture>

Since 2012 there has been a significant increase in access to Aboriginal Language and Culture principally through Murrook Cultural Centre.

In the financial years 2013 to 2016 Council funded a total of \$159,910 from the Cultural Projects Fund; and \$140,000 from the Aboriginal Projects Fund.



The Murrook Cultural Centre is situated on Nelson Bay Road, Williamstown. Its purpose is to gather, sustain, protect and teach Aboriginal Culture to all people with an emphasis on Worimi culture being the land and people of this area. The Centre caters for a vast range of groups from schools (pre, primary, secondary and university/TAFE), to community, business, government groups and international visitors.

Most importantly, Murrook is used by our Aboriginal community as a gathering place. Aboriginal staff teach many facets of our culture, from boomerangs, weapons and tools, didgeridoo, communication like art and dance, bush food medicine, cooking, craft (basket weaving, beading), artefacts and much more. Murrook seeks to deliver a sound, authentic and relevant cultural experience to their visitors helping them to see Australia through the eyes of a local Aboriginal person. The staff run tours and workshops at Murrook, at schools and 'On Country' having access to Aboriginal sites.

<http://worimi.org.au/education/>

On 20 May 2013, Council officially launched the upgraded Aboriginal and Cultural Project fund program. Over 50 community members attended, including aboriginal elder John Ridgeway and the two Chairs of both the Aboriginal Steering Committee and the Cultural Committee. The event was very positive and participants were appreciative of the event and the opportunity to apply for funding.

In consultation with Council's Aboriginal Strategic Committee Council planned annually for NAIDOC Week Celebrations. For example in 2013 the celebrations included a cultural training program for relevant Council staff; and an Elder being invited to open the Council meeting during NAIDOC Week on 9 July 2013.

In July 2014 Council's Community Development and Engagement unit, in conjunction with the Aboriginal Strategic Committee and the Worimi and Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Councils marked NAIDOC Week with the hosting of the traditional flag-raising and smoking ceremonies at Council's Administration Building. Council also participated in the Worimi Family Fun Day celebrations held at the Murrook Cultural Centre.

Birubi Point Cultural Heritage Advisory Panel convened in August 2014, December 2014, March 2015 and November 2015. Tasks agreed to at the March 2015 meeting included finalising the funding agreement between NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Council commencing beach access pathway reconstruction and engaging a consultant to develop a draft management plan and landscape master plan, subject to funding. The pathway was completed and the management funding agreement was executed by all parties in April 2016. With the management funding agreement resolved, the Panel will now progress strategic planning for the Birubi Point Aboriginal Place and Crown Reserve.

The Port Stephens Cultural Plan 2015-2018 was adopted by Council at its meeting of 10 February 2015, following exhibition of the plan and the receipt of one submission concerning its content. Short to medium term actions outlined within the plan are being implemented by Council's Community Development and Engagement unit in consultation with the Strategic Arts Committee.

Library Services

Port Stephens Council provides library services at Raymond Terrace, Tomaree Library and Community Centre, a Mobile Library Service, and a community library facility in the Tilligerry Peninsula.

In 2013 a new Raymond Terrace Library replaced the smaller, older facility. More than 100 guests and dignitaries attended the opening of the new, state-of-the-art library facilities in Raymond Terrace which opened to the public on 4 September 2013.

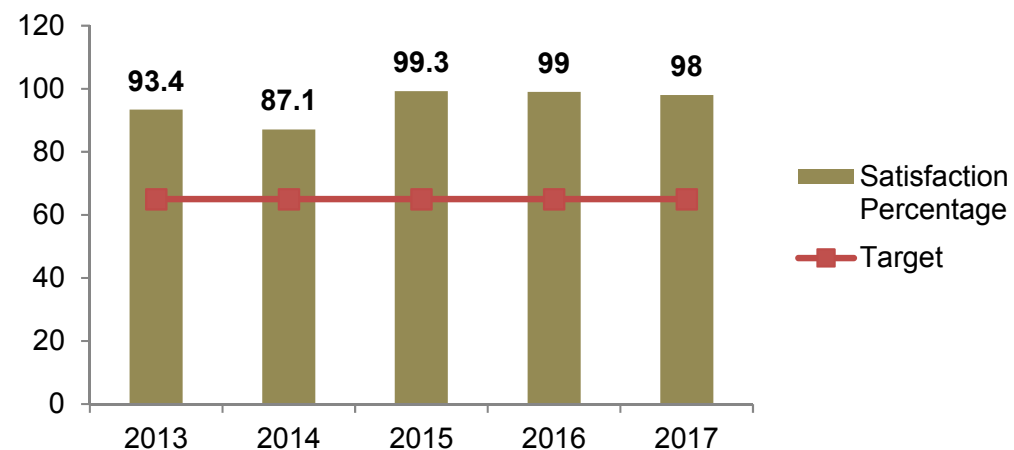
Port Stephens Mayor Bruce MacKenzie was joined by the Hon. George Souris, MP, Minister for the Arts, Dr Alex Byrne, State Librarian & Chief Executive of Libraries NSW as well as local member Craig Baumann to cut the ribbon and officially launch the opening of the new library.

This library has more than three times the space than the previous facility and offers, the latest in library and research technology as well as a large children's activity space, a study room and a coffee shop.

In 2014 an art space was added, which has since held continuous exhibitions, including an exhibition of works in various media by Council staff in 2015.

The Raymond Terrace Library project was jointly funded by Port Stephens Council and the NSW State government with \$200,000 coming from the Country Libraries Fund Program.

Satisfaction with Libraries in PSC



Our Lifestyle

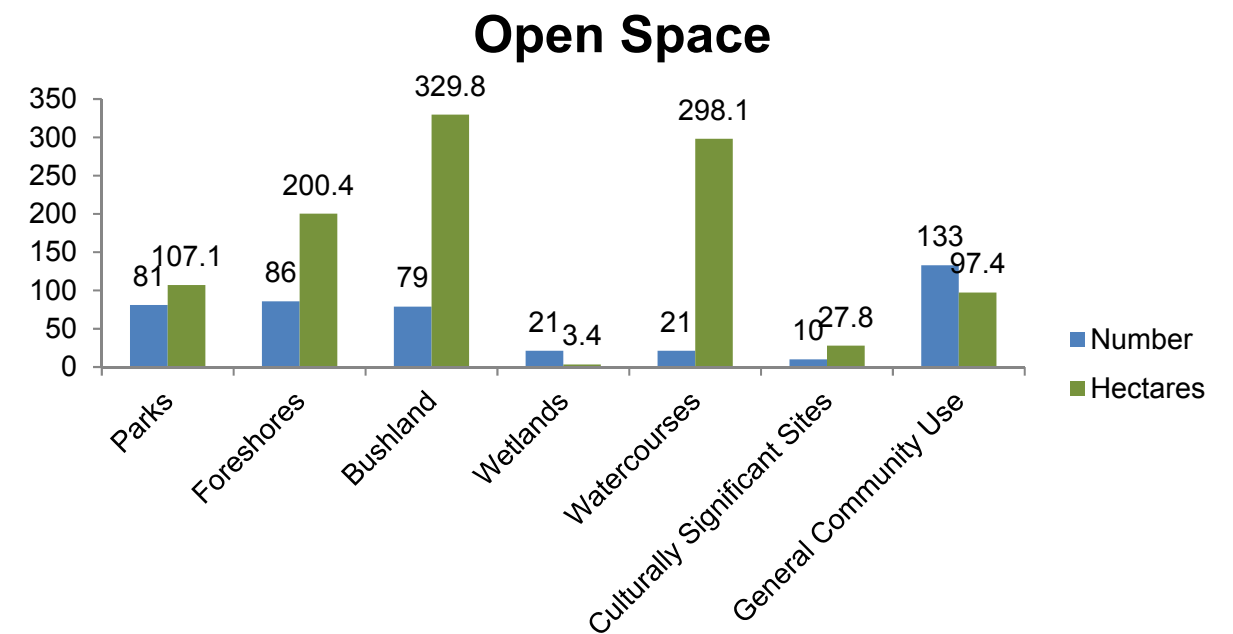
Theme: Recreation and Leisure

Goal: Provide passive and active recreation and leisure services and facilities.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Access to recreation and leisure facilities.	Increase in facilities compared to 2012.
Opportunities to participate in recreation and leisure activities.	LGA continues to have both active and passive recreation and leisure accessible to and suitable for all age groups.

Port Stephens LGA provides for both active and passive lifestyle choices for residents and visitors, as well as opportunities for community service and participation.

Lifestyle in Port Stephens – Active



Parks and Reserves can generally be used for active and passive recreational purposes. Categories of open space in the Port Stephens LGA compare well to the general standard of 2.5 hectares per 1,000 residents.

Also included as open space are watercourses (21) 298.09 hectares, and wetlands (21) 3.421 hectares.

The LGA has 62 playgrounds which exceeds the standard of one playground to every 220 children less than 14 years.

Council-owned sporting facilities are shown in the table below.

Netball courts	28 courts
Skate parks	8
BMX tracks	1
Sports fields	45 fields
Tennis courts	51 tennis courts
Croquet courts	2 courts
Swimming facilities	3 complexes
Cricket nets	8
Equestrian centres	2
Golf course	1
Amenities buildings	67

In addition to Council-owned facilities there are numerous sporting facilities such as swimming pools and gymnasiums in hotels, motels and holiday parks across the LGA.

The following sports are known to be played in the Port Stephens LGA: hockey, cricket, tennis, rugby union, rugby league, Australian Rules football, soccer, athletics, croquet, golf, lawn bowls, yachting, game fishing, horse riding, bocce, triathlons, water polo, swimming, bridge and surfing. There are surf club amenities at Birubi and Fingal Bay.

The Port Stephens LGA has significant waterways for recreational yachting, boating and fishing, and includes 17 wharfs, 18 boat launch sites, 10 sea walls, two tidal swimming enclosures and five boardwalks.

Recreational cycling and walking facilities include footpaths and cycle ways. Port Stephens has approximately 190kms of pathways located within the road reserve across the LGA. These include approximately 125kms of traditional footpaths and 65kms of shared paths which is a total of 310,703m².

The LGA is home to the Racing Pigeon Association Raymond Terrace.

There are several clubs in Port Stephens devoted to dancing (all forms), tai chi, model aeroplanes and walking for pleasure, and private gymnasiums and slimming groups.

The Roads & Maritime Services NSW (RMS) has provided \$3.68 million to improve boating facilities in Port Stephens under a 'Boating Now' initiative. Projects delivered or to be delivered over three years include boat ramp and facility upgrades at Seaham, Karuah, Tomago and Lemon Tree Passage.

In 2014-2015, licences were prepared and finalised for the Maori Cultural Group at Williamtown Oval, a renewed licence for Tilligerry Men's Shed and a renewed licence for Nelson Bay Tennis Club. Raymond Terrace Trotting Club licence was finalised and issued. A new licence was issued for Shoal Bay stand up paddle board hire and lessons. In 2015 a licence was entered into for the Boccè facility at Nelson Bay to the Croatian Fishermans Boccè Club.

In 2017 a new Men's Shed was opened at Boomerang Park in Raymond Terrace.

At the conclusion of the term of management of the YMCA a Request for Tender for Aquatic and Leisure Centre management attracted four tenderers to manage the facilities at Raymond Terrace, Salamander Bay and Mallabula. The successful tenderer appointed by Council in September 2015 was Belgravia Leisure Pty Ltd.

In late April 2016 the State government announced \$180,000 for 12 pedestrian and bicycle access projects across Port Stephens, with the total project worth \$350,000. Most of the projects aim to improve pedestrian access such as an upgrade to the William and Sturgeon Streets intersection at Raymond Terrace. Ramps will help people cross Sturgeon Street while a refuge will make it easier to do so.

Fingal Beach Surf Club

As a result of fire, a new surf club was built in 2013 – Fingal Beach Surf Club is a state of the art facility that represents a community partnership. Council was a finalist in the NSW Property Awards for its unique design and functionality.



Fingal Beach Surf Club

Birubi Surf Club

After a decade of planning, the Birubi Point Surf Living Saving Club's new building was officially opened on 13 March 2014. At a total cost of \$4.9 million, the Club redevelopment consists of a new two building complex that houses the youngest surf lifesaving club in the Hunter Branch of the Surf Life Saving NSW. The buildings were designed to create a facility that blends into the natural surrounds while maximising views across Stockton Beach and the Worimi Conservation Lands.

The building was officially recognised with EJE Architecture declared joint winner of the Public Architecture Award at the Newcastle Architecture Awards.

The Club is a state of the art building with dedicated first aid room, training and equipment rooms and life guard tower. The site also includes a new cafe with uninterrupted views over the beach, ocean and sand dunes.



Birubi Beach Surf Living Saving Club

Many organisations involved in making this project possible include representatives from Hunter Surf Life Saving, the Board of Management of Worimi Conservation Lands, Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, architect firm EJE Architecture and construction company Hansen Yuncken.

Birubi Surf Club

Key funding partners are the Australian government through the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (\$2.2million), Port Stephens Council (\$1.925 million), NSW government through the Crown Reserve Trust (\$500,000), NSW Office of Communities, Sport and Recreation through NSW Surf Life Saving (\$260,000) and the NSW Department of Primary Industries (\$15,000).

Volunteer lifesaving services have been conducted from Fingal Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Birubi Beach Surf Life Saving Club since September 2014. Both Clubs have enjoyed uninterrupted use of the purpose built buildings during the beach seasons.

A new whale watching platform from a popular vantage spot at Fingal Bay was completed in time for the whale watching season, which saw reports of hundreds of whales passing through every day. The new facility at Barry Park combines the natural vista of the coastline with information about whale migration patterns and identifying features of the different breeds that pass by.



The platform at Barry Park was part funded by a National Landcare Program grant through the Federal Office of Environment, and built by Council using composite fibre primarily from recycled plastic materials. A new unisex amenities building for Barry Park was also constructed.

Lifestyle in Port Stephens – Passive

Port Stephens Council operates four library services: Raymond Terrace, Tomaree, Tilligerry Community Library, and the Mobile Library. See the section on Arts and Culture above.

PSC Library Services has formalised new user agreements with the Port Stephens Historical Society and Port Stephens Family History Group. The new licences were drafted with the assistance of Council's Property Services Section, and enable the use of library space for the activities of the Port Stephens Historical Society and Port Stephens Family History Group. The agreements will be reviewed annually between the parties.

Tomaree Library & Community Centre



Most religious denominations are represented in the Port Stephens LGA and there are many service clubs and activities as shown in the table below.²⁴

Apex Clubs	Port Stephens Bridge Club
Community Health Centres	Rotary
Country Women's Association	Marine Rescue
Lions Clubs	Salvation Army
Meals on Wheels	Samaritans
PCYC	Social and Welfare Clubs
Port Stephens Community Band	St Vincent de Paul
Port Stephens Community Arts Centre	Toastmasters-Port Stephens
Port Stephens Adult Choir	Tomaree Musical Theatre Co
Port Stephens Friendship Group	Tomaree Neighbourhood Centre
Port Stephens Historical Society	Tomaree Peninsula Photography Club
Port Stephens Family History Society	Torchbearers For Legacy
Raymond Terrace and District Historical Society	View Club
Probus Clubs	Walking For Pleasure Club
Port Stephens Dog Club	Quilters Clubs

The LGA also has RSL sub-branch clubs that support ex-service personnel and their families in the region.

The University of the Third Age operates in the LGA, normally at the Tomaree Library & Community Centre. Until 2017 Port Stephens Council ran a computing for seniors program at its Business Port Stephens computer rooms in Raymond Terrace.

Port Stephens Council has 23 multipurpose community facilities and 16 single use buildings that are regularly used by clubs and societies for recreational and lifestyle activities.

Port Stephens Council residents have access to cinemas in Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay. Other passive leisure activities include shopping, galleries, museums and spas.

²⁴ This table is representative only.

Our Environment

Theme: Environmental Management

Goal: Manage the environment for present and future generations.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Air and water quality.	Index for air quality remains below accepted pollutant levels; potable water and beach quality very good; contamination at Williamtown is an exception event.
Threatened species.	Monitoring indicates no changes since previous period.
Habitat preservation and regeneration.	Increase in regeneration of bushland, foreshores and reserves.
Greenhouse gas emissions.	Reduction in LGA per capital usage leading to reduction in emissions.
Waste and recycling ratio improvements.	Increased diversion from landfill across the LGA.
Noxious weed infestations.	Regular programs to contain infestations ongoing.

Port Stephens Council Environment Policy

Port Stephens Council adopted an Environment Policy in March 2016 consistent with the community's vision statement of achieving 'a great lifestyle in a treasured environment'. The Policy outlines Council's commitment to the environment by providing leadership and direction for improved environmental performance. The Policy outlines amongst other things Council's commitment to the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) and Council's commitment to ensuring a healthy natural environment is maintained for the wellbeing of the Port Stephens community.

Port Stephens Council Environmental Management System

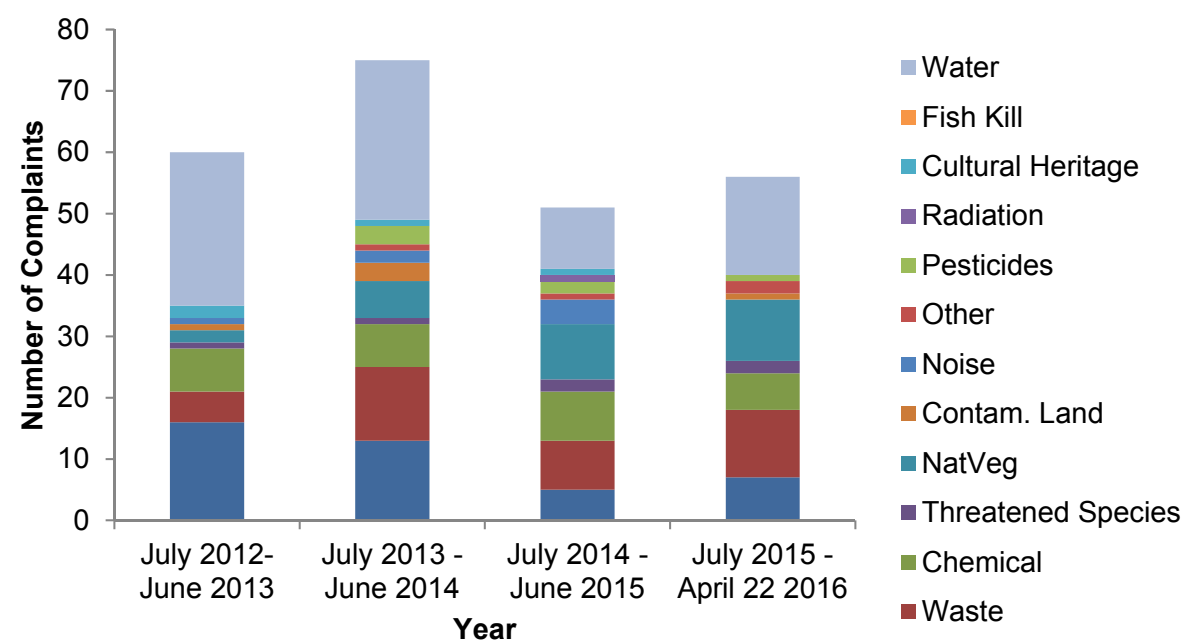
An Environmental Management System (EMS) has been developed and implemented for Port Stephens Council over the next two years and will form part of Council's Integrated Risk Management System (IRMS). An EMS is a framework that enables Council to manage its environmental performance. Port Stephens Council's EMS is being developed consistent with International Standard ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management Systems.

Air and Water Quality

The Office of Environment and Health/Environment Protection Authority Environment Line handles general enquiries about environmental issues and reports of pollution for which OEH/EPA is the Appropriate Regulatory Authority.

The data provided represent pollution incidents reported to the Environment Line where OEH/EPA has regulatory responsibilities for the incident. All categories of complaints to the Environment Line have been included for reference purposes only.

EPA Environment Line Complaints Received for Port Stephens LGA



Source: EPA Environment Line Complaints Received 2012 – 2016* (*2016 period only up to 22/4/2016) (Source EPA/OEH)

Environmental Protection Licences, issued under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (POEO) are a principal means to monitor and control pollution emitters and the impacts of pollution sources in NSW. Currently there are 64 Environmental Protection Licences issued within the Port Stephens LGA²⁵.

For the reporting period (2012-2016) there have been five penalty notices issued for breaches of an Environmental Protection Licence²⁶.

Clean air is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Port Stephens. It directly affects both the natural environment and human health along with the overall amenity of the area.

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) operates an air quality monitoring network to provide the community with accurate and up-to-date information about air quality. No monitoring sites are located within the Port Stephens LGA with the closest monitoring stations located in the Newcastle Local Government Area at Stockton, Beresfield, Mayfield, Carrington, Wallsend and Newcastle as per the below map.



Source: OEH Air Quality Monitoring Sites across Newcastle Local and Lower Hunter Regions (Source www.environment.nsw.gov.au/AQMS/siteslh.htm).

OEH defines an air pollutant as "any substance in the air that can harm people or the environment."²⁷

Air pollutants arise from bushfires and other natural processes as well as human activities including industrial production and transport. An increasing range of health effects has been linked to air pollution, especially fine particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}).

OEH air quality monitoring focuses on the following six key pollutants due to the risk they pose to human health: ozone, nitrogen dioxide, visibility, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and Particles PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀.

Raw data collected for the above pollutants are converted into Air Quality Index (AQI) values. The highest AQI value over a 24-hour period becomes the AQI value for the site for that day. An AQI reading above 100 indicates that at least one pollutant has exceeded its permissible threshold value during that particular 24-hour period at that site.

More information on the monitoring networks operating across NSW, air pollutants and the health effects of air pollution can be found at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/air.

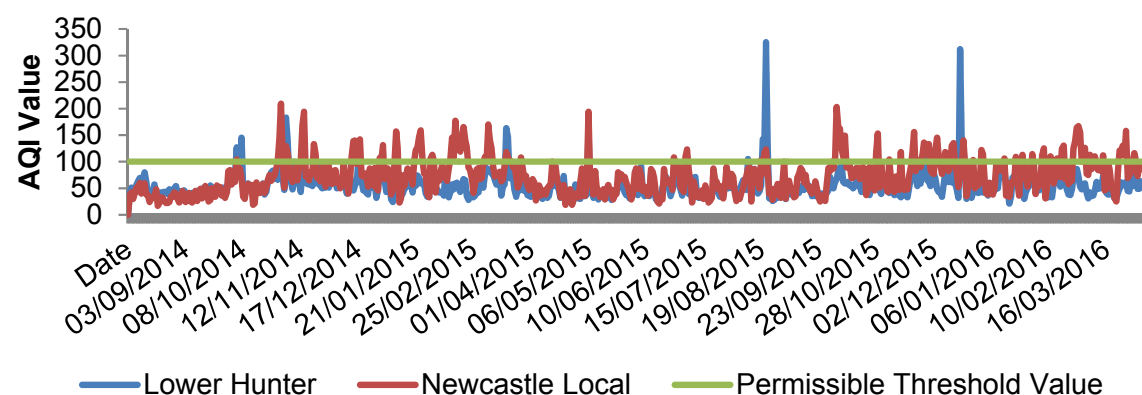
The 2005 World Health Organisation (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines are available at www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair/outdoorair_aqg/en/

²⁵ As of 7/4/2016, Source www.epa.nsw.gov.au/prpoeo/licences.htm

²⁶ Current as of 7/4/2016, Source www.epa.nsw.gov.au/prpoeoapp/SearchResult.aspx?SearchTag=notice&searchrange=notice&range=notice

²⁷ www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aqms/whatisairpolln.htm

Regional Air Quality Index (AQI) for Lower Hunter and Newcastle Local



Source: Daily Regional Air Quality Index (AQI) for Newcastle Local and Lower Hunter Areas (closest areas to LGA). Source OEH²⁸

Noise

In NSW noise is regulated through the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (POEO Act); the POEO (Noise Control) Regulation 2008 addresses common noisy activities that occur in residential situations. Council shares responsibility for noise control regulations with the EPA, NSW police and NSW Roads and Maritime Services.

For more information about the role of the EPA and Local Government in noise pollution see the EPA website.

The majority of noise complaints received by Council relate to animal noise (such as dogs, roosters, etc), the noise of commercial activities, residential and neighbourhood activities (such as lawn mowers, air conditioners, pool pumps, parties, etc), construction noise and vehicle noise.

Water Quality

Council monitors the quality of waterways and catchments within the Port Stephens LGA because of their environmental, recreational, agricultural and economic value. Water quality monitoring sites include the Hunter River, Williams River, Paterson River, Tilligerry Creek and the Port Stephens estuary.

Council undertakes regular water quality monitoring to record baseline river health, detect recreational water quality risks at key locations and run-off characteristics after rainfall events. The monitoring program is also designed to gain an improved understanding of water quality benchmarks in un-sewered areas.

Council's water quality monitoring program was reviewed in 2013 – as a result sampling sites were revised to better reflect the intention of the program.

²⁸ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aqms/index.htm>

Beachwatch

Four sites within the LGA are monitored every six days by Hunter Water as part of their Environmental Protection Licensing. The beaches currently included in this Beachwatch program are Zenith Beach, Box Beach, Fingal Beach and One Mile Beach²⁹.

Beachwatch State of Beaches Indicators for Port Stephens LGA:

Overall Results	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Good/Very Good	9	4	4	4
Fair	0	0	0	0
Poor/Very Poor	2	0	0	1
Total Sites Reported On	11	4	4	5

Source: OEH State of Beaches Annual Reports 2012-2015

Council responds to reports of suspected algal contamination and stormwater and sewage pollution at these locations. Microbial water quality testing is undertaken on as needs basis as determined by Council to determine whether water quality is suitable for swimming. If these results indicate that water is not suitable Council may close swimming areas.

The Hunter Water Corporation (HWC) is a key stakeholder in the management of water quality in the Port Stephens LGA.

Williamstown RAAF Contamination

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) informed the NSW government that the Williamstown RAAF Base has been found to contain high concentrations of perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). These chemicals are very stable and do not readily break down. They can persist for a long time in the environment as well as within living organisms.

There are currently no Australian guidelines for the PFOS and PFOA contaminants. Whether PFOS or PFOA cause adverse health effects in humans is currently unknown, but on current evidence, the potential for adverse health outcomes cannot be excluded.

PFOS and PFOA were present in fire-fighting foam used on the RAAF base. Over time these chemicals have entered surface water and groundwater resulting in contamination of the RAAF site and nearby land. Surface water samples from Dawsons Drain, Moors Drain, Upper Tilligerry Creek and Fourteen Foot Drain have been found to contain PFOS. Ground water and fish from the local creeks were tested for PFOS and were found to contain high levels of the compound³⁰.

A contamination investigation area was established in October 2015 (see below), which indicates the area³¹ under investigation for potential groundwater contamination and the affected fisheries and oyster farms.

²⁹ State of the Beaches Report 2014-15, OEH, October 2015

³⁰ <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/Pages/RAAF-site-contamination.aspx>

³¹ current as of 4/5/2016

Williamstown Contamination Investigation Area



Source: EPA³²

Fishing closures are in place for all creeks and drains within Fullerton Cove and Tilligerry Creek following precautionary advice not to consume fish, prawns or shellfish caught in the investigation area. There was a precautionary ban on the sale of oysters farmed in the Tilligerry Creek harvest area, which was lifted in October 2015 following test results indicating that these products posed no risk to food safety³³.

The EPA is working with the Department of Defence as well as a range of NSW government agencies including NSW Health, the Department of Primary Industries, NSW Food Authority and the Hunter Water Corporation to assess the situation. NSW government agencies will continue to assess the situation, undertake comprehensive health risk assessments and testing of bore water to update this advice.

As of 21 October 2015 the NSW government continues to advise precautions for residents who live inside this investigation area while assessments are undertaken, including:

- not to drink or prepare food from private water bores, or water from dams, ponds, creeks or drains (town water is safe);
- not to eat eggs from backyard chickens or milk from cows and goats that have been drinking bore water or surface water in the area; and
- not to eat fish, prawns or wild oysters caught in the nearby area³⁴.

³² www.epa.nsw.gov.au/MediaInformation/williamtown.htm

³³ <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/epa/152670-williamtown-faq-091115.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/MediaInformation/williamtown.htm>

Council has established an online portal for information relating to the ongoing investigation of ground and surface water contamination at Williamstown RAAF base. Access is available through the Port Stephens Council website (www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au).

The NSW Expert Panel has advised that a comprehensive Human Health Risk Assessment be undertaken to determine the PFOS/PFOA exposure risk posed by individual food groups, as well as to calculate the cumulative risk to someone who consumes several types of food on a daily basis⁹.

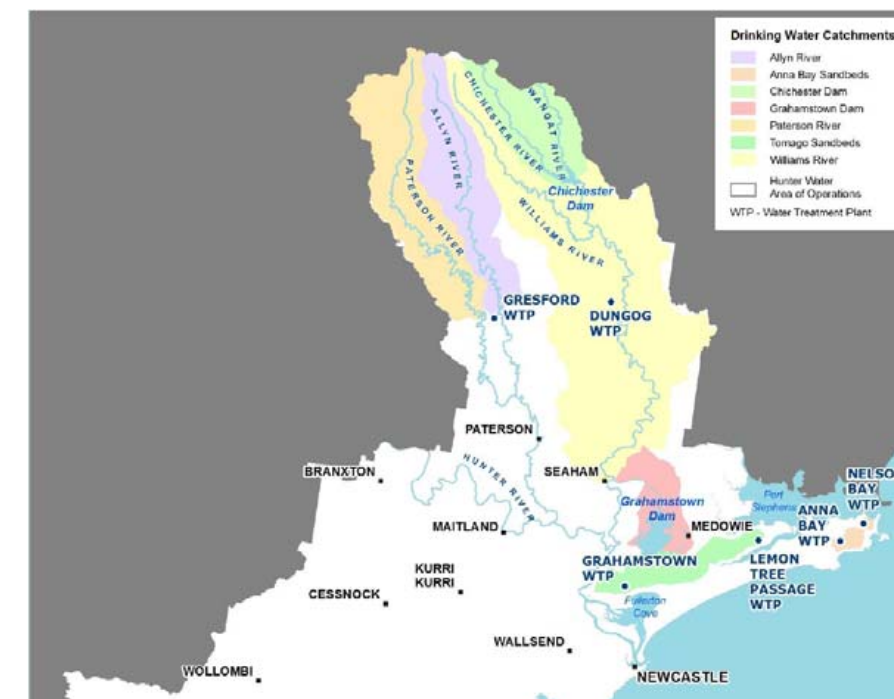
A comprehensive Human Health Risk Assessment therefore requires that a large range of samples are tested, including fish, water, meat, dairy, eggs, fruit and vegetables, honey and other crops. Until this risk assessment is completed by the Department of Defence the precautionary advice applies³⁵. Further information is available from the EPA, Commonwealth Department of Defence, NSW Environment Line, and NSW Food Authority.

Potable Water & Sewerage

As can be seen in the map below, there are three drinking water supply zones (Grahamstown Dam, Tomago Sandbeds and Tomaree Sandbeds) and four water treatment plants (Grahamstown WTP, Lemon Tree Passage WTP, Anna Bay WTP and Nelson Bay WTP) managed by the Hunter Water Corporation (HWC) within the Port Stephens LGA.

Pollution monitoring data are collected by HWC, as required under the Environmental Protection Licences issued to HWC by the Environment Protection Authority. A full list of these data is available on the HWC website³⁶.

Hunter Water Catchment Areas, Storages and Water Treatment Plants



Source Hunter Water Compliance and Performance Report 2014-15³⁷

³⁵ <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/epa/152670-williamtown-faq-091115.pdf>

³⁶ [www.hunterwater.com.au/Water-and-Sewer/EPA-Monitoring/Environment-Protection-Authority-\(EPA\)-Pollution-Monitoring-Results.aspx](http://www.hunterwater.com.au/Water-and-Sewer/EPA-Monitoring/Environment-Protection-Authority-(EPA)-Pollution-Monitoring-Results.aspx)

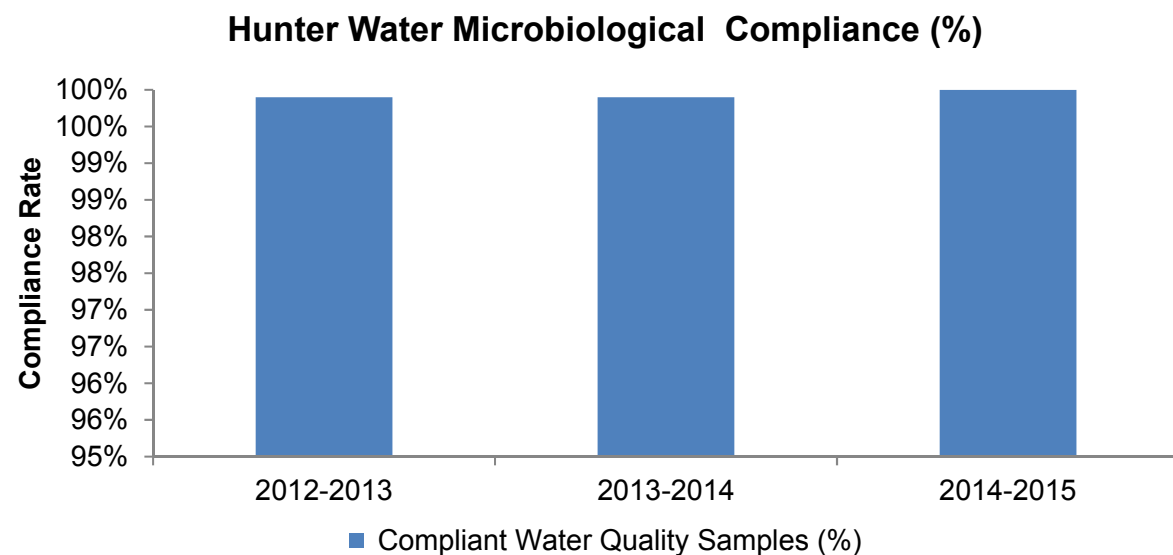
³⁷ <http://www.hunterwater.com.au/Resources/Documents/Other-Reports/Regulatory-Reports/Compliance-and-Performance-Report-2014-15---submitted-to-IPART.PDF>

Human activities including urban development, agriculture, onsite wastewater treatment systems and land clearing have the potential to impact the health of our drinking water catchments.

The potable water supply of the LGA is the responsibility of the Hunter Water Corporation (HWC) and many of their major water supply assets are located within the Port Stephens LGA, including:

- Grahamstown Dam: a large off-river storage reservoir located within the LGA – provides around 52% of the region's drinking water requirements. Complimentary to its catchment area, it receives pumped inflows from the Seaham Weir Pool on the Williams River and from the Campvale Canal.
- Tomaree Sandbeds: an area of approximately 16 km² located within the protected area of Tomaree National Park.
- Tomago/Anna Bay Sandbeds: Hunter Water's major groundwater source has an area of approximately 109 km².

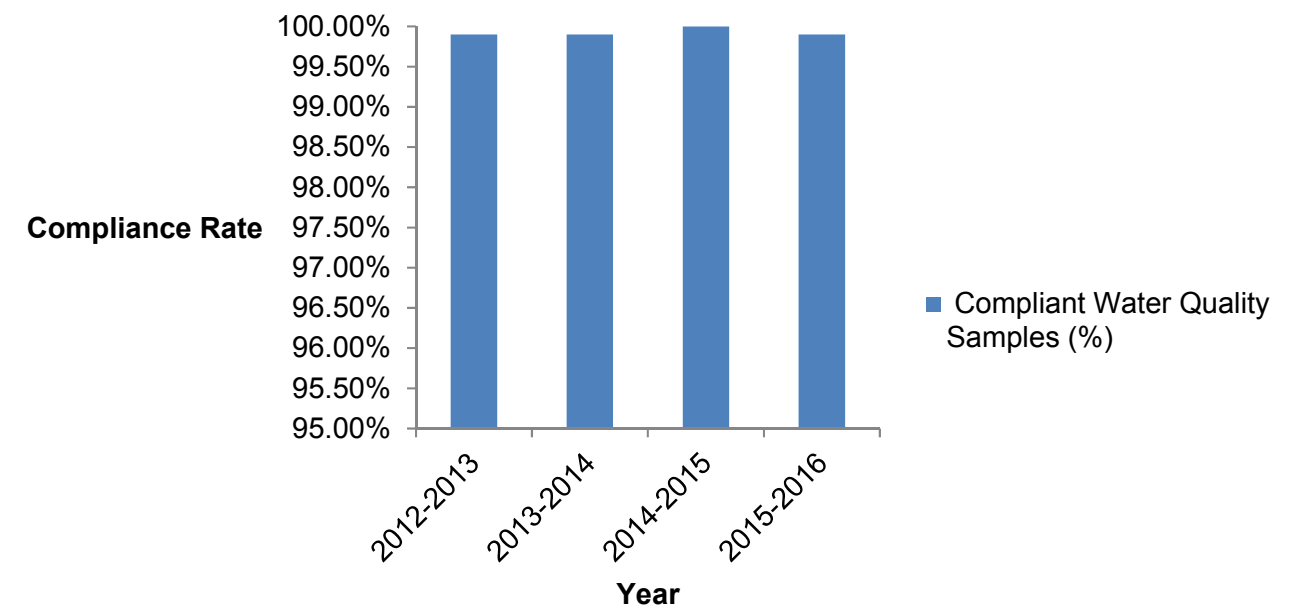
HWC's water quality management program includes the protection and improvement of drinking water catchments as well as compliance with the Australian Drinking Water Quality Standards for the microbiological indicator E.coli and key physical and chemical parameters. Compliance rates for these parameters can be seen in the figures below. Key physical and chemical indicators include turbidity, pH, colour, iron, manganese, aluminium, copper, lead, zinc, fluoride, chlorine and trihalomethanes.



Source: Hunter Water Compliance and Performance Report 2014-15, Hunter Water Corporation, 2015

In 2015-2016 all of the water quality sampling undertaken by Hunter Water complied with microbiological indicator parameters.

Hunter Water Microbiological Compliance



Source: Hunter Water Compliance and Performance Report 2014-15, Hunter Water Corporation, 2016

In 2015-2016 99.9% of routine water samples complied with Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for chemical and physical parameters. The slight decrease reflects the localised water quality issues associated with system reconfiguration to maintain water supplies during the April 2015 storm event³⁸.

Although the Williamstown contamination has not impacted town water supply, a precautionary embargo on the operation of two bore stations in the Tomago Sandbeds has been implemented. These two bore stations are in close proximity to the RAAF base and therefore are at risk of being affected by contamination from the base³⁹.

Water Usage

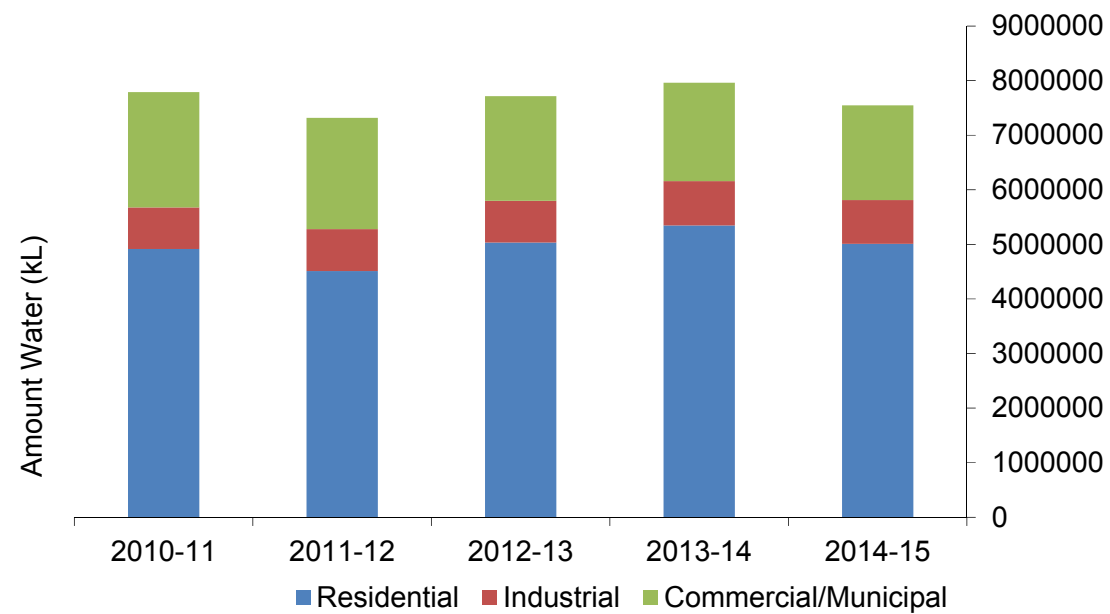
The HWC has a water conservation target to ensure that the five year rolling average for annual residential water consumption is equal to or less than 215 kilolitres per year for each residential property. The water conservation target [was] achieved in 2015-2016 – the latest available report at the time of writing⁴⁰.

³⁸ Hunter Water Compliance and Performance Report 2014-15, Hunter Water Corporation, 2015

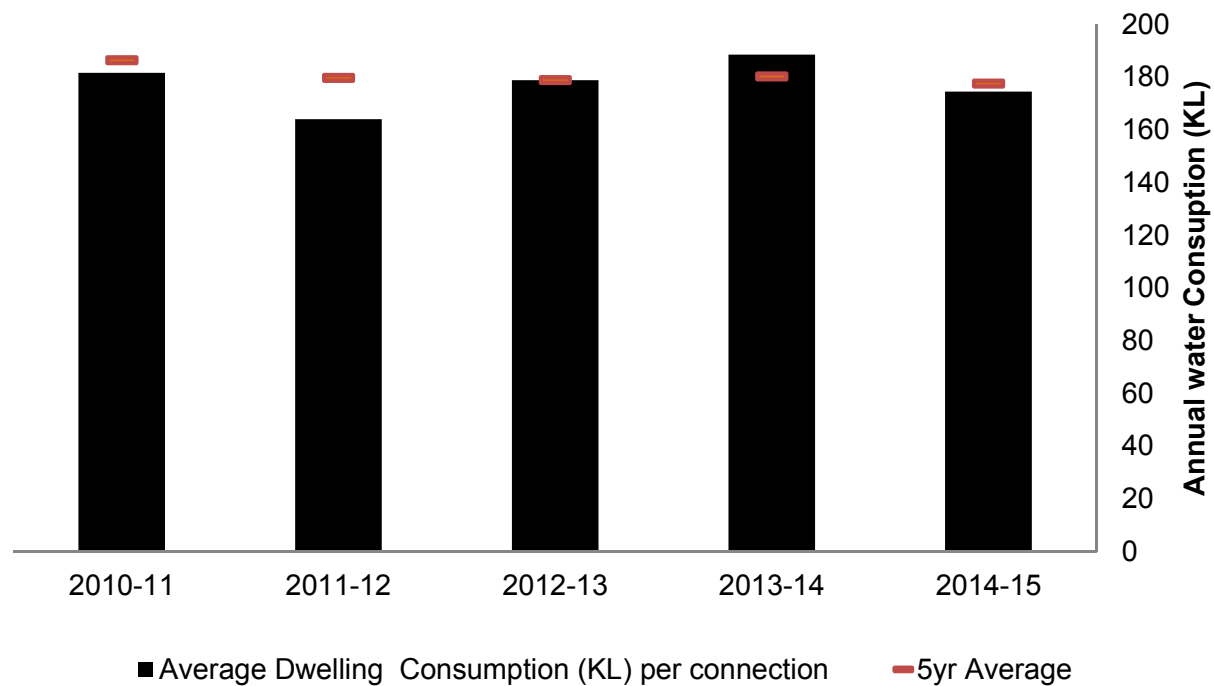
³⁹ <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/MinMedia/152670-williamstown-faq-211015.pdf>

⁴⁰ <http://www.hunterwater.com.au/Resources/Documents/Other-Reports/Regulatory-Reports/Compliance-and-Performance-Report-2014-15---submitted-to-IPART.PDF>

Port Stephens LGA Annual Water Consumption (latest available data)

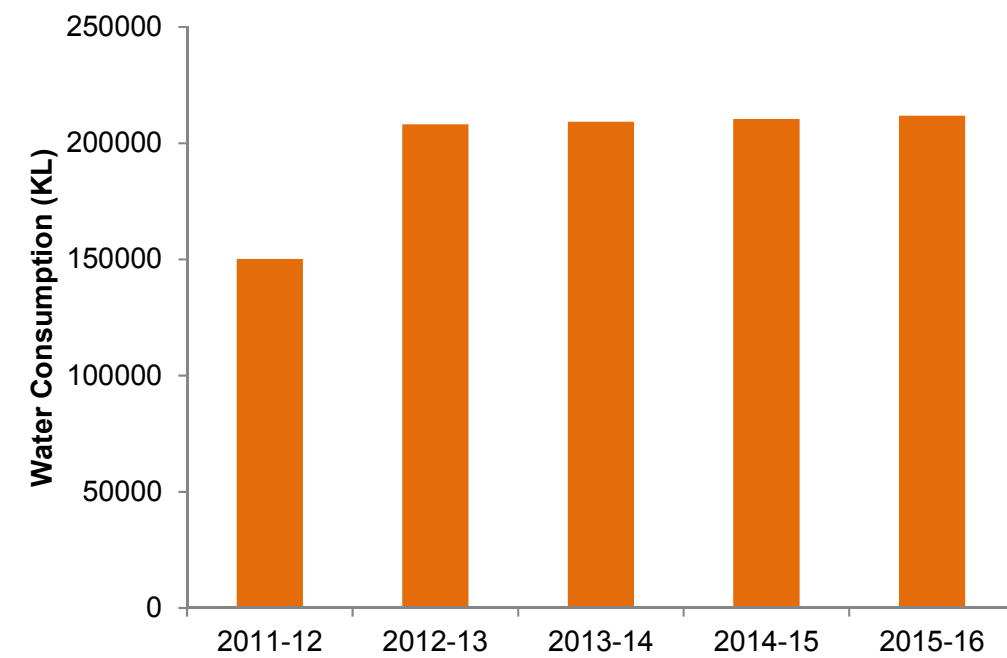


66.4% of potable water consumed from the Hunter Water Corporation's network in Port Stephens 2014-2015 was for residential purposes. Total water consumption has remained relatively stable over the period across the LGA. Residential water consumption within Port Stephens remains well below Hunter Water Corporation's water conservation target of 215 kilolitres per year for each residential property over a five year rolling average.



Average Residential Dwelling Consumption (KL) per connection⁴¹

⁴¹ Hunter Water Corporation



Port Stephens Council Annual Water Consumption

Council has undertaken a number of water audits throughout its major facilities to identify opportunities for improved water efficiency and continues to monitor water consumption on an ongoing basis.

Sewerage and Onsite Sewage Management Systems

The provision of waste water treatment services within the Port Stephens LGA is primarily the responsibility of HWC, with the exception of onsite sewerage management systems which are the responsibility of Port Stephens Council.

There are over 4,800 onsite sewage management systems (OSMS) in use in the LGA, mainly located in unsewered areas such as semi-rural villages and rural areas. System types include septic tanks with adsorption trenches or evapotranspiration beds, septic tanks that pump to sewer, aerated wastewater treatment systems, pump to sewer systems, and effluent pump-outs.

All surface waterways and groundwater can be potentially affected by failing onsite wastewater treatment systems. Systems that are poorly maintained and not operating effectively can introduce high levels of nutrients, micro-organisms and other pollutants to our waterways.

Council's On-site Sewage Management Program has been operating since March 2000 following legislative changes by the NSW government. All properties operating an OSMS require an approval to operate, and renewal on an annual basis. An inspection program is run by Council officers to ensure systems are maintained to a satisfactory condition⁴². The outcomes of the annual inspection process are shown in the table below.

⁴² <http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/resident-services/environmental-health-and-compliance/onsite-sewage-management>

On Site Sewerage Management Systems Approved and Inspected by Council.

Year	Total OSMS Approved	New Approvals	Annual Inspections	Compliance Rates from Inspections	Pollution Incidents Relating to Failing Systems (CRMs)
2012-2013	4,722	47	838	97%	21
2013-2014	4,776	30	815	93%	13
2014-2015	4,876	39	1,275	87%	4
2015-2016	4,896	34	883	92%	16

Threatened Species

The Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the key piece of environmental legislation through which the Australian Government focuses its interests on the protection of matters of national environmental significance. The EPBC Act provides for the listing of nationally threatened native species and ecological communities, native migratory species and marine species⁴³.

States and territories have responsibility for protecting matters of State and local significance. Provisions are made under the NSW *Threatened Species Act 1995* for the identification of State significant threatened species, populations and ecological communities. This Act also provides for the declaration and mapping of habitats that are critical to the survival of those identified threatened species, populations and ecological communities that are classified as endangered (critical habitats)⁴⁴.

Port Stephens Council plays a key role in the conservation and management of biodiversity and threatened species within the LGA. Council is responsible for the land use planning and development assessment process within the LGA, including the assessment of potential and likely impacts on threatened species as a result of land use planning decisions. As a land manager, local government is responsible for large areas of public land, much of which has high biodiversity value⁴⁵.

BioNet is a database of plant and animal sightings within NSW. Records come from a variety of sources, including members of the public. A BioNet search for flora and fauna recorded or verified within the LGA or a catchment region overlapping the LGA is summarised in the table below.

⁴³ <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/what-is-protected/threatened-species-ecological-communities>

⁴⁴ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/>

⁴⁵ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodiversity/BiodiversityResources.htm>

Number of Native Species, Threatened Species and Endangered Populations in the LGA

Species Type	No. Native Species Recorded in LGA	No. Species Listed (TSC Act, 1995)	No. Species Listed (EPBC Act, 1999)	Total No. of Listed Threatened Species (TSC Act and/or EPBC)	Native Species Listed in LGA (%)
Mammals	95	34	12	34	36%
Birds	325	75	19	75	23%
Amphibians	41	7	4	7	17%
Reptiles	58	6	4	6	10%
Plants	1,376	58	35	58	4%
Insects	16	1	0	1	6%

Source: BioNet⁴⁶

The Koala and Grey Headed Flying Fox are two of the most prominent threatened species within the LGA and for which information is most readily available.

Koala

The koala is listed as 'vulnerable to extinction' under the *Threatened Species Act 1995* and the NSW population as 'vulnerable' under the EPBC Act due to ongoing habitat threats and pressures resulting in declining numbers. This listing gives the koala an increased level of protection and attention: for example development proposals that will affect koala habitat are assessed more rigorously.

State Environmental Planning Policy No. 44 (SEPP 44) – Koala Habitat Protection aims to encourage the conservation and management of natural vegetation that provides important koala habitat. The SEPP 44 requires a plan of management for areas of more than one hectare that contain koala habitat and for which a development application has been lodged.

Koalas in Port Stephens

The Port Stephens LGA is home to an important koala population. In order to protect the iconic koalas of the area, Council developed the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM), which was approved by the Department of Planning in 2002. The principal aim of the CKPoM (which is consistent with State planning policies) is to:

'Encourage the proper conservation and management of areas of natural vegetation that provide habitat for koalas, to ensure permanent free-living populations over their present range and to reverse the current trend of population decline.'⁴⁷

The CKPoM covers the entire LGA as an effective tool to assist Council manage the balance between development and the conservation of habitat. It focuses on koala conservation in the LGA through the identification of core koala habitat, mitigation of threats to koalas and

⁴⁶ Data from the BioNet Atlas of NSW Wildlife website, which holds records from a number of custodians. The data are only indicative and cannot be considered a comprehensive inventory, and may contain errors and omissions.

⁴⁷ <http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/grow/land-environment-and-heritage/environmental-plans-and-strategy/comprehensive-koala-plan-of-management>

native vegetation on which they rely as well as the further development of koala conservation measures in the region.

The CKPoM contains 13 objectives relating to identifying key habitat, implementation of conservation programs, community education and ongoing research into the koala population(s) of Port Stephens. The CKPoM states these objectives will be achieved in cooperation with the community and key stakeholders through the implementation of the action plan contained within the CKPoM. The CKPoM Steering Committee continues to guide the development and implementation of the plan.

The Great Koala Count has been run during 2013, 2014 and 2015 by the National Parks Association of NSW. It is a community based, citizen-science survey program conducted over a specific time period in November each year. It aims to build on community knowledge to create a comprehensive picture of the abundance and distribution of koalas in the local area. The survey is designed to achieve clear outcomes through rigorous and systematic structure. Repeated over time the Koala Count intends to show trends in koala populations, movement and habitat usage. See koalacount.org.au for the full 2013 and 2014 reports as well as more information about the program.

Port Stephens LGA	Number of Citizen Scientists	Number of Koalas Counted	Number of "My Koala Walks" ^{**}
2013	19	60	9
2014	13	44	14

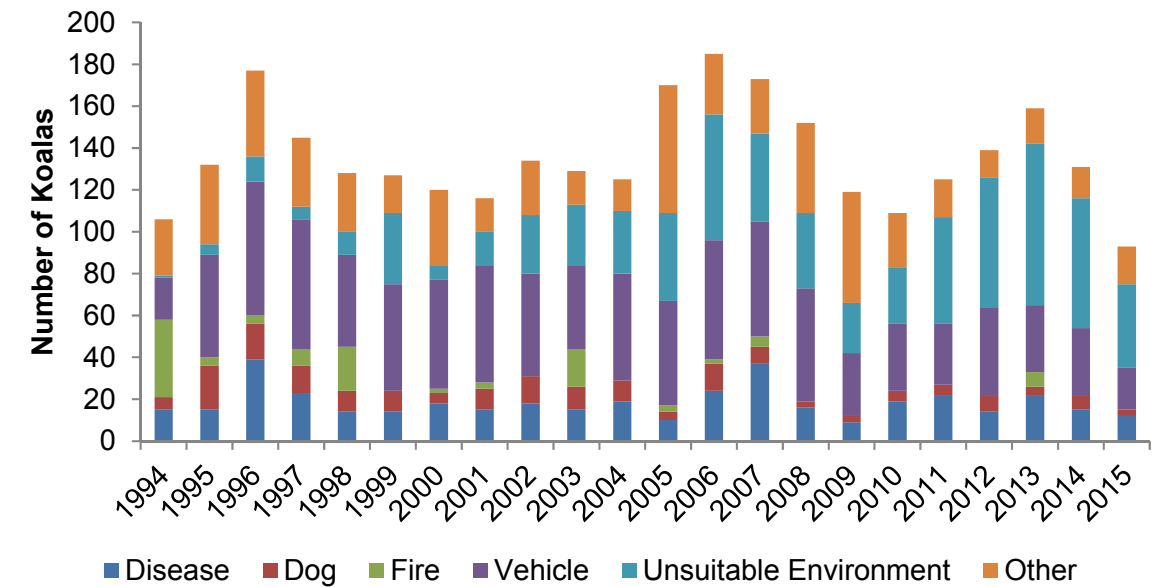
National Koala Count Data submitted for Port Stephens LGA

* Number of 'My Koala Walks' refers to where citizens looked for koalas but were unable to sight any.

In May 2017 Port Stephens Council announced a plan to build and operate a \$3 million koala hospital and tourism facility at Treescapes holiday Park, One Mile Beach. This one-of-a-kind facility is a joint initiative between Council and Port Stephens Koalas in response to challenges facing the region's koala population.

The Hunter Koala Preservation Society (HKPS) is a volunteer group dedicated to the preservation, management, rehabilitation and care of koalas in the Port Stephens area. They maintain a database of koalas that come into the care of rescuers, or are found deceased in order to better inform decision and policy making.

Koalas Taken Into HKPS Care



Source: HKPS

It can be seen from the figure above that the total number of koalas being taken into care by HKPS fluctuates over the data period; however the number of rescues attributed to an 'unsuitable environment' is increasing.

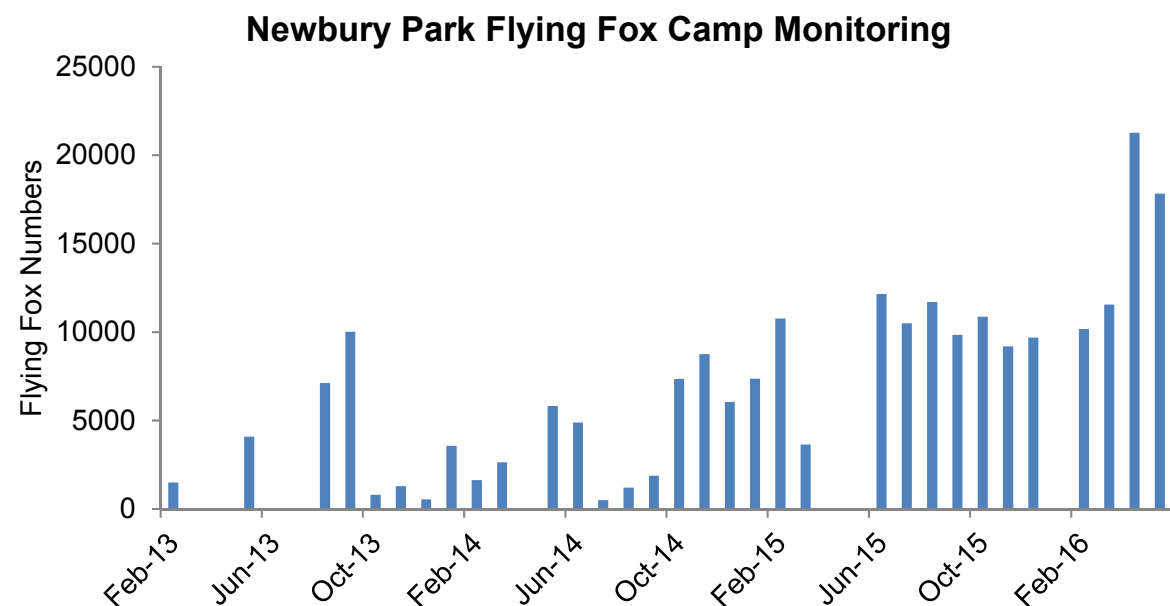
The Grey Headed Flying Fox is protected under *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, and listed as 'vulnerable' under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act, 1999), and the *New South Wales Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act, 1995).

The decline in the Grey Headed Flying Fox population may not be obvious in all areas. As their natural habitat is lost through clearing, these animals become more concentrated in localised areas where feeding and roosting habitat is still available⁴⁸.

Newbury Park, Raymond Terrace, has been home to a permanent, now 'Nationally Significant' flying fox camp since 2010. There are also temporarily populated camps called satellite camps located at:

- Fullerton Cove
- Medowie
- Bobs Farm
- Wallaroo
- Salamander Bay
- Snapper Island

⁴⁸ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/Grey-headedFlying-foxVulnerable.htm>



Source: Newbury Park Flying Fox monitoring data February 2013 – March 2016.

It is noted that monitoring data were not reported for four months (April-June 2015 and January 2016) in the monitoring period 2015-2016. This was due to staffing restructure and changes within the Natural Resources section of Council. No data were collected during January 2016 due to storms and flooding in Raymond Terrace and the Port Stephens Local Government Area (LGA).

Recently the flying fox population at Newbury Park has expanded into Ross Wallbridge Reserve. This change in behaviour is attributed to unseasonal conditions through NSW and south Queensland over the summer of 2015-2016. This rare natural event has resulted in significant changes to flying fox seasonal migration patterns, most noticeably resulting in higher numbers in the Hunter Valley. The combination of warmer conditions and unseasonal flowering has attracted flying foxes to Ross Wallbridge Reserve from Newbury Park and elsewhere. As of late April 2016, monthly monitoring established that the local Raymond Terrace population has expanded from 10,000 to 20,000 with a related increase in resident and business enquiries. Council will closely monitor the situation, particularly in relation to potential changes from upcoming cooler conditions.

Council has been liaising with concerned community members, particularly residents of Alton Road, to provide updated information and details on the cross governmental management approaches, as well as options for their own action and dispelling some common myths around flying foxes and human health.

Endangered Ecological Communities

The following Endangered Ecological Communities (as listed under the TSC Act, 1995) are listed on BioNet for the LGA⁴⁹:

- Hunter Lowland Red Gum Forest.
- Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions.

⁴⁹ Data from the BioNet Atlas of NSW Wildlife website, which holds records from a number of custodians. The data are only indicative and cannot be considered a comprehensive inventory, and may contain errors and omissions.

- Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions.
- Lower Hunter Spotted Gum – Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion.
- River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions.
- Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions/Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion.
- Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions.
- Littoral Rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin, and SE Corner Bioregions.
- Lowland Rainforest in NSW North Coast and Sydney Basin Bioregion.
- Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland.
- Themeda grassland on Sea cliffs and Coastal headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney basin & SE Corner bioregion.
- Lower Hunter Valley Dry Rainforest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions.
- Blue Gum High Forest in Sydney Basin Bioregion.

Biodiversity in Port Stephens is impacted by land clearing for agriculture, mining and urban development, and habitat and corridor fragmentation. Invasion by introduced species and altered fire regimes also affect native terrestrial biodiversity.

Habitat Preservation and Regeneration

Council is one of many land owners and managers within the LGA. Regulatory control for key environmental protection matters and landholder responsibilities are also held by:

- National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) as a land manager for the NPWS Estate. NPWS is also a regulatory authority for native flora and fauna.
- Forestry Corporation of NSW as a land manager.
- Local Land Services as the approval body of *Native Vegetation Act 2003*.
- Crown Lands as a land manager.
- Private property owners.

Port Stephens is a diverse region, comprised of natural features including bushland, rivers, wetlands and coastal areas. The table below shows the natural land areas within the Open Space Management Plan by land ownership and the net area zoned for Environmental Protection in the 2013 LEP.

Protected Natural Areas within the LGA

Land Type	Area (ha)	Percentage of LGA
National Park (NPWS)	19,318	20%
State Forest	3,468	4%
'Natural Area' Community Land	480	0.5%
'Foreshore Area' Community Land	118	0.07%
'Natural Area' Crown Trusteeship	65	0.1%
'Foreshore Area' Crown Trusteeship	123	0.1%

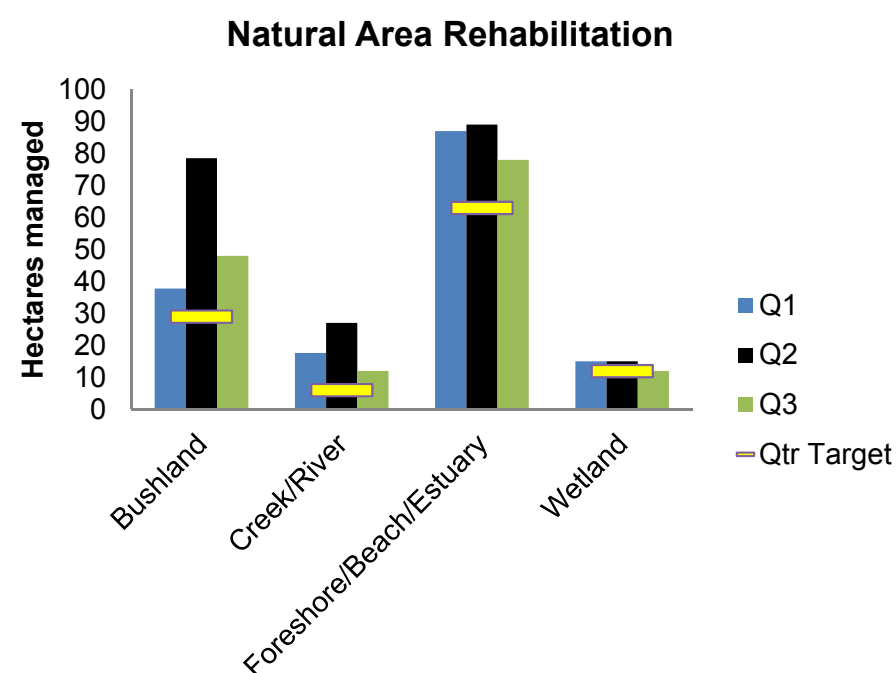
Land Type	Area (ha)	Percentage of LGA
Land Zoned 'Environmental Protection (private and public)	7,759	8%

Bushland Restoration

Approximately 60-65% of the Port Stephens LGA supports remnant native vegetation. This bushland contains many of the threatened flora, fauna, and vegetation communities found within the LGA and provides important wildlife corridors to facilitate species movement.

Council conducts an ongoing natural area rehabilitation program which includes a range of activities across a number of Council controlled sites. These activities range from bushland regeneration, native plantings, weed and pest control, education activities and monitoring programs. This program is divided into bushland, creek/river, foreshore/beach/estuary and wetland categories. Areas actively managed in 2015-2016 are depicted in the figure below.

2015-2016 Natural Area Restoration Outcomes and Targets



Over 750 volunteers are actively involved in many of Council's committees, programs and initiatives. Volunteers make an enormous contribution to the achievement of environmental outcomes through the maintenance, restoration and protection of the LGAs natural assets.

Environmental Weeds and Pests

Environmental weeds are managed according to priority sites for overall bushland management.

Those weeds that are not declared noxious, but remain a threat to the environment are termed 'environmental weeds'. The largest proportions of environmental weeds are horticultural species that have escaped from cultivation. Environmental weeds still have a detrimental effect on local biodiversity. Management of environmental weeds is primarily

done on a site-management needs basis where control is undertaken in order to conserve EECs and protected species.

Pests are prioritised based on the list of currently declared pest species in NSW. Currently declared pest species in NSW are:

- wild rabbits
- wild dogs
- feral pigs
- foxes (European Red)
- feral camels (Western Division of NSW only)
- a number of locust species (the Australian Plague, Spur-Throated and Migratory).

Under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* all land managers in NSW, whether on public or private land, have an obligation to control declared pest species on their land.

Local Land Services is the lead agency for pest management in NSW. Council undertakes pest management as a responsible landholder; no regulatory role is currently attributed to Council. Other landholders such as NPWS, Forestry Corporation of NSW and Crown Lands undertake pest management within their own areas. Similar to the management of environmental weeds, Council controls pests in terms of specific site management requirements.

Local Land Services helps landholders by providing advice and assistance in eradicating declared pest species. They also work with private and government stakeholders to develop vertebrate pest management plans and cooperative management programs⁵⁰.

Riparian Protection and Enhancement

Local freshwater ecosystems include wetlands, coastal freshwater swamps, marshes, hanging swamps, and intermittently inundated floodplains along the Hunter and Williams Rivers. Healthy freshwater ecosystems are placed under pressure by erosion clearing, grazing, altered hydrology and introduced species.

Through the award of a NSW Environmental Trust Grant, Council has undertaken an extensive restoration project to protect the riparian corridor of the Williams River between Raymond Terrace and Seaham. The project was run from 2010-2014. Objectives of this project included:

- Targeted weed control and re-planting of native riparian vegetation along the estuarine reach of the Williams River.
- Installation of rock filleting to increase the resilience of the riverbank areas to flooding and erosion processes, as well as reduce sediment flow into the river when coupled with native revegetation.
- Building the capacity of landowners to protect riparian areas through the facilitation of on-ground improvements such as weed management, regeneration and the fencing of riverbank areas to reduce the impacts of livestock within wetlands and other sensitive areas.

Through the cooperation of Council, land managers and private residents the project successfully improved the resilience, protection and native vegetation of 3.8 km of degraded

⁵⁰ <http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/pest-control>

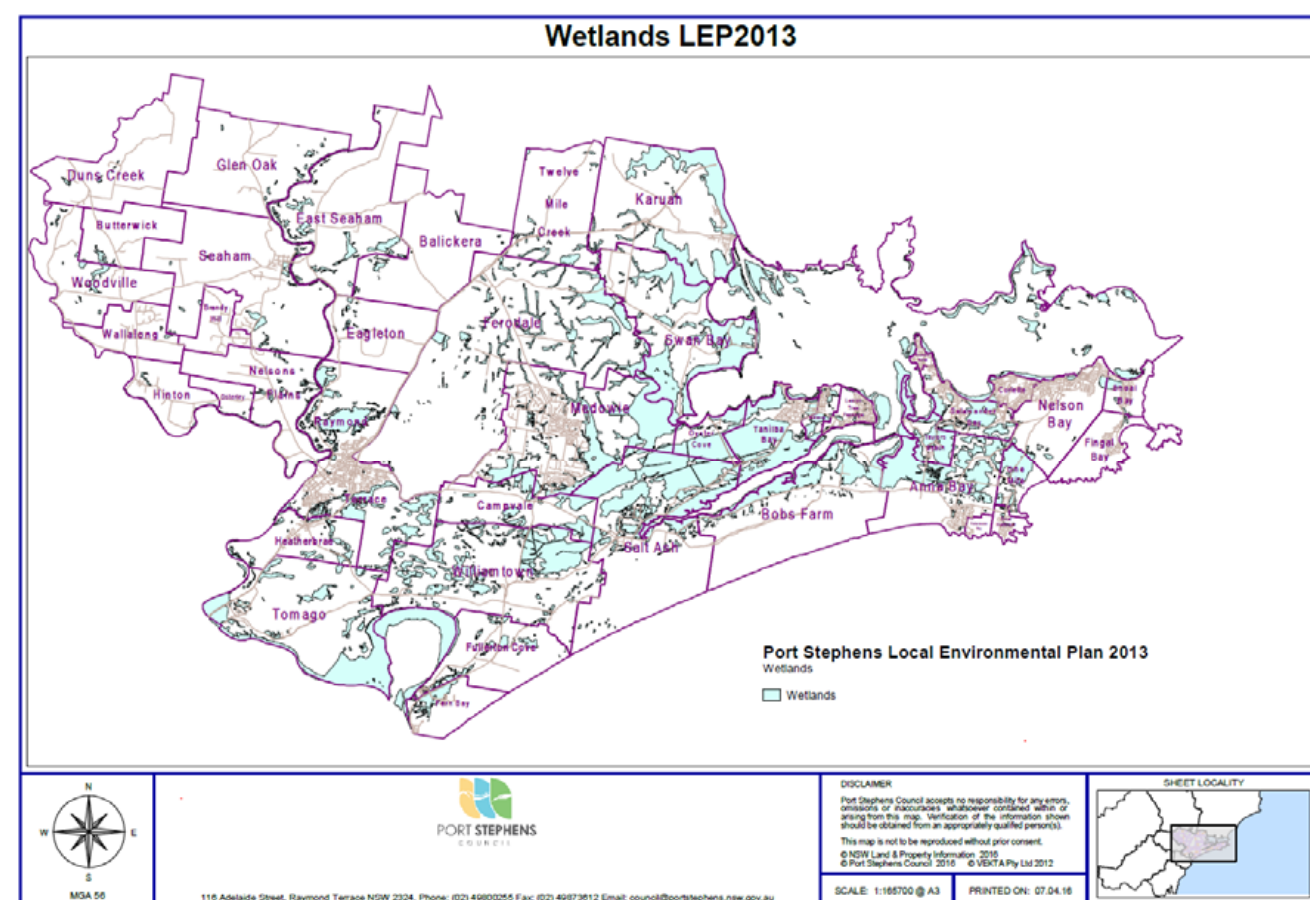
river bank. In turn this has enhanced the water quality, biodiversity, ecosystem services and best management practices appropriate to each site.

Wetland Preservation

Within the LGA two wetland systems of International Importance (Ramsar) are listed as Matters of Environmental Significance under the EPBC Act.

The Mambo Wetlands and Wanda Wetlands are located primarily in Salamander Bay. The Mambo Wanda Wetlands Committee aims to protect, maintain and enhance the wetlands, encourage public visitation while safeguarding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and the areas ecological integrity.

Regular activities undertaken by the group include the removal of weed species, native bushland regeneration, monitoring of water quality, maintenance of the area including walking tracks and access barriers for illegal users⁵¹.



Wetland Areas mapped within the LGA under the LEP2013

Foreshore Management

The coastal areas of Port Stephens are dynamic and diverse; they shape our region through innate influences on tourism, industry, lifestyle and culture. Our coastline includes a diversity of habitats and landforms, an ever-changing environment that is continuously shaped by complex coastal processes.

The management of the foreshore within Port Stephens is the joint responsibility of a range of agencies and stakeholders who work collaboratively on projects and activities to ensure the foreshore area is protected and enhanced for the benefit of the community and the natural environment.

The Port Stephens Foreshore Management Plan provides a coordinated approach for the prioritisation of management actions and ongoing commitments to the sustainable use of foreshore areas in Port Stephens and Great Lakes LGAs. The Foreshore Management Plan is currently under a scheduled review.

Over the reporting period Council has undertaken many foreshore management projects to protect and enhance coastal areas as well as encourage safe and easy access to water ways by recreational users. All works undergo the appropriate consideration and assessment afforded to them by their high ecological and recreational values.

Tanilba Bay foreshore revetment works, undertaken in two stages including saltmarsh re-introduction, were completed in June 2016. This project included the implementation of erosion management measures in accordance with the Tanilba Bay Foreshore Management Plan (developed 2011). The unauthorised boat ramp at Peace Park was also removed in accordance with this management plan.

Boat ramps were upgraded at Lemon Tree Passage, Karuah, Forster Park (Tanilba Bay) and Shoal Bay foreshore areas. Council also undertook upgrade works on Rookes Point Jetty, Mallabula and the Lemon Tree Passage tidal pool pontoons. Infrastructure improvements, including the construction of a revetment wall at Henderson Park, Lemon Tree Passage are ongoing.

Conroy Park, Corlette and Sunset Park, Soldiers Point required emergency foreshore stabilisation works. Revetment works and the removal of unauthorised boat ramps are scheduled for Sunset Park, Soldiers Point.

The Sandy Point/Conroy Park Foreshore Erosion and Drainage Management Plan was endorsed by Council in April 2016, formalising Council's commitment to investigate specific foreshore protection works for the area which is currently being significantly impacted by coastal processes. A coastal processes study has been completed, as has a drainage processes study; development of concept plans, community consultation, prioritisation of works and detailed design for sand nourishment is currently underway.

The Kangaroo Point Foreshore Study was undertaken in 2015 to consider coastal processes and future management of the foreshore area to the North of Kangaroo Point, Soldiers Point. Oceanic swell exposure has resulted in significant damage to the existing inappropriate seawall and subsequent loss of the beach – works are proposed for July 2017.

Sand nourishment of Shoal Bay Beach is ongoing in response to long term erosion issues.

Council is in the early stages of future improvements to Little Beach boat ramp. Coastal processes studies are currently being undertaken to guide concept designs for the area. Sand management surrounding the boat ramp continues.

Future coastal process studies and management will be in accordance with the recent creation of the NSW Coastal Management Bill.

⁵¹ <http://www.mambowanda.com.au/>

Estuary Health

Estuaries are important natural resources, supporting a vast biodiversity of terrestrial and marine organisms and providing an array of vital ecosystems services. In addition to its high natural value, the Port Stephens estuary is an important location for commercial and recreational fishing and marine tourism. Threats to estuary health result from the increased pressure of human activities and pollution and as well natural events such as storms, floods and erosion.

Management of the estuary is shared between multiple government authorities and stakeholders. The PSC Estuary Committee is established to progress and monitor the implementation of the Port Stephens/Myall Lakes Estuary Management Plan (2000). The Committee includes representatives of local and State government authorities, estuary user groups and the community.

Completed in 2013 Council undertook a two staged project to improve and protect water quality in Tilligerry Creek which flows into the Port Stephens Estuary. The initiative involved the fencing of approximately 3 km of riparian area to restrict livestock access and associated degradation and the revegetation of over 1 km of riparian area to increase habitat and run-off filtration. The aim was to support the capacity of landholders to manage the creek front and estuarine reach.

Fisheries Research Institute

NSW Department of Primary Industries operates Port Stephens Fisheries Institute at Taylors Beach; all fisheries research in NSW is coordinated from this centre. Research programs are focused on aquaculture, marine ecosystems, freshwater ecosystems and fisheries research assessment⁵².

Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park

The Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park (PSGLMP) was declared in 2005 under the *Marine Parks Act 1997*. The park covers an area of approximately 98,000 ha and includes important habitat for the grey nurse shark and black cod, the primary breeding site of the Gould's Petrel, the largest areas of mangrove and saltmarsh in NSW and 5% of the State's seagrass area.

The PSGLMP Zoning Plan enhances conservation of marine habitats and species by providing various zones and corresponding levels of protection whilst allowing for multiple use. The four types of zones that are applied in NSW marine parks are sanctuary zones, habitat protection zones, general use zones and special purpose zones⁵³.

The Marine Parks Authority (MPA) undertakes management action within the Marine Park area in accordance with the PSGLMP. PSGLMP objectives and management actions have been organised under the following strategies:

- Identification and adaptive management of threats to marine biodiversity and habitats.
- Protection of high conservation areas and threatened species.
- Assessing developments in and affecting the marine park to minimise impacts.
- Maximising voluntary compliance with the marine park zoning plan.

⁵² <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/research/centres/psfi/research>

⁵³ <https://www.portstephens.org.au/images/documents/Great%20Lakes%20Marine%20park%20brochure.pdf>

- Ecologically sustainable management of commercial activities.
- Delivering an ecological, social and economic research and monitoring program.
- Promotion of sustainable tourism and recreational uses, as well as facilitation of a greater appreciation of marine biodiversity.
- Ensuring management is consistent with the cultural aspirations of Aboriginal people⁵⁴.

Marine Parks Association

Established by a group of marine scientists and concerned citizens, the Marine Parks Association (MPA) supports marine parks and sustainable marine resource management from a community based platform.

MPA collaborates with DPI, NPWS, OEH, universities and Marine Parks to undertake citizen science and research projects such as the annual dolphin census and seagrass studies⁵⁵.

Coastal Reforms

The aim of the coastal reforms is to establish a new approach that allows land managers and decision makers to respond effectively to coastal processes and hazards, and to manage the unique environmental, social and economic values of the coast in a coherent and functional way.

The current legal framework for coastal management in NSW was established over 35 years ago. It was recognised that these laws were not able to adequately reflect the current and future challenges faced by our coastal areas, nor the evolving knowledge of coastal processes and hazards.

On 13 November 2015, the NSW government took a major step in this two stage coastal reforms program by releasing a draft framework for coastal management for public consultation. A full draft Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) and corresponding maps of the coastal management areas will also be released separately for public comment in the coming months. The government will not finalise the coastal reforms until this second stage of public consultation is completed⁵⁶.

The Foreshore Management Plan is being reviewed in the context of the Coastal Reforms which require councils to prepare a Coastal Zone Management Program.

Environmental Education Programs

Council regularly delivers educational programs to promote awareness, preservation and protection of the Port and its estuarine environments. These programs include:

- The Summer Coastal Activities Program
- Port Stephens Marine Discover Series
- Coastal Habitat Awareness Program

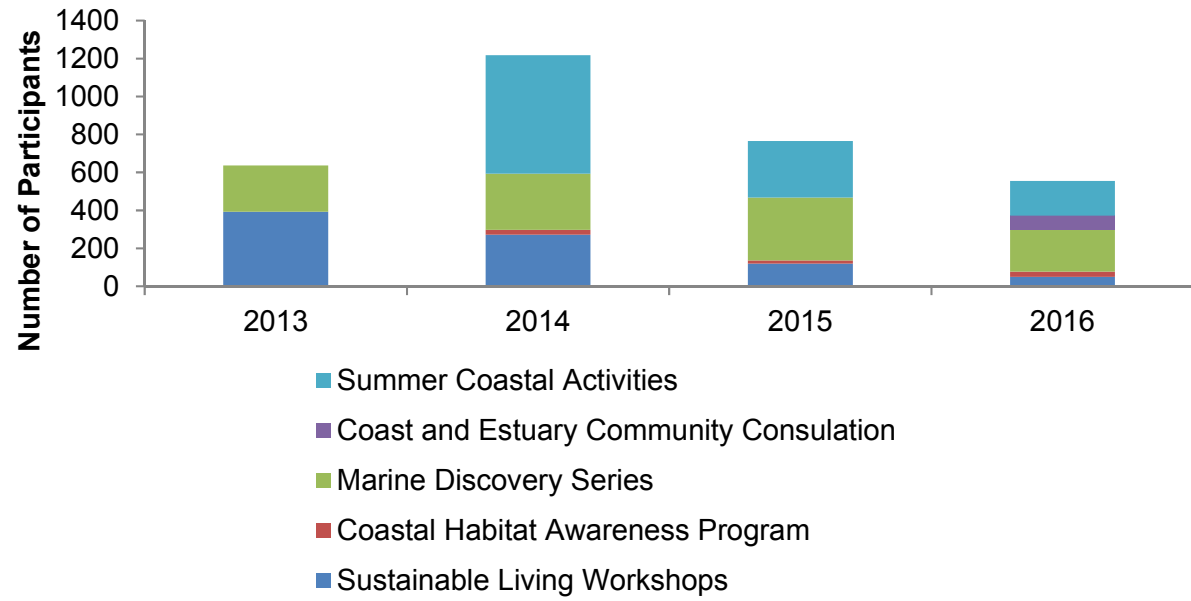
Participant numbers are shown in the following graph.

⁵⁴ <http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au/pdf/PSGLMP-Operational-Plan-2010.pdf>

⁵⁵ <http://www.marineparksassociation.org.au/>

⁵⁶ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/coasts/coastreforms.htm>

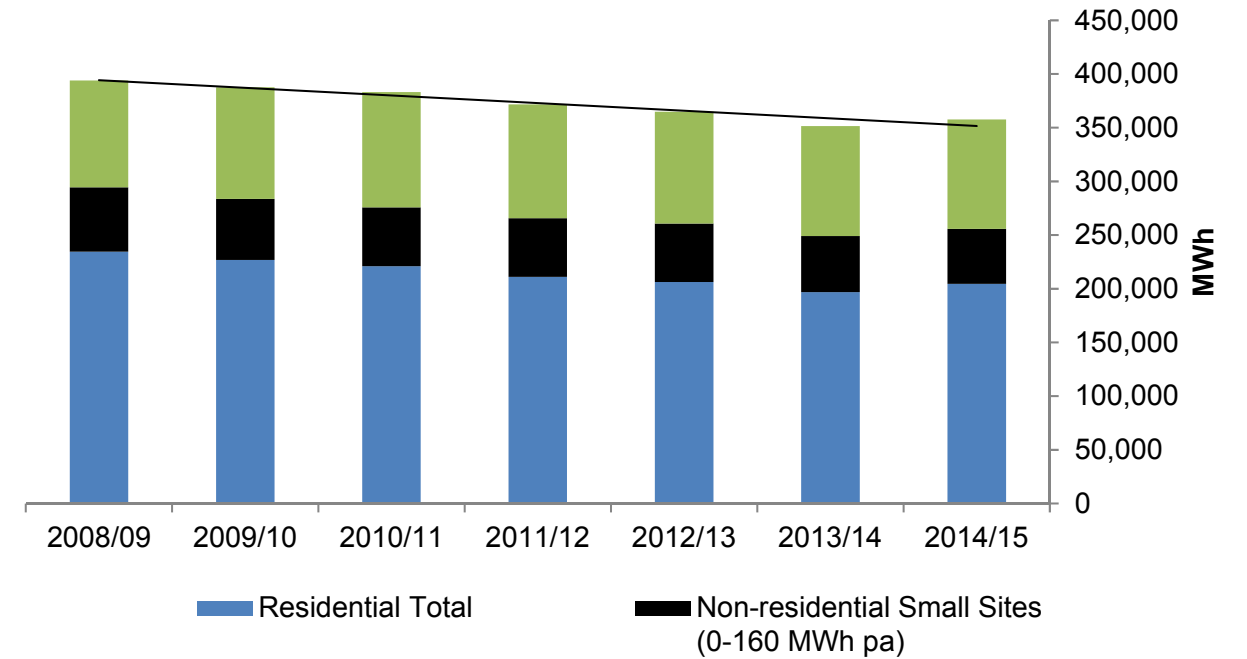
Estuarine Environmental Education Programs



Greenhouse Gas Emissions

As climatic records continue to be broken across Australia, the need to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally and locally has never been stronger.

The electricity sector remains a significant contributor to GHG emissions in NSW. In recent years electricity consumption has declined in NSW due to a variety of economic factors, such as increased local generation by residential and commercial users and improvements to energy efficiency⁵⁷.

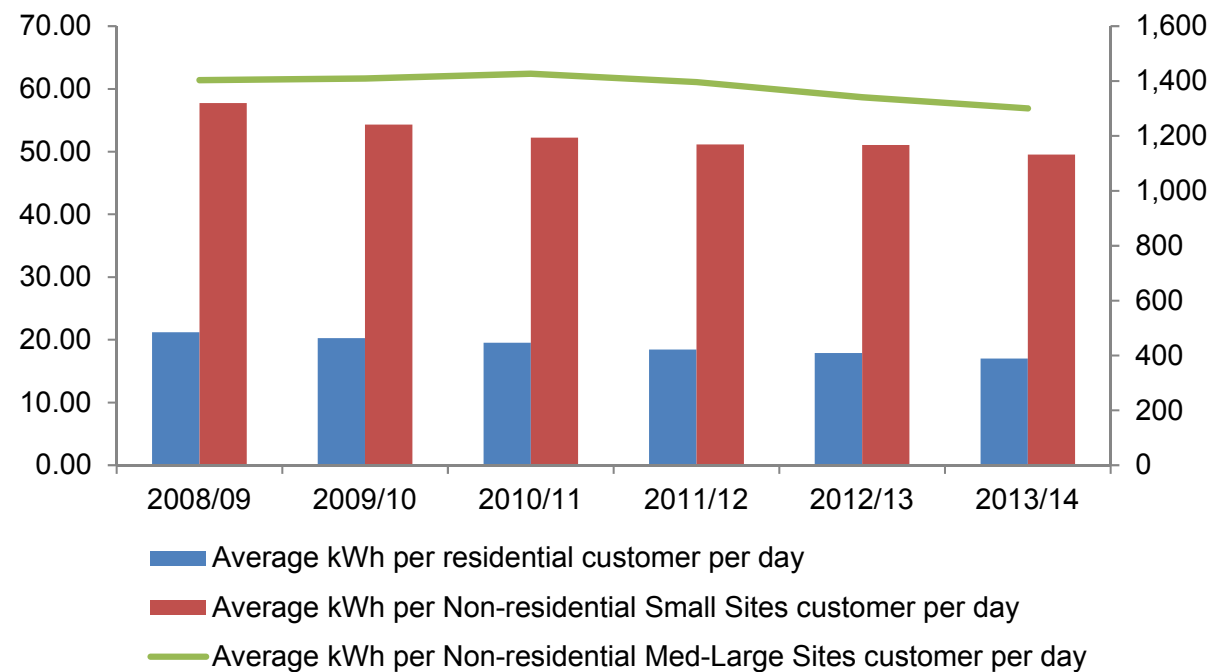


Total Electricity Consumption in the Port Stephens LGA

According to Ausgrid total electricity consumption has been steadily declining over recent years across Port Stephens however consumption increased in 2014-2015 for the first time since at least 2008-2009.

Average annual electricity consumption by customer has been declining across all categories over the reporting period, providing further indication of increased energy efficiency measures and uptake of local generation opportunities including, most significantly – solar photovoltaics.

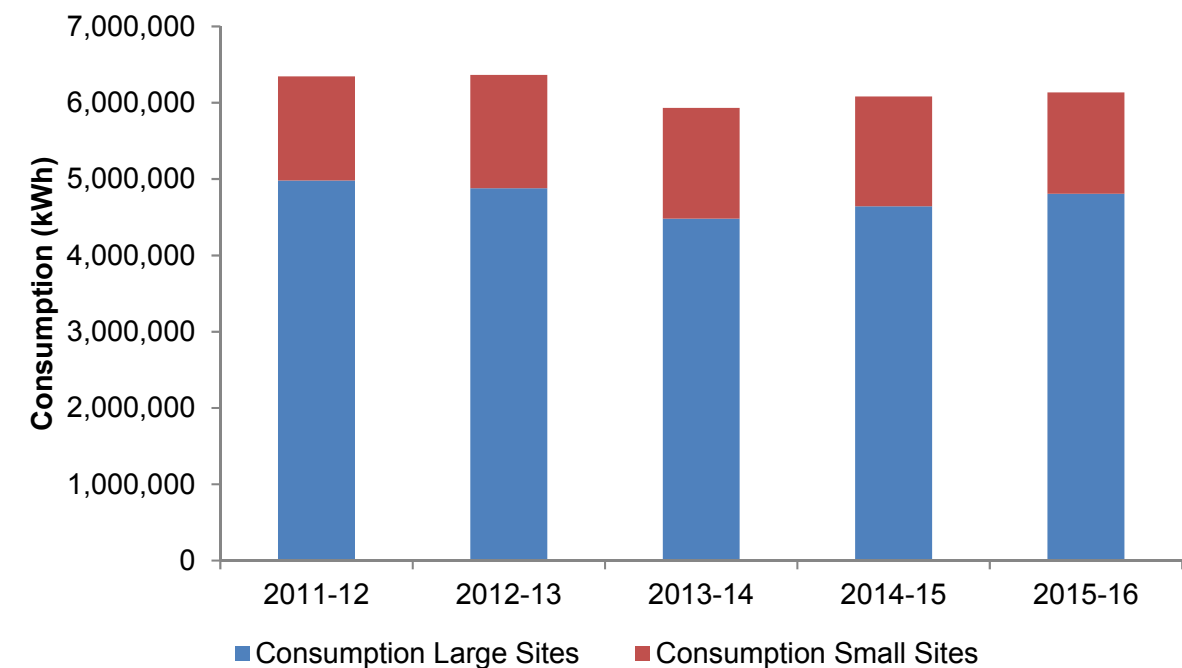
⁵⁷ <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/soe/20150817soe-2015.pdf>



Average annual electricity consumption per customer and customer category in the Port Stephens LGA

According to the Australian Photovoltaic Institute (APVI) as at 19/04/2016 there was 13,325 kW of installed solar photovoltaic capacity of across the Port Stephens LGA from 4,722 solar installations, equating to approximately 16.1% of dwellings having a solar PV system installed⁵⁸. According to APVI this is the highest density of solar PV systems installed by LGA within the Hunter.

Port Stephens Council continued to implement its sustainable energy program throughout the term with a range of activities implemented throughout the LGA to improve the overall efficiency, environmental performance and financial sustainability of its assets. These projects ranged from LED lighting retrofits to renewable energy (solar) installation, installation of building management systems, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) upgrades, timer and sensor controls amongst others.



Port Stephens Council annual electricity consumption (excluding streetlights)

Noxious Weed Infestations

In New South Wales, the term 'noxious weed' is used to describe plants that have been declared as noxious by the Minister for Agriculture under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* (the Act). The Act aims to protect the economy, the environment and the community from the negative effects of serious weeds. The Act provides the means by which the spread and establishment of serious weeds can be prevented.



Chinese Violet

Council's approach to the management of noxious weeds in Port Stephens is aligned with the Australian Weeds Strategy, NSW Invasive Species Plan and the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Weeds Strategy. This is a coordinated and integrated approach to ensure consistency.

Plants that pose a serious threat to primary industries, the environment and/or the community are potential candidates for declaration as noxious weeds. There are five control classes of noxious weeds, scaled in terms of weed type and threat. Control requirements are specified in accordance to these control classes.

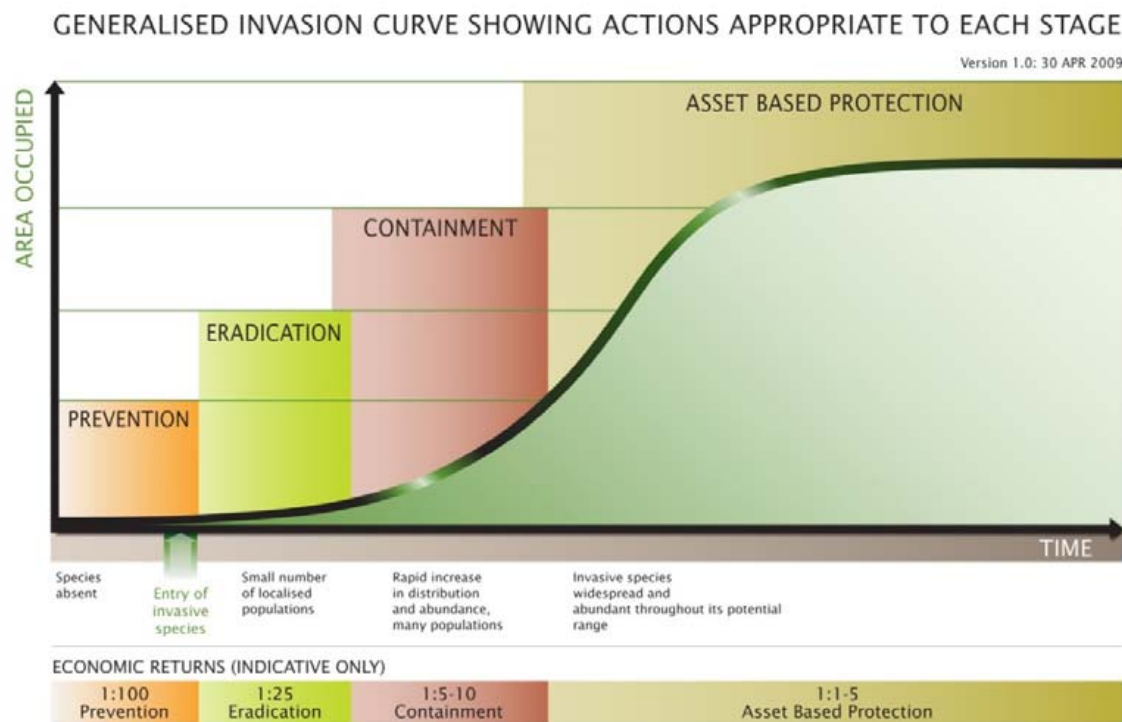
⁵⁸ <http://pv-map.apvi.org.au/historical#9/-32.8564/151.4117>

There are 98 Weeds Declared in the Local Control Authority area of Port Stephens Council.

Class	Definition	Number
1	State Prohibited Weed <i>The plant must be eradicated from the land and that land must be kept free of the plant</i>	35
2	Regionally Prohibited Weed <i>The plant must be eradicated from the land and that land must be kept free of the plant</i>	12
3	Regionally Controlled Weed <i>The plant must be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed</i>	17
4	Locally Controlled Weed <i>The plant must not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed</i>	34

Source: NSW Weedwise⁵⁹

The declaration of noxious weeds and the prioritisation of control works are generally based on the 'invasion curve', see figure below. The invasion curve shows that eradication of an invasive species becomes less likely and control costs increase as an invasive species spreads over time. Prevention is the most cost-effective solution, followed by eradication. If a species is not detected and removed early, intense and long-term control efforts will be unavoidable.

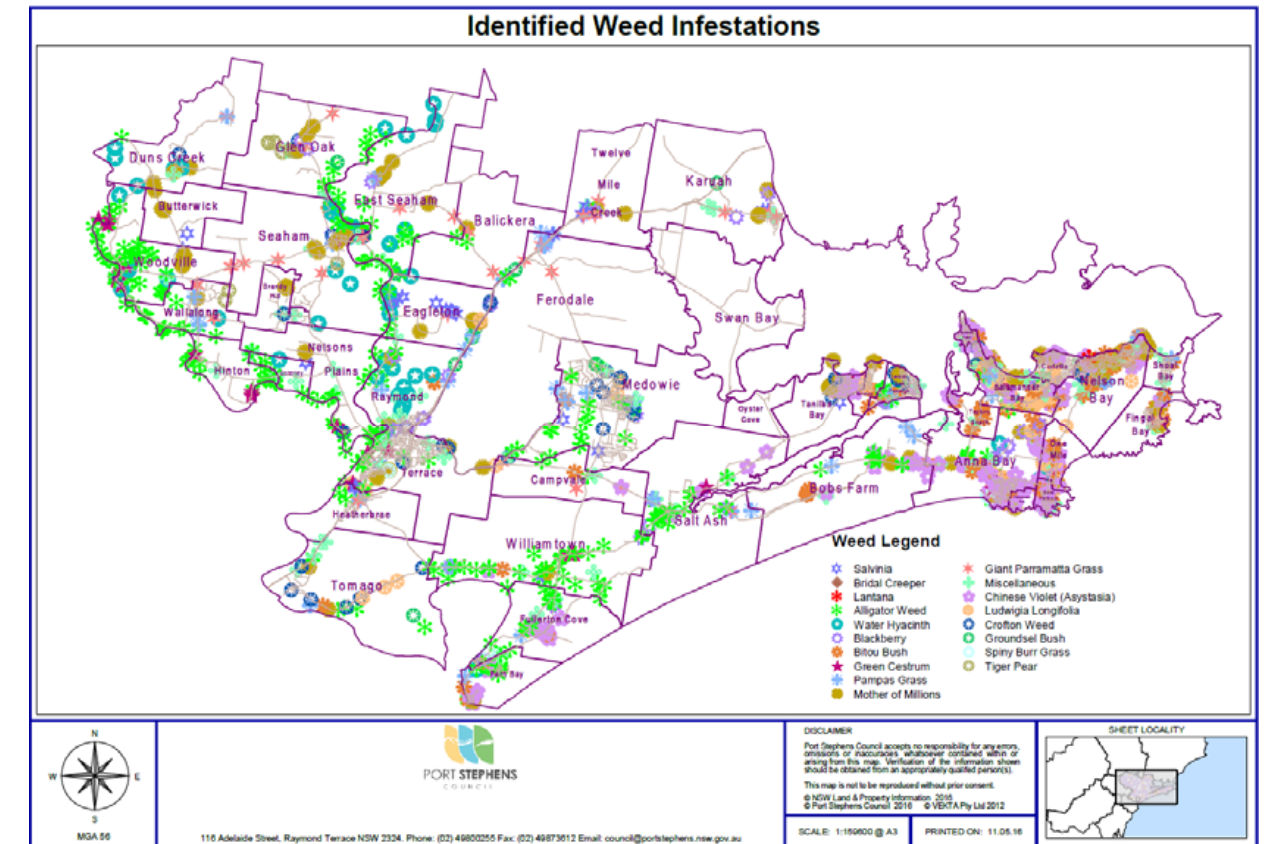


Source: Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework, Agriculture Victoria

Council is a local control authority for noxious weeds within in the LGA. This means that Council has a regulatory role to enforce the Act on private property; Council is also required to comply with the Act on land for which Council has management responsibility.

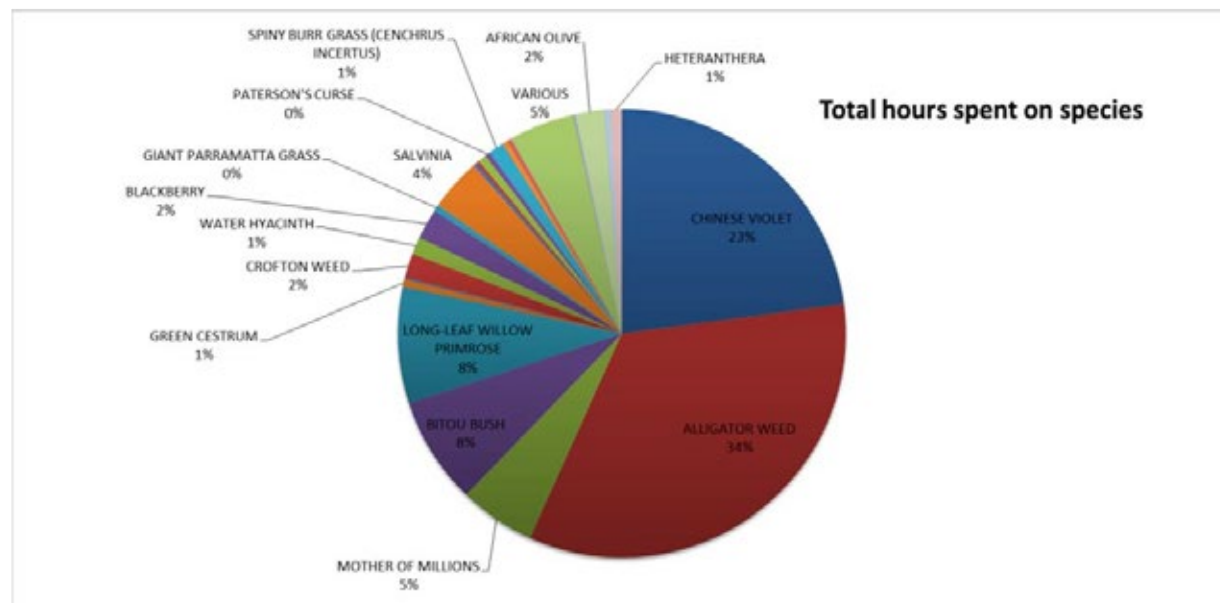
Council utilises GIS mapping to monitor and track the extent of noxious weed incursions. Mapping demonstrates that noxious weeds are concentrated around key pathways of spread such as waterways, major roads and urban areas. Mapping is also used to prioritise inspection programs, as part of early intervention initiatives.

Extent of Noxious Weeds Identified and Treated Through Council Inspection Programs



Council prioritises its noxious weed control program based on the invasion curve and weeds mapping. Many of Council's weed control programs are focused on species and areas where early prevention, eradication and containment outcomes are achieved ahead of the need for asset based protection. The figure below depicts the species Council prioritises for control and compliance programs.

⁵⁹ Data Retrieved 28/2/2016



Total Hours Spent on Weeds Species within the LGA

Our Environment

Theme: Waste Management

Goal: Port Stephens has a highly valued, affordable and convenient waste and recycling system.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Total waste per capita (landfill, recycle, green).	Total tonnage of waste has increased since 2012 but is considered on target with growth. A spike in tonnage in 2014-2015 is a result of green waste generated from the April 2015 storm. Diversion and recycling rates have increased since 2012 due to improved sorting processes at Salamander Bay Waste Transfer Station and process changes at the ARRT.

Council contracted its waste collection services through Solo Resource Recovery for the period to 30 June 2015. Thereafter a new contract was awarded to Suez for new garbage and recycling bins which were rolled out across Port Stephens from 1 July 2015 – changing the way residents process and dispose of rubbish.



The new arrangements created a greater emphasis on recycling with households taking up an option for a bigger recycling bin for a one-off fee.

The new contract included changes to the kerbside collection service with households able to book in two collections a year on a date that suited them.

Waste Statistics for the period 2012-2016

	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Landfill	19,548.94	17,212.64	20,378	20,361
Per capita	0.287	0.247	0.289	0.288
Green waste	3,050.04	3,821	13,346	4,155
Per capita	0.045	0.055	0.189	0.006

	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Recycling – yellow bin	6,360.17	6,888.12	6,786.34	6,747
Per capita	0.093	0.099	0.096	0.096
Recycling - compost	13,148	13,346.68	12,497.68	13,377
Per capita	0.193	0.191	0.177	0.189
Totals per capita	0.6188	0.5918	0.7524	0.6337

Council operates the Salamander Bay Waste Transfer Station and also has decommissioned landfill sites which are monitored on an ongoing basis.



Salamander Bay Waste Transfer Station

Salamander Bay Waste Transfer facility earned second place at the 2017 Australian Landfill & Transfer Stations Innovation and Excellence Awards. This is national recognition for the hard work and innovation undertaken in transforming this facility over recent years to achieve better environmental outcomes and better financial results. The efforts undertaken turned around what was an operating deficit of some \$600,000 per annum into a modest annual surplus, as well as greatly improving local environmental issues.

Our Environment

Theme: Sustainable Development

Goal: Balance the environmental, social and economic needs of Port Stephens for the benefit of present and future generations.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Housing affordability and stress.	Undersupply of affordable housing to rent or buy.

Port Stephens does have a problem with an undersupply of affordable housing in relation to incomes. The definition of affordable housing is housing rent or mortgage is 30% or less of household income. Port Stephens has quite disparate income levels, higher amounts of low income households and lower levels of high incomes with bigger gaps in between when compared with NSW for example.

Investigation shows that a mismatch of dwelling types is quite likely to be contributing to instability in housing affordability. There appears to be a decline in particularly two bedroom dwellings and a very significant increase in four bedroom dwellings. This may be attributable not only due to construction of new four bedroom dwellings but also renovation of two and three bedroom dwellings. Increased cost of housing may be resulting in people buying what they can afford then later renovating when they can afford it.

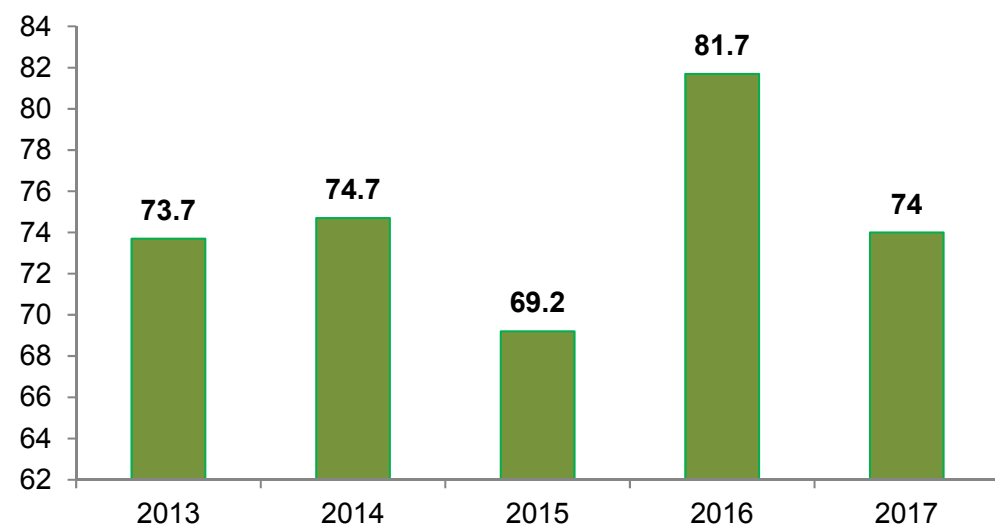
Port Stephens had the lowest amount of affordable rental for very low (10.3%) income households in the Hunter at June 2014.⁶⁰ There are also high proportions of low and very low income households in both rental and purchase stress and purchase affordability for very low and low income households is poor. At June 2014 Port Stephens had just 0.3% properties affordable for purchase by very low income households.⁶¹

Port Stephens is a desirable settlement destination, and not just for retirees: the so-called 'sea change' and 'tree change' options are appealing to all demographics. Proximity to urban amenities, rural or rural/residential lifestyles, or villages by the sea provide lifestyle and employment options. This desirability is reflected in satisfaction with the built environment as shown in the graph below.

⁶⁰ These are the latest data available.

⁶¹ <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/centre-for-affordable-housing/for-planners-of-affordable-housing/housing-snapshots/housing-market-snapshot-hunter-sub-region>

Percentage Satisfaction with Built Environment



Source: Port Stephens Council Satisfaction Surveys

The Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013 (the LEP) was gazetted on 23 December 2013 and commenced on 22 February 2014. Since that time, the LEP has been amended on 18 separate occasions. These amendments have related to land re-zonings, clause changes and administrative amendments. The Strategic Planning Unit is currently undertaking a housekeeping amendment to the LEP. This amendment seeks to cover off on minor matters that have been raised since its adoption.

The Port Stephens Development Control Plan 2014 (the DCP) was adopted by Council on 14 July 2015 and commenced on 6 August 2015. Since that time, the DCP has been amended on two separate occasions. These amendments have related to tree management and seek to implement the Raymond Terrace and Heatherbrae Strategy. The Strategic Planning Unit is currently undertaking a housekeeping amendment to the DCP. This amendment will cover off on matters such as drainage, multi-dwelling housing, definitions and notification that have been raised since adoption.

There are considerable protections available to preserve the amenity of the LGA for future generations. These are in the form of planning and associated legislation as shown in the table below.

SHIREWIDE SEPPs
State Environmental Planning Policy No 1 - Development Standards
State Environmental Planning Policy No 21- Caravan Parks
State Environmental Planning Policy No 30 - Intensive Agriculture
State Environmental Planning Policy No 33 - Hazardous and Offensive Development
State Environmental Planning Policy No 36 - Manufactured Home Estate
State Environmental Planning Policy No 44 - Koala Habitat Protection
State Environmental Planning Policy No 50 - Canal Estate Development
State Environmental Planning Policy No 64 - Advertising and Signage
State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 - Design Quality of Residential Flat Development
State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005
State Environmental Planning Policy (Building Sustainability Index: BASIX) 2004
State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007
State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt & Complying Development Codes) 2008
State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009
State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007
State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008
State Environmental Planning Policy (Temporary Structures) 2007
SITE SPECIFIC SEPPs
State Environmental Planning Policy No 14 - Coastal Wetlands
State Environmental Planning Policy No 32 - Urban Consolidation (Redevelopment of Urban Land)
State Environmental Planning Policy No 55 - Remediation of Land
State Environmental Planning Policy No 62 - Sustainable Aquaculture
Draft State Environmental Planning Policy No 66 - Integration of Land Use and Transport
State Environmental Planning Policy No 70 - Affordable Housing (Revised Schemes)
State Environmental Planning Policy No 71 - Coastal Protection
State Environmental Planning Policy - (State Significant Development)
State Environmental Planning Policy - (Housing for Seniors or People with Disability) 2004

Our Economy

Theme: Economic Development

Goal: Port Stephens has a sustainable and diversified economy.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Employment growth.	Unemployment has fallen to 4.6% as at March 2017. Employment growth is – 5.1%.
Growth in tourism.	Visitors numbers have been increasing despite a slight decrease in 2016.

The economy of Port Stephens has four key drivers:

- Defence and Aviation
- Global Manufacturing and Logistics
- Services
- Tourism

Port Stephens is home to one of the Australia's fastest-growing aviation and defence hubs, has a long-established manufacturing sector, and is one of the east coast's most famous tourism destinations.

Other features that have underpinned economic growth in the LGA include:

- Growing population and choice of either rural or coastal lifestyle.
- Located only two hours north of Sydney and 30 minutes from Newcastle.
- Moderate climate ideal for agriculture, tourism and lifestyle choices.
- Newcastle Airport providing daily flights to Brisbane, Sydney & Melbourne.
- Primary tourism destination within the Hunter and Mid North Coast regions.
- Strong community services infrastructure.
- Business expansion and establishment support.
- Skilled labour force.
- Affordable housing and commercial real estate.

Constraints on economic development include infrastructure gaps (particularly roads, energy and services in industrial areas), and limited public transport.

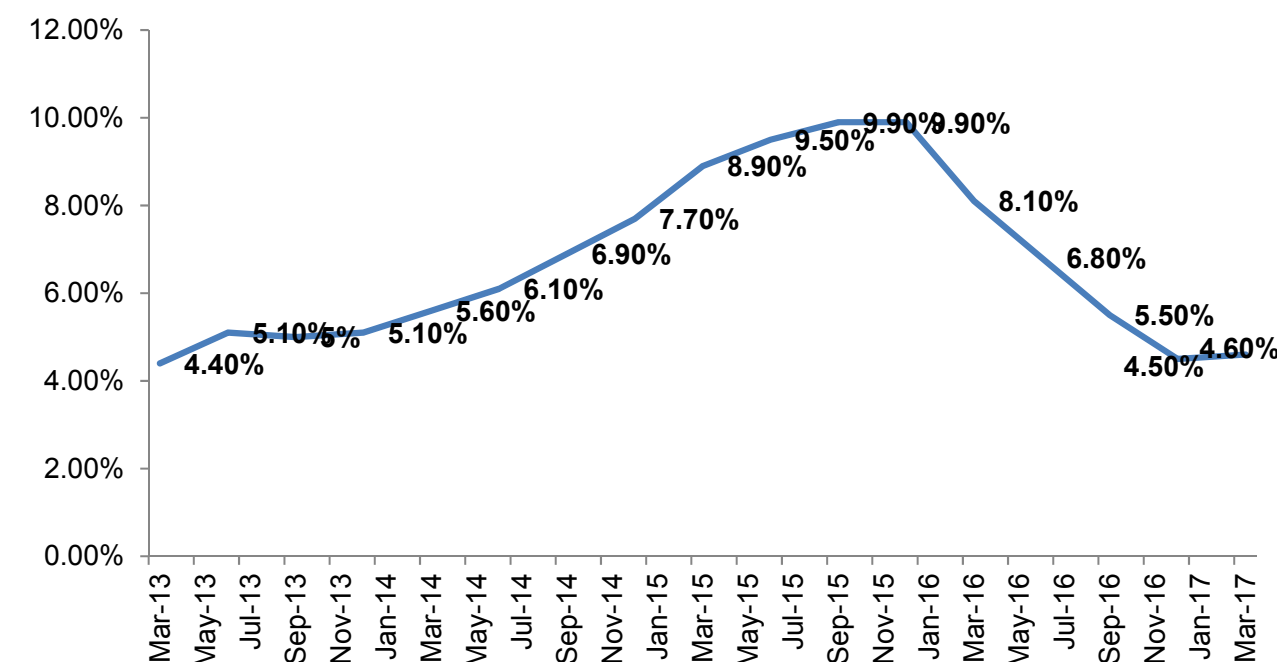
In 2012, 244 businesses in Port Stephens were in the turnover range of \$2 million plus. In 2014, 261 businesses were recorded to be in this range. That is an increase of 7%.

- Economic output in Port Stephens is estimated at \$9.37 billion.
- Port Stephens represents 10.59% of the output generated in the Hunter Region.
- Wages and salaries paid by businesses and organisations are estimated at \$2 billion.
- Port Stephens represents 0.84% of the \$239.7 billion in wages and salaries in NSW.
- The value of regional exports is estimated at \$4.74 billion.
- It is estimated that tourism contributes \$75.508 million to wages and salaries – or 3.77%.

Port Stephens

Unemployment Rate

Unemployment % - Port Stephens



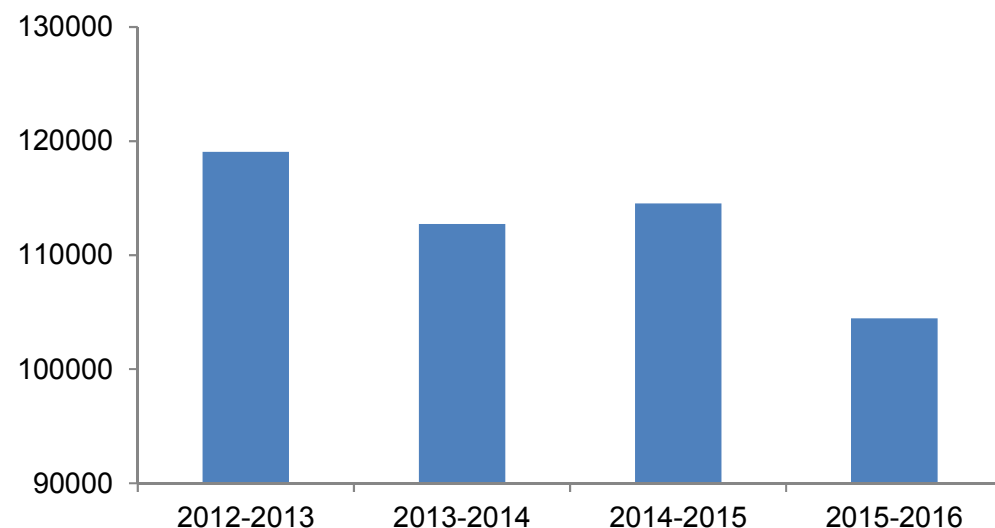
Source: Port Stephens Economic Profile 2017

Port Stephens Council has a leadership role in economic development through planning, promotion of the LGA as a business location; supporting tourism; marketing and new business attractions; and small business support programs.

Year end June	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Domestic Overnight Visitors	650	682	630	654	619
	5%		-8%	4%	-5%
Domestic Visitor Nights	1,900	2,137	2,022	2,352	2,082
	12%		-5%	16%	-11%
Average/night stay	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.6	3.4
Domestic Day Visitors	777	672	701	747	751
	-14%		4%	7%	1%
International Overnight Visitors	21	24	27	26	26.4
	14%		12%	-2%	0%

Year end June	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
International Nights	109	133	117	138	126
	22%		-12%	18%	-8.7%
Year end June Total Visitors	1,449	1,378	1,357	1,427	1,396
Year end June Total Nights	2,009	2,270	2,139	2,490	2,149

No. Visitors to Visitor Information Centre



The Visitor Information Centre in Nelson Bay is centrally located. It appears the dip in visitor numbers is related to the many alternative information sources such as social media, internet and Facebook where Destination Port Stephens and Council have strong brand presence.

Council continues to partner with Destination Port Stephens across a range of promotional events that supported the *P.S. I Love You* campaign.

Thousands of people flocked to Raymond Terrace on the long weekend in 2013 when Council's Lakeside Sporting Complex was the venue for the running of the 42nd Annual NSW Aboriginal Rugby League knockout. 93 teams were registered in open age, under 17, under 15 and women's competitions. An estimated 2,500 players and officials – and many more supporters – came into the region in time for kick off. This has since become an annual event.

Sail Port Stephens returned to the Bay in 2012-2013 and is a successful event supported financially each year by Council.

Council also supports the Tastes of the Bay event in November each year and the Blue Water Country Music Festival.

Other events that have been attracted to the LGA since Council refocused its economic development program towards tourism and events include:

- Stand Up Paddle Board.

- Elite Energy Triathlon (May 2013).
- IRB Surf Life Saving Championships (July 2012 and June 2013) held at Fingal Bay. There were 350 competitors and crowds of over 1,000 people across the weekend.
- Moto Cross (April 2013).

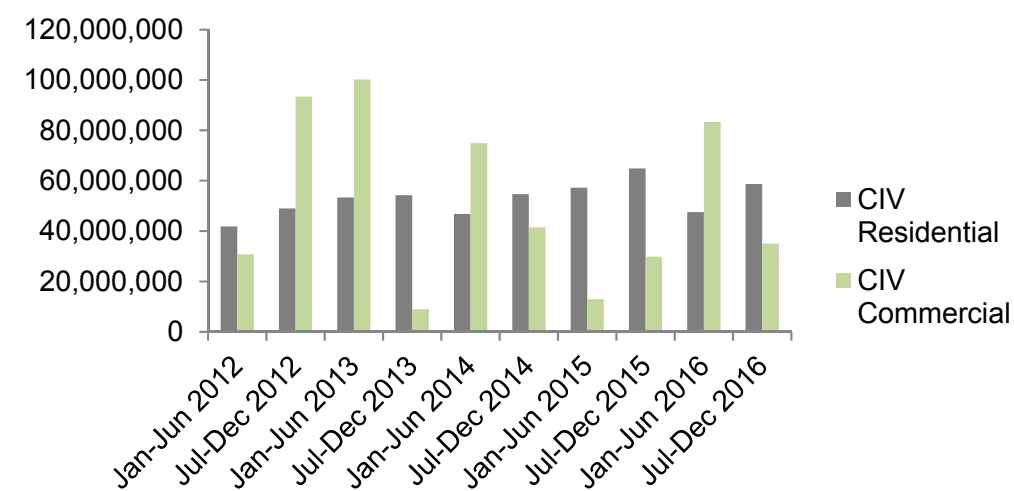
NSW Country under 17 Cricket Championships were held in Raymond Terrace in November 2012. The economic impact was assessed at \$200,000.

The 2014 Campervan & Motor Home Association's muster held at Nelson Bay, brought more than 1,000 recreational vehicles to the LGA.

In addition to support for tourism in the four financial years to June 2016 Council provided \$235,417 to business chambers at Karuah, Raymond Terrace, Tilligerry and Nelson Bay.

Economic growth in the LGA can be seen in the number of development applications approved since January 2012 by Port Stephens Council. There were 3,410 residential development applications approved between January 2012 and December 2016 with a capital improved value (CIV) of \$528 million; and 698 commercial applications approved with a capital improved value of \$511 million.

Capital Improved Value - DAs Approved Jan 2012 - Dec 2016



Note: values are approximate only, based on estimates at time of application.

Our Economy

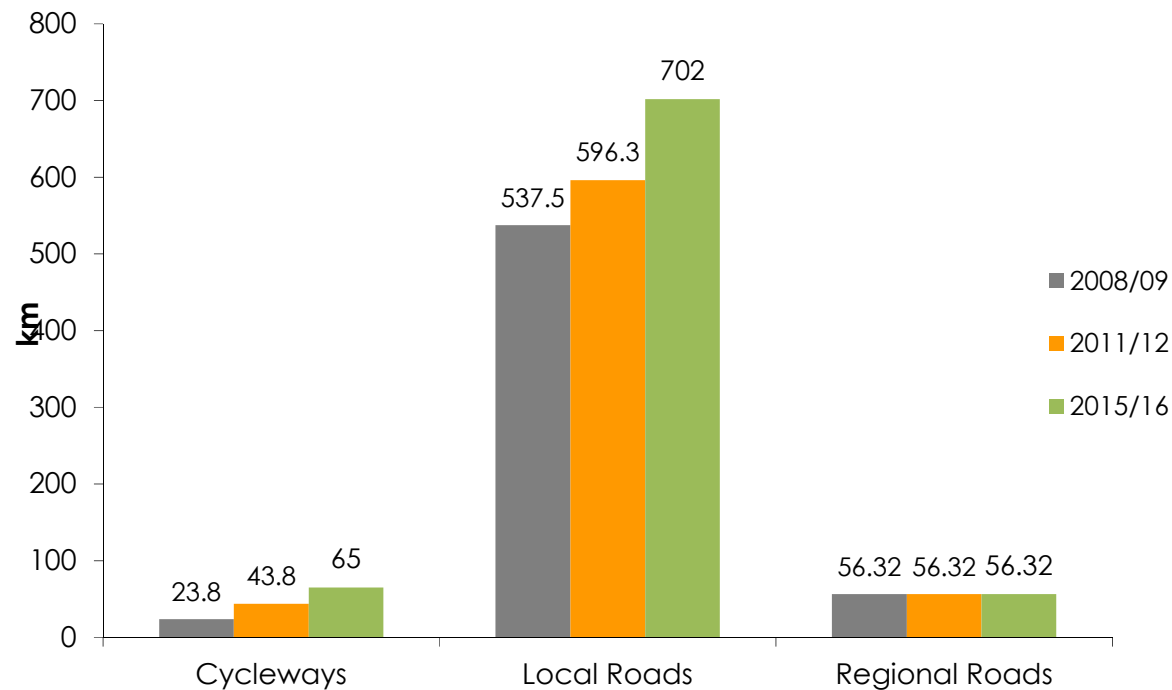
Theme: Transport

Goal: Port Stephens has an integrated, connected transport network

Community Indicator	Outcome
Access to public transport.	Private coach service satisfaction 95% - same percentage as in 2012.
Condition of State roads.	Data not available – last updated 2010 and reported in 2012 End of Term Report.

The Port Stephens LGA has a network of sealed roads (640km as at 1 July 2015); and unsealed roads (62km as at 1 July 2015). These are local roads and regional roads and do not include roads that are owned privately, or by the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), or by the Crown. The Pacific Highway runs through the LGA from Hexham to Karuah which is owned and managed by the RMS.

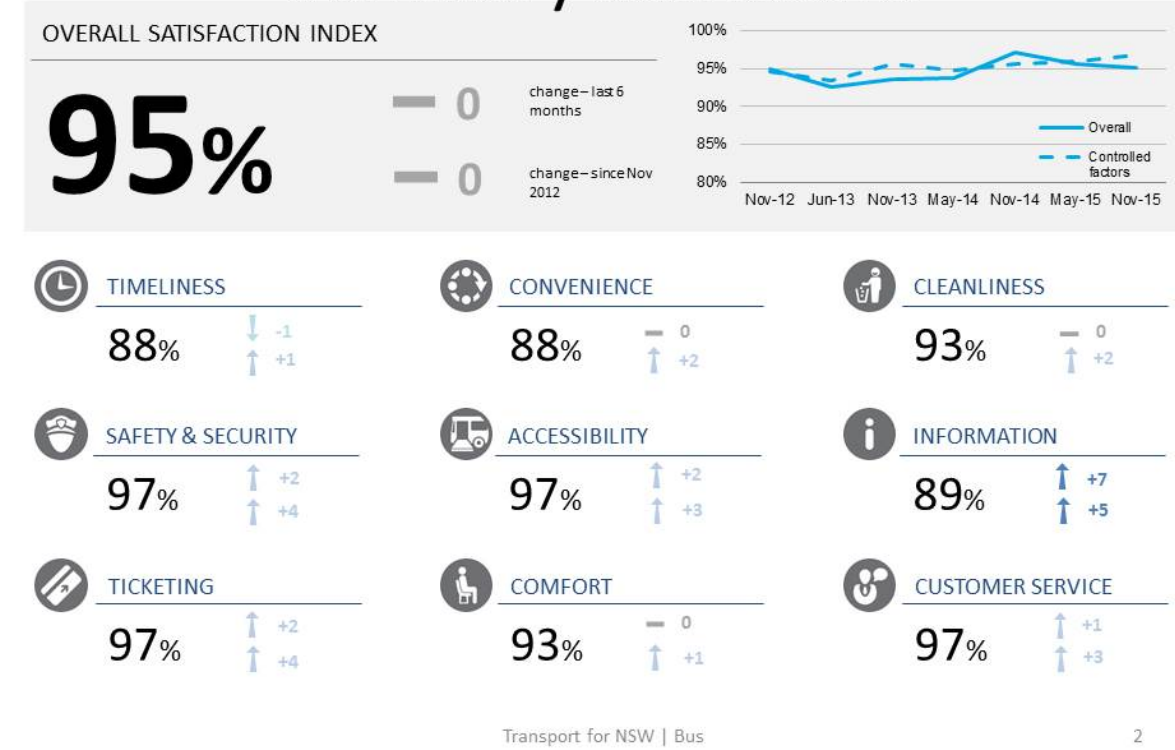
Cycleways, Local & Regional Roads



The LGA has limited public transport provided by two private bus operators and a taxi service which is also privately run. There are no State buses and there is no rail transport in Port Stephens.

Transport for NSW conducts regular surveys of the bus service providers in the LGA. The summary below of the survey (n=7,354) for Port Stephens Coaches shows overall satisfaction with the services provided (95%); satisfaction with factors that the operator can control; change (top arrow) in the six months to November 2015; and (bottom arrow) change since 2012.

Summary dashboard

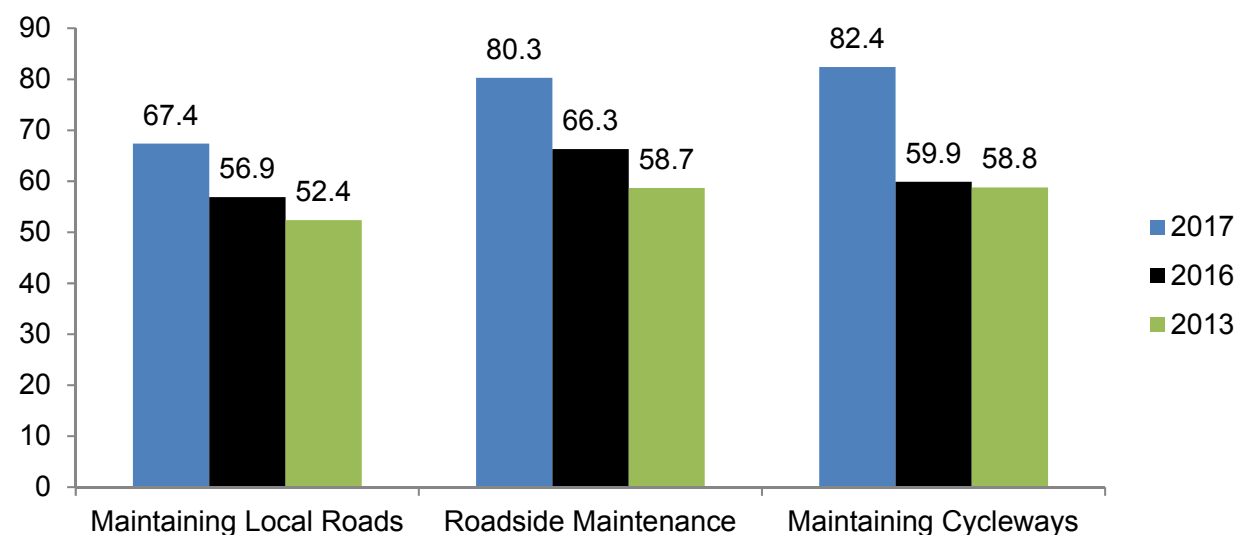


Community Transport Port Stephens provides services for eligible clients including:

- a door to door service (subject to safe access);
- regular services throughout Port Stephens; this includes Tomaree, Tilligerry, Raymond Terrace, Medowie and Karuah areas;
- services to Newcastle and Maitland for medical appointments, hospital visits, visiting friends and family, shopping and social outings;
- individual services for special medical needs – subject to available resources;
- transport for eligible client groups on social outings.

Vehicular transport remains the most popular transport option for residents and visitors. For this reason Council's management of the local road infrastructure is important to the wellbeing of all who use them.

Council Community Satisfaction %



Council supports the local Traffic Committee⁶², which is a technical advisory body authorised to recommend regulatory traffic controls to the responsible Road Authority. The Committee's functions are prescribed by the *Transport Administration Act 1988* with membership extended to the following stakeholder representatives: the Local Member of Parliament, the Department of Transport, NSW Police, Roads and Maritime Services, and Council. The recommendations from the local Traffic Committee aim to improve traffic management and road safety.

There are three private helicopter companies located in Port Stephens, and in addition citizens have access to the Westpac Rescue Helicopter which operates from the neighbouring LGA (Newcastle).

A ferry service operates between Nelson Bay in the Port Stephens LGA and Tea Gardens in the Great Lakes LGA; another ferry service operates between Lemon Tree Passage and Nelson Bay with a stop at Soldier's Point Marina.

Newcastle Airport is an enterprise jointly owned by Newcastle City Council and Port Stephens Council. It is situated in the Port Stephens LGA on a facility shared with the RAAF.

The Airport's passenger throughput has increased to over 1 million per annum. It is currently handling around 170 flights per week of five airlines – QantasLink, Pelican, Rex, Jetstar and Virgin Australia.⁶³

⁶² This is a statutory committee and not a Committee of Council.

⁶³ www.newcastleairport.com.au

Council meets regularly with bus and other transport providers in a forum to resolve Council-wide interface issues, connectivity, infrastructure needs and other impacts that would affect the operators' ability to provide the community with transportation. Items raised in this process are assessed by the Council's traffic team or presented to Council through the Local Traffic Committee.

This transport forum also assists Council to apply for Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants. In 2014-2015 Council received in excess of \$80,000 from the CPTIG grants for bus shelter upgrades.

Council has taken a lead role in facilitating a tourism transport interchange solution for the Birubi Point entrance to the Worimi Conservation Lands.

Our Economy

Theme: Education and Training

Goal: Port Stephens has education and training opportunities for people of all ages.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Increase in people with post-secondary qualifications.	Decrease in post-secondary in 2016 to 13.9% compared to 2011 (15.1%)

The Port Stephens LGA has a TAFE presence at the Tomaree Education Precinct and there are registered vocational training organisations in the LGA. Students can also complete studies at the University of Newcastle and at TAFE colleges in the Newcastle area. See also earlier chapters in the Report: Children; Young People.

Until early 2017 Council conducted Business Training Workshops and a number of educational and training programs through its Business Port Stephens facility at Raymond Terrace. The facility also offered computing for seniors.

Business Port Stephens also conducted training programs in partnership with Registered Training Organisations, and work readiness programs with job service providers.

In 2015 Port Stephens University of the Third Age (U3A) celebrated 20 years in the LGA. U3A offers a large variety of learning and lifestyle programs, generally but not exclusively accessed by older citizens. Details of the program can be found at <http://portstephens.u3anet.org.au>

Tilligerry Adult and Community Education (TACE) conduct economical educational programs to meet the needs and interests of adults in the local community. TACE also works in cooperation with other organisations in developing Adult and Community Education programs.

Tomaree Community College at Nelson Bay offers certificate and general interest courses, recreation and leisure courses, and languages.

WEA Hunter offers a limited program of courses at its campus in Raymond Terrace, including photography, Young Mums, Internet/Email/Facebook and Adult Reading Recovery among others.

The Gleeson Report commissioned by Council's Community Development and Engagement unit was endorsed by Council with outcomes being implemented. The ALESCO Education Centre for alternative education delivery for senior secondary school students was established in Raymond Terrace in February 2015. Council participated in a steering committee which met in 2014 to establish this facility.

Council's revised Apprentices, Trainees and Cadets Strategy was implemented in 2014-2015 with a number of new positions created. New apprentices, trainees and cadets have commenced their off-the-job as well as on-the-job training in accordance with their personal development plans.

An apprentice, trainee and cadet networking session was conducted in June 2016 with staff and their supervisors to provide further information about working at Council; an introduction to local government; and an overview of their rights and responsibilities as students, trainees and cadets.

Council supports workforce development with a wide range of opportunities for education, training and professional Development through a mix of vocational training, apprenticeships and traineeships, non-accredited short courses, regulatory training and university qualifications.

Much of Council's training is delivered in house by Learning and Development staff, with the exception of ticketed/statutory training and Vocational Education and Training courses which are primarily run by the Local Government Training Institute (LGTI) a division of Hunter Councils Inc. LGTI work with Council in the provision of specialised services, supporting the delivery of required statutory training, accredited training programs, short courses and traineeships to ensure that Council staff are suitably qualified to perform their roles.

Our Council

Port Stephens Council was elected on 8 September 2012. The Council comprises nine Councillors representing three Wards and a popularly elected Mayor who represents the whole of the local government area.

Mayor	Bruce MacKenzie
East Ward	Councillor Sally Dover Councillor John Morello Councillor John Nell
Central Ward	Councillor Geoff Dingle Councillor Chris Doohan Councillor Steve Tucker
West Ward	Councillor Ken Jordan Councillor Peter Kafer Councillor Paul Le Mottee

General Manager 2014 – Present

Wayne Wallis

General Manager 2012 – 2014

Peter Gesling

Council's Vision

Engaged people, working together, delivering valued services.

Council's Purpose

To deliver services valued by our community in the best possible way.

Council's Values

Respect

Creating a unique, open and trusting environment in which each individual is valued and heard.

Integrity

Being honest and inspiring trust by being consistent, matching behaviours to words and taking responsibility for our actions.

Teamwork

Working together as one Council, supporting each other to achieve better results for everyone.

Excellence

Improving the way we work, to meet the challenges of the future.

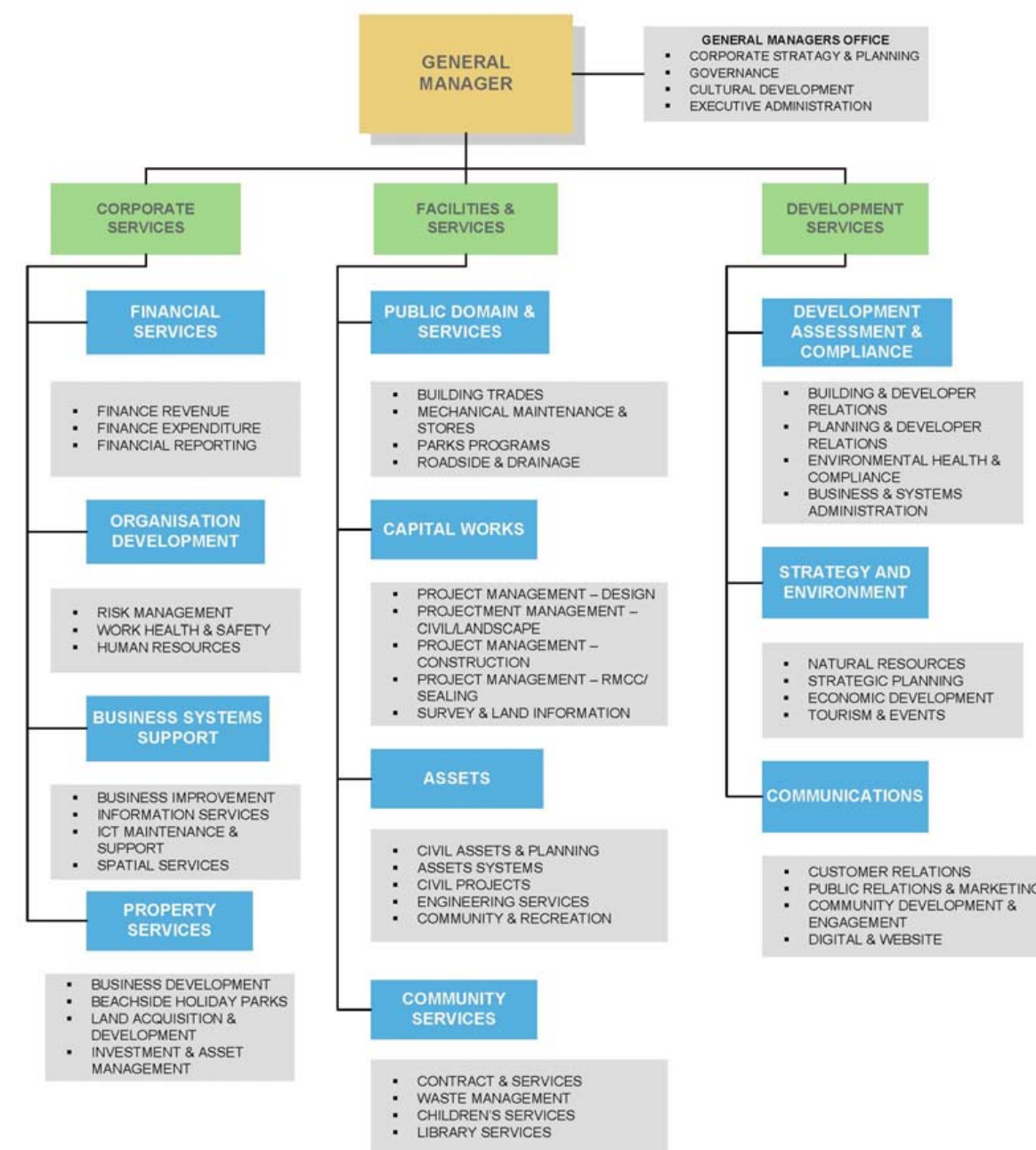
Safety

Providing a safety focused workplace culture to ensure the wellbeing of staff, their families and the community.

Port Stephens Council Organisation Chart as at May 2017



Port Stephens Council Organisation Structure



Our Council

Theme: A Sustainable Council

Goal: Port Stephens Council's services and assets are sustainable in the longer term.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Financial Sustainability.	Breakeven operating revenue two years ahead of schedule, declared financially sustainable by independent authorities.
Reduction in infrastructure gap.	Reduction from \$29 million in 2012 to \$18 million in 2016.

In 2012 NSW Treasury Corporation (TCorp) examined Port Stephens Council's financial status. The graph below demonstrates that Council has put its finances on a firm footing.

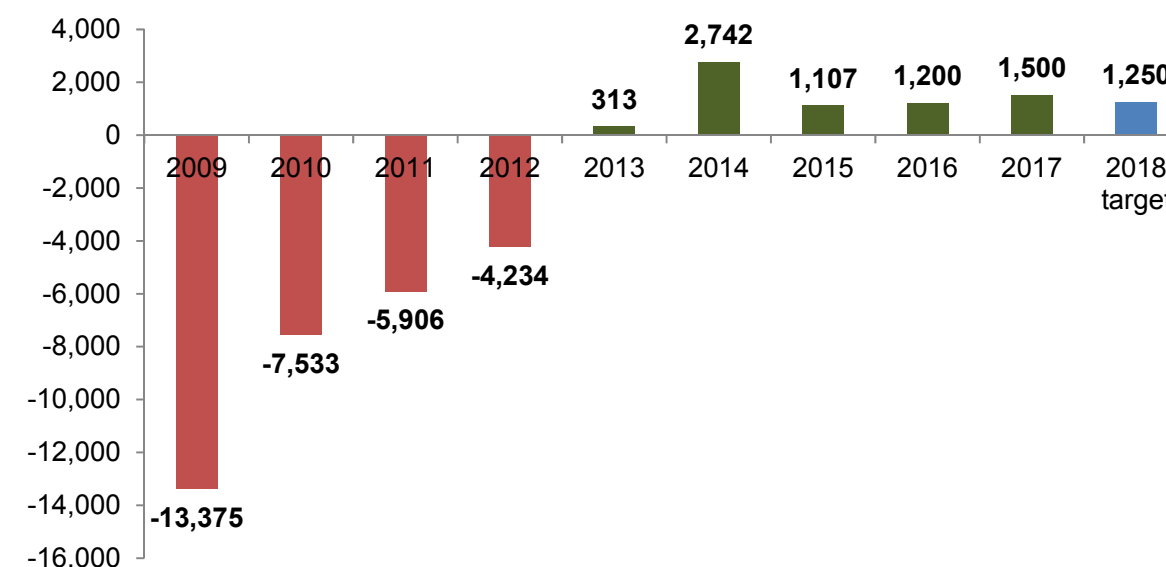
From the 2010 Sustainability Review – which set in place a new expenditure paradigm – Council set about increasing its revenue from non-rates sources. Initiatives such as sand extraction, bio-banking and the restructure of Newcastle Airport have lead and will lead to an increase in non-rates revenue that augments that of our commercial enterprises (holiday parks, commercial property portfolio).

TCorp's assessment of Council was:⁶⁴

Council has been effectively managed over the review period based on the following observations:

- Council's underlying cash result (measured using EBITDA) has been improving over the three year period.
- Council has developed a number of commercial operations such as the Newcastle Airport that provide reliable cash flows to support their activities.
- Approximately 82.0% of the Council's revenue base is derived from own sourced revenue (annual charges, and user charges and fees). Council can rely upon these revenue streams for financial flexibility ..."

Underlying Operating Result \$000s



The Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) found:

Port Stephens Council appears likely to remain sustainable in its present form well into the future, and there are no pressing boundary issues.⁶⁵

In 2015 the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) found Port Stephens Council to be 'fit' to stand alone on the basis of its financial sustainability measured by the following criteria projecting into the future.

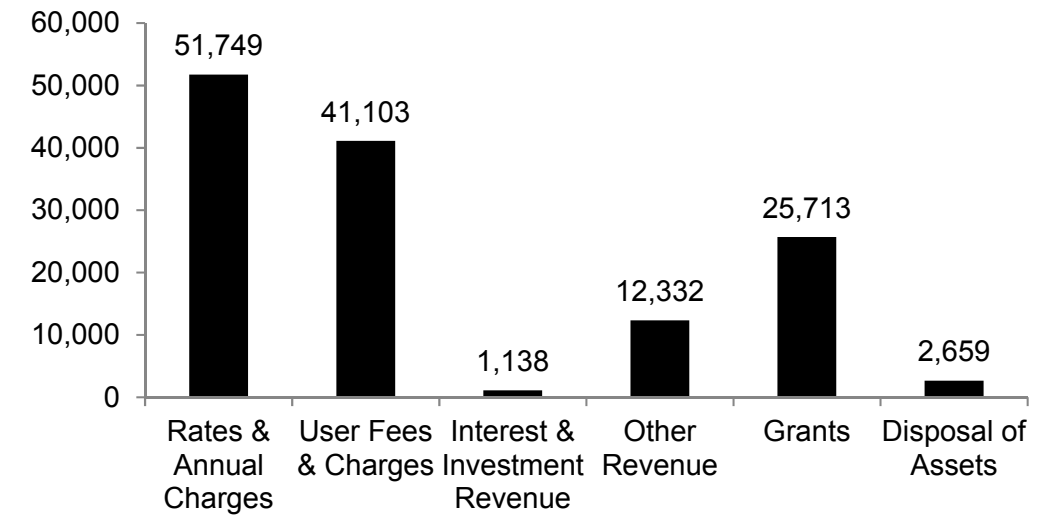
Description	Current Performance	Future Performance	Benchmark	Comment
Operating Performance Result	0.0010 3 year average from 2012-2014	0.035 3 year average from 2015-2017	Greater or equal to break-even average over 3 years	The current performance ratio is based on a 3 year average between 2012 and 2014. The ratio was affected by the non-payment of the 2014 4th quarter Federal Assistance Grant. Had Council received this operating grant the ratio would have been 0.010 instead of 0.0010.
Own Source Revenue	77.9%	81.21%	60.0%	Council has strong revenue streams outside of grants which

⁶⁴ NSW Treasury Corporation, 2012, Financial Assessment and Benchmarking – Port Stephens Council, p.4

⁶⁵ ILGRP Final Report p.109

Description	Current Performance	Future Performance	Benchmark	Comment
	3 year average from 2012-2014	3 year average from 2015-2017		include commercial income from our investment portfolio, commercial property portfolio, holiday parks and Newcastle Airport.
Building and Infrastructure Asset Renewal	85.4% 3 year average from 2012-2014	103.71% 3 year average from 2015-2017	>100% average over 3 years	Council has slowly been growing its capital budget in order to reinvest into its building and infrastructure. In 2014 Council achieved a 114% renewal rate with plans to continue at this rate.
Infrastructure Backlog	5.57% As at 30 June 2014	2.27% As at 30 June 2017	<2%	Refer to section 3.1 for comments on Council's Infrastructure backlog.
Asset Maintenance	50.7% 3 year average from 2012-2014	98.2% 3 year average from 2015-2017	>100%	Refer to section 3.1 for comments on Council's Asset maintenance.
Debt Service Ratio	8.19% 3 year average from 2012-2014	4.62% 3 year average from 2015-2017	>0% and <20%	Council's debt and cash ratios remain steady and within the benchmark limits.
Real Operating Expenditure per capita	Decrease from 1.33 in 2011/12 to 1.23 in 2013/14	Decrease from 1.24 in 2015 to 1.13 in 2017.	Decreases over time	Decrease achieved despite average population growth of 1.2% -1.4% p.a.

Sources of Revenue \$000s



Source: Port Stephens Council Annual Report 2015-2016

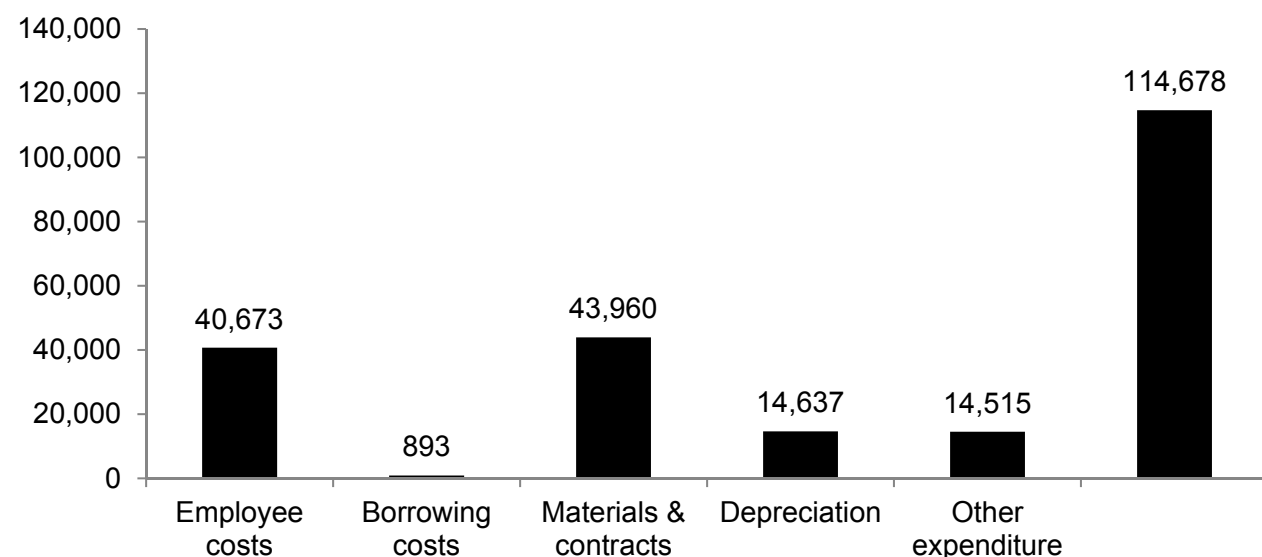
Revenue from rates represents only 38.4% of total revenue of \$134,694,000 (2015-2016).

The Port Stephens LGA comprises four categories of rateable land as shown in the table below:

Rates Category	Number of Assessments				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Farmland	474	479	486	492	494
Residential	29,477	29,770	29,872	30,050	30,498
Mining	2	2	2	2	2
Business	1,751	1,767	1,769	1,773	1,770

Only 54% of the land in the Port Stephens LGA is rateable, as land which does not attract rates includes Crown land and land subject to constraints, as well as such exempt areas as Grahamstown Dam and government entities' facilities. For this reason, as the graph above shows, Council has worked to increase revenue from non-rates sources.

Expenditure \$000s



Council's expenditure in 2015-2016 was \$114,678,000 (including overheads and depreciation) as shown in the above graph.

A particular focus of Council's return to financial sustainability has been on its own-source, non-rates revenue:

- In 2012-2013 bio banking of Council's Karuah land was registered on the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage website.
- Council's market share of Accredited Building Surveying Services has increased from 71.6% in 2011-2013 to >80% in 2015.
- Restructured Newcastle Airport: new wholly owned PSC Companies Newcastle Airport Partnership Company 3 Pty Limited and Newcastle Airport Partnership Company 4 Pty Limited. The effect of the restructure is to allow an annual dividend to Council of approximately \$1 million per annum.
- Entered into a contract with the preferred tenderer for the extraction of sand from Council land at Cabbage Tree Road, Williamtown. This will enable Council to derive a potential income of circa \$18 million over the next 12-15 years based on royalty payments and annual base rental payments.
- Council developed a 33 allotment subdivision located at Tarrant Road, Salamander Bay. The lots were sold at auction in November 2015 with the Deposited Plan being registered with Land & Property Information in April 2016 allowing Certificates of Title to be issued. Settlement of the sales occurred in May 2016. The gross realisation of the development excluding GST was \$6,145,000. Total costs associated with the development, including holding costs, were \$3,948,044 leaving a net profit from the development of \$2,196,956.
- In the financial year to June 2017 Council's property sales achieved \$6.998 million and a lease income of \$130,000 p.a.

Council continues to hold investment properties which are located both within Port Stephens and in the Newcastle LGA. The portfolio continues to be fully let to either blue chip tenants including multi-national retailers and financial institutions or to NSW government agencies. The majority of the portfolio is comprised of B+ grade office accommodation while each property in general terms has significant inherent redevelopment potential. The value of the

portfolio as at 30 June 2015 was \$20.835 million while the net rental derived as at that date represents an annual net return of 8.50% which for the 2015 financial year was a half a percent better than budgeted projections.

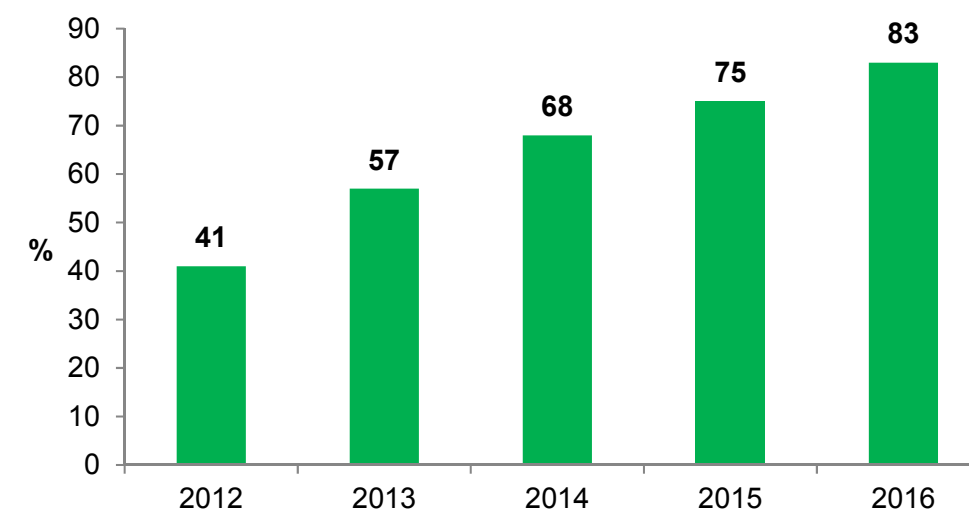
Corporate Risk Management

Our health and wellness program encourages healthy lifestyles and provides a number of programs for staff to ensure that maintain fitness for work as well as general good health outcomes. This means that our injury rates have decreased substantially and our unplanned employee absences from work are well with Australian general industry standards. It also means those employees who wish to continue working past traditional retirement ages are able to do so, providing retention of knowledge within Council together with the social benefits of an active and healthy community.

- The dramatic improvement in our safety culture has resulted in a reduction in the number and severity of injuries in the workplace and has resulted in a reduction of Port Stephens Council's workers compensation premium from \$1.86 million in 2009-2010 to \$568,590 in 2015-2016. Key to this success was the introduction of a number of programs to encourage workers to identify risks before incidents occurred. \$112,884.84 rebate from StateCover - Mutual Performance Rebate Distribution.
- 2016-2017 WHS Financial Incentive from StateCover - \$100,000 (maximum rebate).
- \$57,603.60 rebate from Statewide as a special distribution because of better performance of the scheme.

Port Stephens Council continues to cement its reputation as a leader in workplace health and safety and in was awarded the SafeWork NSW Award for the best workplace health and safety management system (public sector/not for profit).

Risk Maturity Score: Target 65%



Another key focus of Council has been to manage and mitigate (and where possible eliminate) risks across all operations. Council's target has been a Risk Maturity Score⁶⁶ >65%. The actual in 2015-2016 was 83%.

⁶⁶ Risk Maturity Score is assessed independently by an expert panel against AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 *Risk Management*.

Implementation of the Integrated Risk Management Framework has resulted in a significant decrease in the level of risk across Council. In 2015-2016 there were no risks assessed as extreme due to the implementation of a number of controls. This indicates a higher level of attention is being given to implementing controls by the due date. The Corporate Risk Register and all group risk registers are being reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Port Stephens Council has been successful in a number of industry and general Australian awards for excellence in the management of risk during this term and is proud of its status as an industry leader in the promotion of excellence in risk management.

- Winner – 2015 StateCover WHS Award - Safety Observations Program
- Winner – 2015 SafeWork NSW Award – Best Workplace Health and Safety Management System (Public Sector/Not for Profit)
- Winner – 2015 Affiliated FM Client Risk Management Scholarship
- Winner - 2014 Rotary Pride of Workmanship Award Corporate Risk Management Team
- Winner – 2013 StateCover Mutual Limited Work Health and Safety Excellence Award
- Honourable Mention – 2014 StateCover’s WHS Excellence Awards for development of competency-based training for working near overhead and underground utilities
- Commendation – 2015 StateWide Risk Management Excellence Awards
- Commendation – 2013 StateWide Mutual Risk Management Excellence
- 2017 Second – Workplace Health and Safety Award at the StateCover WHS Excellence Awards
- 2017 Finalist – Work Health and Safety Business of the Year in the Hunter Safety Awards

Our Council

Theme: A Sustainable Council

Goal: Attract, retain and develop staff to meet current and future workforce needs.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Provide a career coaching program that empowers staff to take charge and build their careers.	A successful career coaching program has been developed and implemented at Port Stephens Council. To date, over 70 staff have participated in the program.
Review, coordinate and deliver the Human Resource Management program of work.	A number of strategies have been developed and integrated by Port Stephens Council to support the Workforce Resourcing Strategy and to address the challenges of providing appropriately qualified staff for today and the future.

Workforce Resourcing Strategy 2013-2017 Results

A number of strategies have been developed and integrated by Port Stephens Council to support the Workforce Resourcing Strategy and to address the challenges of providing appropriately qualified staff for today and the future.

Together, these strategies have enabled us to develop the Workforce Strategy Action Plan with a number of actions that were taken during the past four years to ensure Port Stephens Council continues to have a vibrant workforce who is appropriately qualified and able to deliver outcomes identified in the Community Strategic Plan.

The major performance measurements for the Strategy are those identified in the Level 1 Systems View of Council, being:

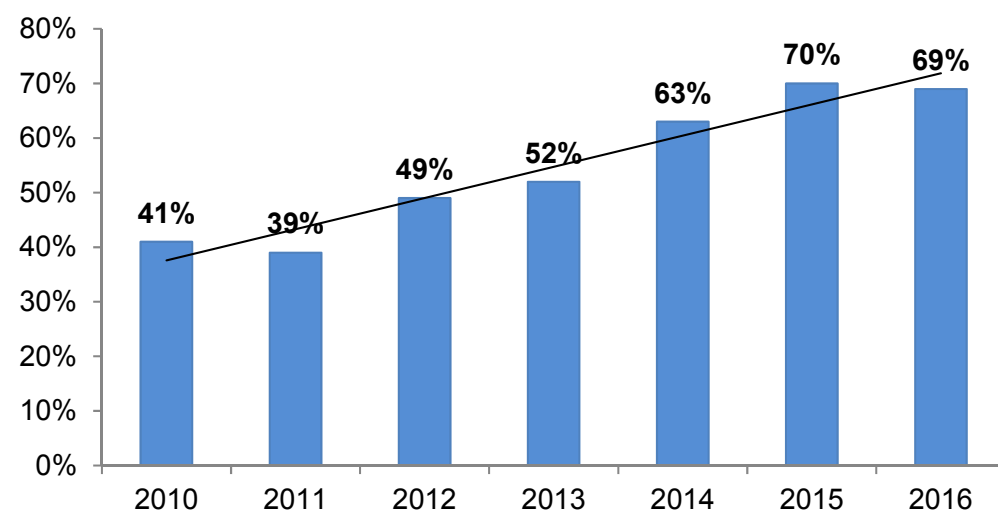
- >65% employee engagement
- >75% customer satisfaction
- underlying financial surplus
- >65% risk management maturity score
- >90% Community Strategic Plan (CSP) delivered on time

Best Employer Strategy

Employee Engagement measures the levels of connection individuals have to the organisation and their willingness to apply discretionary effort to improve individual and business performance. When surveying engagement we are measuring the energy and passion that employees have and the extent to which the hearts and minds of Council's people have been captured by the organisation.

During this period, employee engagement at Port Stephens Council has continued to rise year on year and Council now enjoys an engagement score which ranks it with the most engaged workplaces in Australia.

Employee Engagement %



Port Stephens Council has also been recognised an Employer of Choice at the Australian HR Awards, winning the category in 2013 and becoming a finalist again in 2015 and 2017. This award recognises the best public sector employer to work for in Australia.

Key criteria:

- Positive service-oriented culture reflective of public sector goals;
- Pre-eminent reputation throughout the public sector and wider community;
- Pioneering performance-linked reward and recognition programs;
- Successful and innovative personal and professional career development opportunities;
- Inventive approach to flexible work practices and demonstrable work-life balance.

Diversity in the workforce is important to promote a healthy balance between new entrants and experienced staff. Port Stephens Council has a multi-generational workforce spanning five generations and encourages attraction of staff at all levels. We have been successful in maintaining our average age of staff over the last few years by reviewing our offering for new entrants and having a much more focused attraction strategy at this end of the market.

The identification of critical roles within Council has meant our attraction and retention strategies can be tailored to ensure we maintain staff in these roles. Our employer branding strategy has been highly successful. Recently there has been one exception, the attraction and retention of Engineering Designers, however, there is a general shortfall in the market.

Our flexible working conditions have continued to affect our ability to attract and retain staff in an environment where we are competing with employers who have a higher salary price point than ourselves. Our salary policy, linking remuneration to the median of the local government market, continues to provide a financial sustainable approach to costs as well as providing Council with good quality candidates for roles.

Identified skill deficiencies have been addressed through our learning and development program which has resulted in an increase of skills in identified areas of most need around leadership, project management, contract management and information technology.

Port Stephens Council has been successful in a number of industry and general Australian workforce awards for excellence in the management of its workforce during this term, validating its status as a Best Employer.

- Winner – 2016 Employer of the Year – Career Development Association of Australia
- Winner – 2015 Operational and Management Effectiveness Award - NSW Local Government Excellence Awards
- Winner – 2014 Leadership and Management Excellence – Local Government Professionals Australia NSW
- Winner – 2014 Government Australian Communications Awards for Best Digital Communication Campaign
- Winner – 2013 Australian HR Awards – Employer of Choice (Public Sector and NFP)
- Highly Commended 2014 - Local Government Professionals Australia (NSW) Local Government Excellence Awards – Workforce Excellence
- Finalist – 2015 Career Development Association of Australia – Employer of the Year
- Finalist – 2015 Australian HR Awards – Employer of Choice (Public Sector and NFP)
- Finalist – 2015 Australian HR Awards – Best Workplace Flexibility Program
- Finalist – 2014 Local Government NSW Award for Excellence in Human Resources
- Finalist – 2014 LGNSW HR Excellence Award
- Finalist – 2014 Australian HR Awards Best Employee Value Proposition
- Finalist – 2013 AHRI Award for Workplace Relations

Career Coaching Program

Staff feedback from employee surveys over more than a decade consistently indicated that Council did not provide any career development opportunities for staff. It was clear that the approach the organisation had to career development just wasn't working. Staff perception was that it was the responsibility of the organisation to provide them with a career path – a legacy of an old outdated local government State Award.

In 2014 Council developed a Talent Management Strategy which had been the topic of discussion for some 18 months. As part of the ongoing analysis we reassessed current and future workforce development challenges. We realised that our ability to attract, engage, develop and retain key staff was critical to our ongoing success.

We decided to turn things on their head - one of the key messages that we developed in the strategy is that career development is employee owned, manager facilitated and organisation supported. Under the new strategy, employees have responsibility for their own career development. The manager needs to be supportive and needs to provide coaching in identifying the right gap and development activities that will enable better performance and a higher level of growth and career aspiration. The organisation is responsible for creating an environment where continuous learning is valued.

Career development is an active part of the succession planning module of Council's recently completed Human Resource Information System. Once again, employees have ownership of that module. Even though they might be content to stay in the same role, they are encouraged to recognise that they will be involved in a process of lifelong learning and career development throughout their working life and our education assistance policy provides them with financial support.

The career development module has been designed to be as simple as possible for staff to:

- assess where they are now in their career;
- assess where they want to go; and

- c. have a plan of what it will take to get there.

Staff are asked three questions:

- Where would I like my career to head over the next 2-3 years?
- What skills and strengths do I currently have and what do I still need to learn and develop?
- What areas can Council support them?

Staff are also reminded of our career development program and can book in for a counselling session with the Career Development Manager if they choose.

To date, over 70 staff have participated in the program. Some of the achievements have been:

- The engagement level of staff which has increased from 49% to 70% during this period;
- Regular conversations held between staff and managers on career direction;
- Turnover rate is at its lowest of 7%;
- All staff now have a learning and development plan;
- A real willingness from staff to take charge of their own career.

Council's career coaching program was recognised in 2016, winning the Career Development Association of Australia Employer of the Year award.

Our Council

Theme: Infrastructure

Goal: Port Stephens' infrastructure and utilities meet the needs of all sections of the community.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Condition of public assets.	91% of public assets under Council's control are rated satisfactory or better.
Reliable electricity and water.	Generally satisfactory.

Utilities in the Port Stephens LGA are operated by Ausgrid (electricity poles and wires)⁶⁷ and the Hunter Water Corporation (water and reticulated sewerage).

Since the previous end of term report in 2012 energy retailing is not bound by location. Instead a competitive system applies where consumers can deal with whichever electricity retailer they choose – although Energy Australia appears to have a measurable market share in the LGA.

During the catastrophic storm in April 2015 the widespread destruction resulted in significant power outages that in many cases left homes and businesses without power for more than two weeks, especially in the Nelson Bay area.

Despite that major event and some spasmodic storm-related localised incidents, the water quality and energy supply are generally good and monitored against the appropriate standards.⁶⁸

Port Stephens Council has three categories of community assets (**infrastructure**):

Building, Community and Recreation Assets:

- Council buildings
 - Offices – Administration Building
 - Information and communication technology
 - Depots
- Emergency Services
 - Fire stations
 - SES buildings
- Community buildings
 - Libraries
 - Halls
 - Preschools and Child Care Centres
- Recreational
 - Parks/reserves
 - Waterways

The condition of community assets is rated every five years under a 5-point system:

1. Near Perfect
2. Good
3. Satisfactory
4. Very Poor
5. Unserviceable

⁶⁷ Ausgrid.com.au

⁶⁸ <http://www.hunterwater.com.au/Water-and-Sewer/Water-Supply/Water-Quality/Water-Quality.aspx>

- Cemeteries
- Public amenities
- Playgrounds
- Sport
- Swimming pools
- Surf clubs

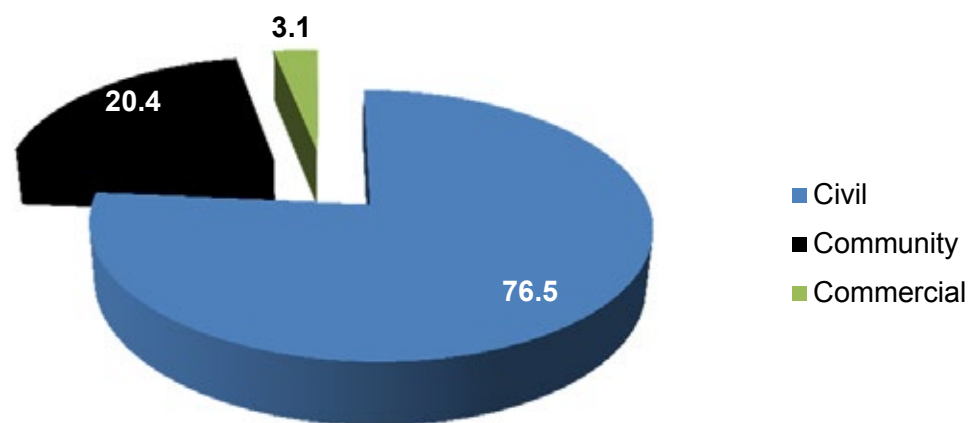
Civil Infrastructure Assets:

- Roads
- Bridges
- Ancillary facilities:
 - Footpaths/cycleways
 - Bus shelters
 - Guardrails
 - Parking meters
 - Retaining walls
 - Signs
 - Street lighting
- Drainage
 - Detention ponds
 - Gross pollutant traps
 - Pits, pipes, and headwalls
 - Open drains
- Waste
 - Waste transfer station
 - Decommissioned landfill sites
 - Quarries
- Heritage items

Commercial Assets:

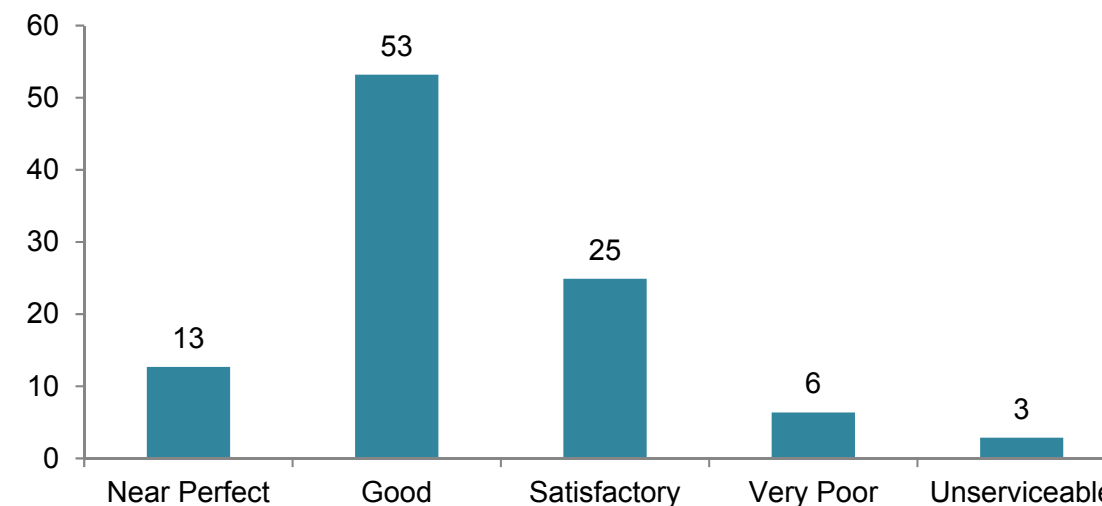
- Holiday parks/resorts
- Commercial properties

Assets by Category - Percentage as a 30 June 2016



The condition rating of community assets (infrastructure) is shown in the graph below. The majority of assets are satisfactory or better (91%) with only a small proportion less than satisfactory.

Asset Condition Rating Percentage of Total Assets 2016



During the period under review Council has obtained grants from external bodies (State and Federal government):

	2011-2012 \$'000	2012-2013 \$'000	2013-2014 \$'000	2014-2015 \$'000	2015-2016 \$'000
Black spot funding	362	390	443	93	981
Road toll response	13	0	0	0	100
Roads to recovery	547	547	144	534	1,294
RLCIP	55	0	0	0	0
State government grants	1,863	675	5,809	3,984	308
Financial Assistance Grant – Equalisation Component	5,576	4,569	2,374	4,979	4,513
Financial Assistance Grant – road component	1,404	1,097	573	1,174	1,019

Council has been successful on two occasions in obtaining Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme funding totally \$3.5 million.

Our Council

Theme: Governance and Civic Leadership

Goal: Port Stephens has strong governance and civic leadership.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Community satisfaction with Port Stephens Council.	Median community satisfaction with Council is 82.2% and range is 75.1% (2012) to 87.2% (2013).

Civic Leadership

For the period September 2012 for the four year term of Council, Council's civic leadership comprises a popularly elected Mayor and nine Councillors – three representing each of West, Central and East Wards. Due to the proposal for merger the term has been extended to finish with elections on 9 September 2017.

In 2012 the General Manager's Office managed the process and election of the new Council and the first popularly elected Mayor, Bruce MacKenzie.

The Ordinary Meeting is held on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month commencing at 5.30pm in the Council Chamber at the Administration Building, 116 Adelaide Street, Raymond Terrace. The public are welcome to attend the open session of Council.

The role of the Ordinary Meeting is to consider and make determination on reports before Council along with the General Manager's Reports, Mayoral Minutes, Notices of Motion, Rescission Motions and Confidential items.

The General Manager and Group Managers attend the meeting to advise Councillors where necessary. The Minutes are a record of the resolutions made by Council; these are prepared directly after the meeting and are uploaded to Council's external website the following day by 5pm.

Public Access is held at 5.30pm on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month prior to the Council meeting, in the Council Chambers.

Council has the following policies in place for civic governance:

- Access to Information Policy and Guidelines
- Code of Conduct
- Code of Meeting Practice
- Internal Reporting – Protected Disclosures Act
- Pecuniary Interest Returns
- Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Councillors Policy

Public Access provides a forum for members of the public to speak directly to the Mayor and Councillors about local or Council issues.

Public Access sessions are restricted to a total of twelve (12) speakers per month with five minutes per speaker and a limit of two speakers for, and two speakers against any issue. The Mayor has delegated authority to approve or refuse applications.

In 2009 the State government introduced the Government Information (Public Access) Act which has a presumption in favour of disclosure of government information and it applies to both State and local governments.

In 2016 the State government implemented Stage 1 of the Review of the Local Government Act 1993 involving roles of Councillors, Council and the General Manger.

At the commencement of the Councillors' term of office in 2008 a comprehensive, self-paced learning system was provided. Council reviewed the learning system in 2012 and provided Councillors with an updated version.

In addition, Councillors are provided with opportunities to attend conferences when they arise. In the term of the Council all Councillors attend at least one learning and development opportunity annually.

Councillors participate in all Council Committees and civic occasions such as Australia Day and Anzac Day.

Advocacy

Individual Councillors, Council collectively and senior staff are involved in an ongoing capacity in making representations to other levels of government on behalf of the citizens of the Port Stephens LGA. The Mayor and General Manager attend the annual Australian Council of Local Government Forums held in Canberra. Councillors serve on regional committees:

Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee	Current Delegates
Port Stephens Community Safety Precinct Committee	To provide a forum for local community members, service providers, businesses and the police to discuss issues and appropriate strategies relating to crime and community safety. ** Attendees will be by invitation only, one representative will be invited by the Police from each peak body/organisation eg Hunter Water Corporation/Housing NSW). Council will hold two positions, one will be Community Planner Crime, and the other will be the Mayor or his/her representative if unable to attend.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie
Birubi Point Cultural Heritage Advisory Panel	To advise Port Stephens Council on the management plan required to protect the Worimi cultural and spiritual heritage and enhance the environment of the Birubi Point Crown Reserve and Birubi Point Aboriginal Place.	Cr Sally Dover
Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management Implementation Committee	Responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Port Stephens Council Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management.	Cr Geoff Dingle Cr Peter Kafer
Public Libraries NSW Association	Country Public Libraries Association constitution requires a Councillor representative. This Association provides support for country public libraries. The Joint Library Advisory Committee's constitution also requires a Councillor representative in line with the Newcastle Regional Library agreement.	To be left open for all Councillors to attend. Note: Council is required to appoint a delegate.

Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee	Current Delegates
Gloucester Coal Seam Gas Project – Community Consultative Committee	The purpose of the Committee is to provide a forum for representatives to discuss the Project with the Company (Lucas Energy).	To be left open for all Councillors to attend.
Hexham Swamp – Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project Steering Committee Term: 3 years from 27 November 2012.	The purpose of the Committee is to oversee the project at the Hexham Swamp Kooragang Wetland. The Committee is a sub-committee of the Catchment Management Authority.	Cr John Nell
Hunter Councils	To discuss regional issues in the Hunter.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie
Hunter Water Corporation Community Consultative Committee	This committee is an advisory committee to Hunter Water Corporation. Note: Cr Nell is appointed to this Committee by Hunter Water Corporation.	Cr Geoff Dingle
Joint Regional Planning Panel	To consider development applications referred to the Panel under the legislation for development applications for the Port Stephens Local Government area. The Panel comprises of three State members and two Councillors. The term is for three years for each Panel member, commencing July 2009 and re-appointed in July 2012.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie Cr Ken Jordan Alternates Cr Paul Le Mottee Cr John Nell Cr Geoff Dingle
Karuah Working Together Inc.	The Committee is a peak group comprising representation of key organisations, businesses and industry representatives in Karuah. The Committee is responsible for ensuring community and economic development activities are coordinated in accordance with local needs, trends and opportunities in accordance with Council's Economic Development Strategy and as specified in the Karuah Strategic Plan.	Cr Peter Kafer Cr Paul Le Mottee Cr Ken Jordan
Local Development Committee	Local Traffic Committee (see 65) providing advice to Council on development.	Cr Peter Kafer
Local Traffic Committee	This is an RTA-based committee which allows Council to have delegated authority to install or remove regulatory sign posting on public roads.	Cr Peter Kafer
Lower Hunter Bushfire Management Committee	The committee is a legislative requirement and is to discuss direction across local government areas and across agencies in regard to bushfire management.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie

Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee	Current Delegates
Lower Hunter Zone Liaison Committee	To review the progress of the Service Level Agreement between Port Stephens Council and NSW Rural Fire Service in the Local Government Area.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie
Lower Tilligerry Floodplain Risk Management Committee	To oversee the Flood Studies for the Tilligerry Creek catchment.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie Cr Steve Tucker
Marine Parks Advisory Panel Ministerial Appointment	Community Consultative Committee regarding the proposed Marine Park in Port Stephens.	Cr John Nell
Medowie Floodplain Management Committee	This Committee will provide advice and recommendations to Council.	Cr Geoff Dingle Cr Steve Tucker Cr Chris Doohan Cr Peter Kafer
Nelson Bay Community College	This committee is an advisory committee for Adult Education.	Cr Sally Dover Cr John Morello
Newcastle Airport Partnership Company No. 3 Pty Ltd	Special purpose vehicle for the part ownership of Newcastle Airport.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie (General Manager)
Newcastle Airport Partnership Company No. 4 Pty Ltd	Special purpose vehicle for the part ownership of Newcastle Airport.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie (General Manager)
Newcastle Airport Partnership	The partnership is responsible for the development and management of Newcastle Airport and related infrastructure.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie (General Manager)
Port Stephens Council Depot re-development committee	To explore the options available for re-development of the Council depot at Raymond Terrace.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie Cr Ken Jordan Cr John Nell
Port Stephens Economic Development Advisory Panel	Act as a communication and advisory mechanism to Council on relevant Economic Development issues. Oversee the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy. 2012 ED Strategy review has occurred.	Mayor Bruce MacKenzie Cr Chris Doohan Cr Ken Jordan Cr Paul Le Mottee (One Councillor from each Ward)
Port Stephens Holiday Park Trust	To act as Trust Managers of the Crown land and Holiday Parks.	All Councillors

Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee	Current Delegates
Port Stephens Transport Forum	The Transport for NSW convenes these forums which have been established in most LGAs throughout NSW. It provides the opportunity for local transport providers (eg community transport, bus and taxi operators) and local residents to discuss local and regional transport related issues and to formulate appropriate strategies to more effectively improve the delivery of existing public transport services in meeting the community's transport needs.	Cr Sally Dover All Councillors to be notified of this meeting.
Port Stephens Domestic Violence Committee	To raise the awareness of the issues surrounding domestic violence and enhance service provision to victims by developing and maintaining effective interagency strategies. Note: Council staff no longer regularly attend this Committee following outcomes of a sustainability review of Council's social planning service package.	Cr Peter Kafer
Port Stephens East Local Health Committee	To ensure that the population of the Tomaree Peninsula has appropriate access to a suitable baseline level of health services and facilities to meet their existing and future health needs.	Cr Sally Dover
Port Stephens West Local Health Committee	To ensure that the population of the Western area of Port Stephens (ie east of Tomaree Peninsula) has appropriate access to a suitable baseline level of health services and facilities to meet their existing and future health needs.	Cr Geoff Dingle Cr Peter Kafer
Port Stephens/Myall Lakes Estuary and Coastal Zone Management Committee	This Committee includes representatives from Great Lakes Council and is responsible for long term planning for the estuary and the coastline.	Cr John Nell Cr Paul Le Mottee Cr John Morello
Williams River Floodplain Risk Management Committee	To oversee the Flood Studies for the Williams River catchment including Dungog Shire.	Open to all Councillors
Williamstown Consultative Committee Forum		Mayor Bruce MacKenzie General Manager
Worimi Conservation Lands Board of Management	To oversee the management of the lands owned by the Aboriginal owners and leased back to the NSW Government.	Cr Sally Dover Alternate: Cr Peter Kafer
Ministerial Appointment		

Name of Organisation	Purpose of Committee	Current Delegates
General Manager's Performance Review Panel	To conduct evaluation of the performance of the General Manager.	Mayor Deputy Mayor (nominated by Council) Councillor (nominated by the General Manager)

As members of Hunter Councils Inc, Port Stephens Council joins with the other councils in the Hunter Region in representations to State and Federal governments on matters that affect the region for example, the state of the Pacific Highway and public transport in the Region.

Governance

Port Stephens Council has a hierarchy of instruments that govern how it operates and the parameters of its powers. Examples of Federal and State laws are shown below.

Jurisdiction	Example	Port Stephens Council
Federal	<i>Copyright Act 1968</i>	Provisions relating to councils' rights to protect their intellectual property particularly in relation to the securing of copyright.
State	<i>Local Government Act 1993 with the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005</i>	This Act sets out the scope and limit of local government in NSW in terms of functions and its charter.
State	<i>Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 and Regulation 2000</i>	An Act to institute a system of environmental planning and assessment for the State of New South Wales.

In total there are in excess of 110 State laws that directly affect Port Stephens Council. The two State Acts above impact on Council the most frequently.

In addition, Port Stephens Council has formulated policies related to both the internal Council behaviours and rules, and externally-related policies. Examples include Asset Management Policy (internal) and Footway Dining in Port Stephens Policy (external). Policies are made by Council and are reviewed regularly. A full list of Council's policies is available on its website.⁶⁹

The General Manager reports to Council six-monthly on the plans and quarterly on the financial situation. These reports are available on Council's website.⁷⁰

The 2009 Integrated Planning and Reporting legislation required that councils must provide an 'end of term' report to their communities. This report is the third required under that legislation. It takes the form of a snapshot of the LGA at a point in time and in some instances tracks progress since the last report in 2012.

Council also provides an Annual Report to the community, including audited financial accounts. Every four years it also provides as part of the Annual Report a comprehensive State of Environment Report. These documents are available on Council's website.⁷¹

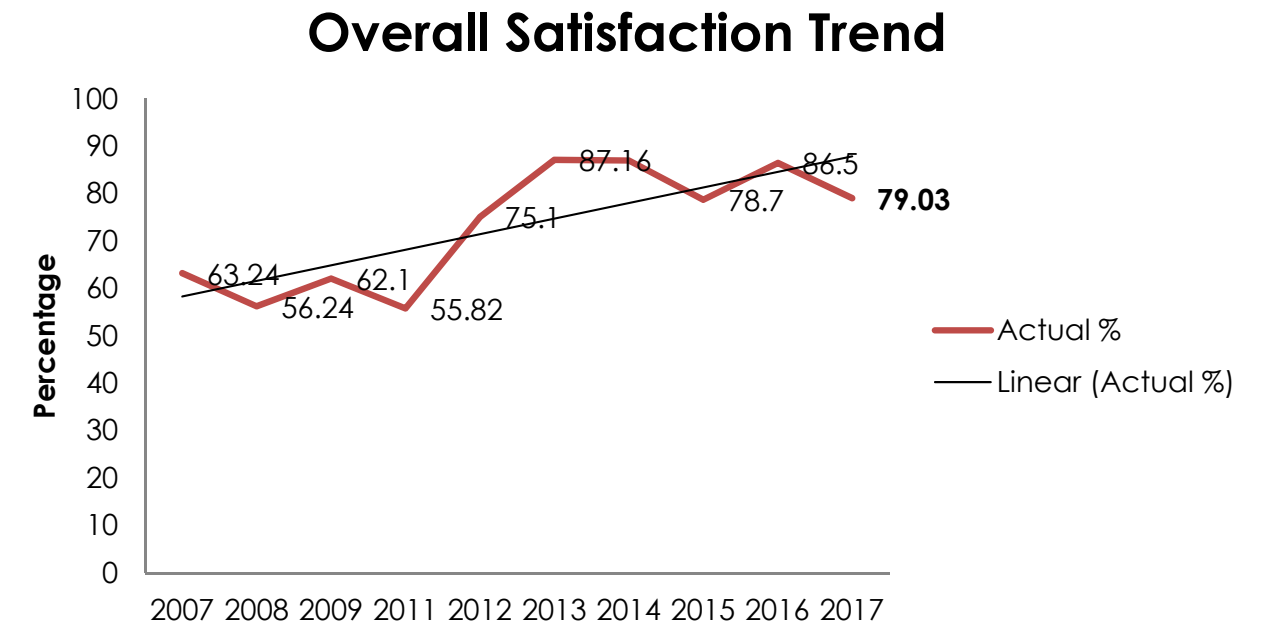
In 2016, Council continued with its biennial Governance Health Check (GHC) and for the first year the GHC was able to be rated out of 100% using a program developed by LG Professionals NSW. This allows Council to work with a set of 324 questions and provide a rating for each question contributing to an overall rating. The GHC covers a range of areas such as: Ethics, Information Management, Risk Management and Reporting.

⁶⁹ <http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/your-council/policies-forms-publications/policies>

⁷⁰ <http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/your-council/policies-forms-publications/publications-and-information>

⁷¹ *ibid*

Council achieved a rating of 94.59% at the completion of the GHC. Council has developed an Action Plan for continuous improvement.



Note: there was no survey conducted in 2010.

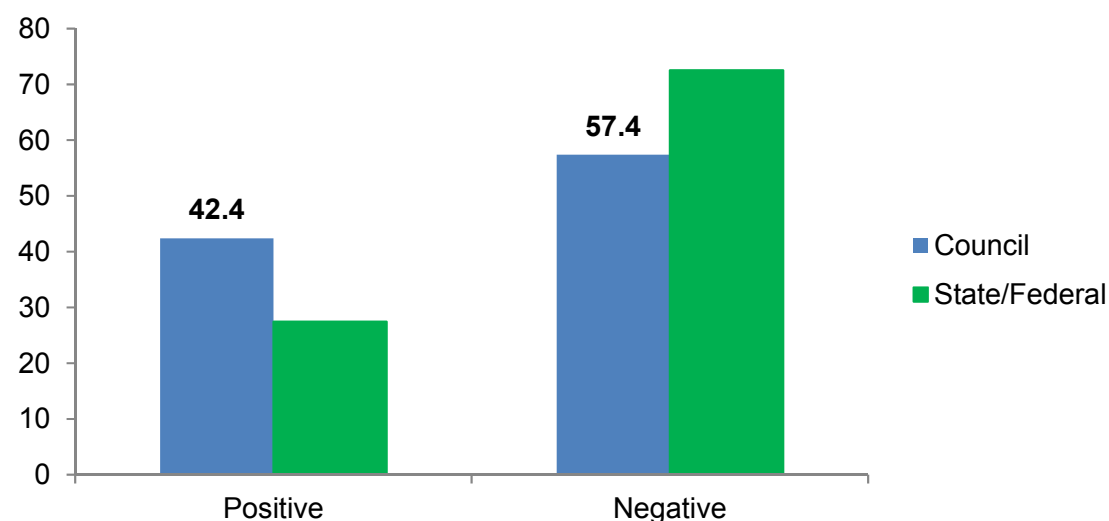
Our Council

Theme: Engagement

Goal: The Port Stephens community is informed and involved in decisions that affect them.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Opportunities for citizens to participate in government and policy decisions that affect them.	42.4% of respondents were positive about their input to Council decisions whereas only 27.5% of respondents were positive about their input to State and Federal decisions (baseline 2016).

Input to Government Decision-Making: Percentage (n=926)



Source: Port Stephens Council Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016

In order to boost opportunities for citizens to have input to Council decisions, in August 2014 Council established the Community Development and Engagement unit.

This unit is responsible for engagement for Council. This involves a variety of activities including:

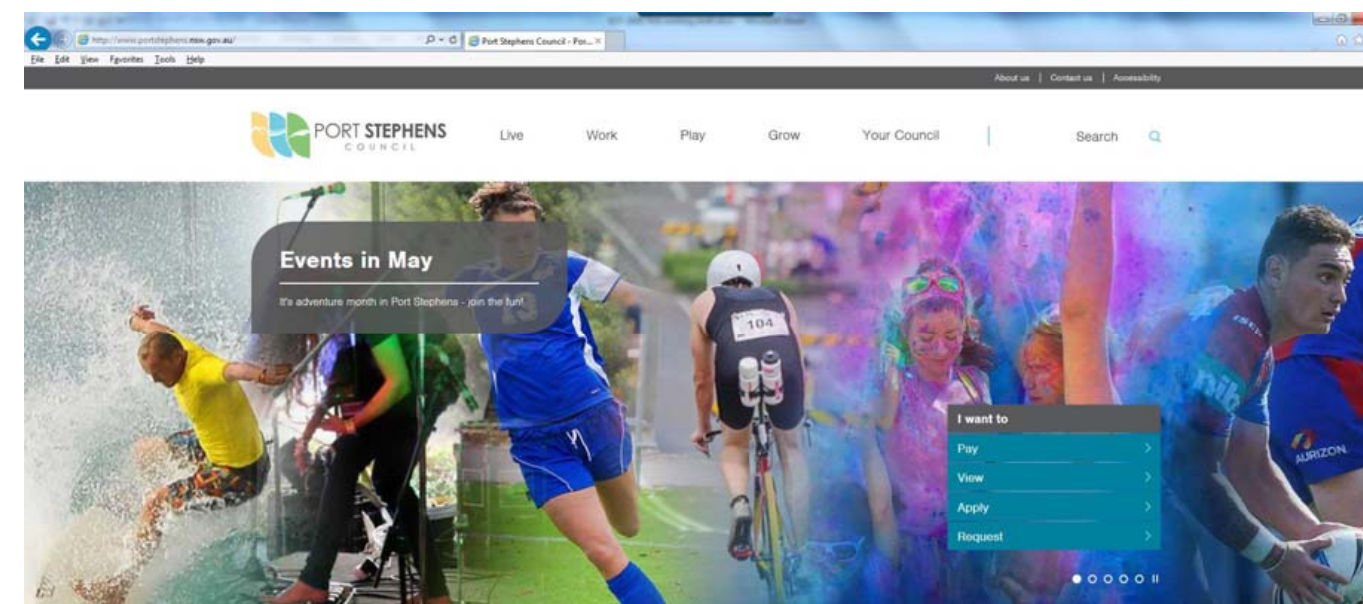
- Implementing Council's Youth Strategy, Cultural Plan and Public Art Policy;
- Implementing Council's Community Engagement Policy;
- Assisting other areas of Council with community engagement;
- Managing two grant programs - Aboriginal and Cultural Projects Funds;
- Administering Clubs NSW grant program;
- Providing secretariat support to three 355c advisory committees - Aboriginal Strategic Committee, Strategic Arts Committee and Australia Day Coordinating Committee;
- Supporting Council's Youth Advisory Panel;
- Supporting Council's 355c Choir Committee;

- Managing Council's Community Awards;
- Overseeing civic events – Australia Day activities and NAIDOC Week;
- Managing an online engagement tool – Engagement HQ.

In the last four years Council has introduced social media (Facebook, Twitter) and an online engagement tool – Engagement HQ – as part of its commitment to actively engage with its community.

During the storm event of April 2015 social media was vital in communicating in the early part of the emergency when more conventional media channels were not available.

Council's new website was launched in December 2015. There was extensive community participation in the development and testing of the website.



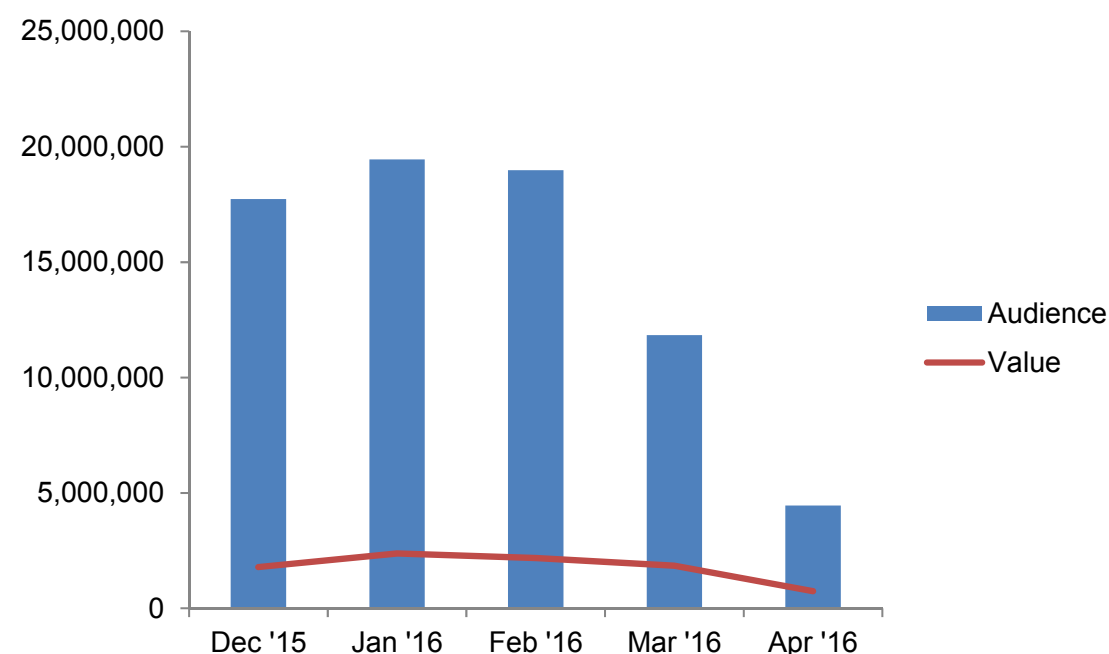
Our Council

Theme: Reputation

Goal: Port Stephens Council is recognised as a leading local government organisation across the State.

Community Indicator	Outcome
Percentage of positive media coverage.	Exact data on positive media coverage is not available however other data on reach and value are shown below.

Media coverage data are available for the period 1 December 2015 to 27 April 2016, and is representative of the audience reach and dollar value for the whole of the period since 2012. Council has an active team of communications specialists who work with colleagues across the organisation and with the community engagement teams to provide information to the community both within and outside the Port Stephens LGA.



Source: Media Monitors

Port Stephens Council has won many awards across all of its operations, most notably being the overall winner as well as category winner in the National Local Government Awards in 2013.

Councillors and professional staff across Council have been regularly invited to speak at conferences, seminars and workshops both within and outside NSW. As a leading Business Excellence practitioner, Council is regularly approached to mentor other councils or individuals, on an informal or formal basis.

In recent times Council has collaborated on projects or completed services for the following State and Federal agencies:⁷²

- NSW Department of Family & Community Services
- NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet, including the Office of Local Government
- NSW Department of Public Works
- NSW Department of Sport & Recreation
- NSW Department of Trade & Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services
- NSW Department of Education & Training
- NSW Department of Planning & Environment
- Australian Government – Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations
- NSW Department of Attorney General & Justice
- Australian Government – Attorney-General's Department (Emergency Management Australia)
- Australian Government – Department of Infrastructure, Federal Transport, Regional Development & Local Government
- Australian Government – Department of Health & Ageing
- The State Library of NSW
- NSW Office of Environment & Heritage
- NSW Department of Health
- State Emergency Management Committee
- NSW Department of Trade and Investment, Crown Land.
- NSW Roads & Maritime Services
- NSW Department of Transport
- NSW Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Australian Government – Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
- NSW Maritime Authority
- NSW Ministry for Police and Emergency Services
- NSW Department of Human Services – Ageing, Disability & Home Care
- NSW Department of Human Services – Community Services
- Australian Sports Commission
- Destination NSW
- TAFE NSW

There is a number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) auspiced by Hunter Councils that collaborate to share expertise:

- Community & Cultural Development
- Community Planning & Development
- Customer Service
- Economic Development & Infrastructure
- Environment Directors Forum
- Human Resources & Training
- Information Hunter (IT)
- Joint Purchasing/Procurement Group
- Records Management
- Regional Waste Educators Group
- Regional Waste Group

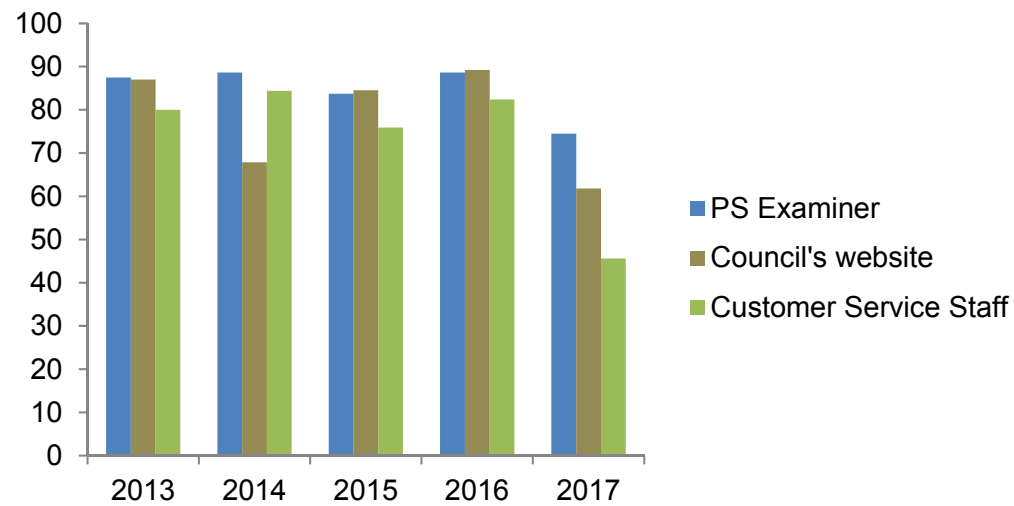
⁷² Port Stephens Council Annual Report 2013-2014 Volume 1

- Regional Weeds Managers Committee
- Sports & Recreation Committee
- Workplace Health & Safety

Port Stephens Council staff participate in all of these Special Interest Groups. More widely, Council staff collaborate in risk management outside the region as well as inside and Port Stephens is recognised for its expertise: recent collaborations and knowledge sharing include with Singleton, Muswellbrook, Greater Taree, Tamworth, Warringah and Gwydir Councils.

Overall satisfaction within Port Stephens LGA with Council's communications has remained well above target of 65% for its main communication channels. Results are collected for social media but the sample is small though increasing and the 'don't know' factor skews the results.

Percentage Satisfaction: Council's Main Communicattions Channels



Source: Port Stephens Council Satisfaction Surveys.

The rise of social media is replacing traditional communications channels, and is not reflected in the above graph.

Council's corporate brand refresh was endorsed in February 2015 having been developed entirely in house over four months commencing in October 2014. Following the endorsement of the brand strategy, a full review of Council's corporate style guide was undertaken by staff from the Public Relations and Marketing unit. The new guide was endorsed and implemented in May 2015. Many key initiatives have followed on from or taken into account the intent of the new brand identity style guide, including Council's business paper process and also the review of policies and management directives.





2016-17

ANNUAL REPORT

Volume Three



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