



OUR INCREDIBLE PLACE

A STRATEGY FOR EVENTS,
THE ARTS AND CULTURE
IN PORT STEPHENS

CONTENTS

Welcome to Port Stephens	2
Mayor's Message	3
Strategic Foundation	4
About the Strategy	5
Cultural Precincts	6
Cultural Identity	8
The Value	10
Council's Role	12
The Consultation Process	14
Key Themes Identified	16
Opportunities and Challenges	18
Strategic Approach	22
Measures for Success	23

GUUDJI YIIGU

(GOO-JEE IK-KOO) The Worimi Traditional Owners' Welcome to Country

The Port Stephens local government area (LGA) is part of the Worimi Aboriginal Nation and is the traditional land of the Worimi people. Council values the unique status of Aboriginal people as the traditional owners and custodians of lands and waters, including those of the Port Stephens LGA.

Council is extremely proud (djirang) of the journey (yawutung) with the Aboriginal community in keeping the Worimi language and people (warrimay) alive (balyangbu). Their heritage and belonging to (guba) country (Barray) is an imperative road (yabang) to be walked together, that can only be realised through cultural listening, learning and action for generations to come.





A message from the Mayor

Port Stephens is a beautiful place blessed with many incredible natural wonders and home to a diverse community living in coastal villages, riverside suburbs, rural lands and historic town centres all with a strong sense of community and unique identity.

As Port Stephens continues to grow at an unprecedented rate we need to look ahead, learn from the past, listen to our community and create innovative plans and strategies to deliver the value, lifestyle and sense of place the people of Port Stephens richly deserve.

It is important though, in a time of growth, that we never lose sight of our true identity, that we maintain our community's values and treasure the things that make us love this incredible place and the people who live in it.

Doing more of the same is the same as doing nothing - this is not an option. Council is committed to change and have listened to our community, business and visitors.

Port Stephens' cultural ecosystem makes a powerful contribution to our identity, our happiness and wellbeing, our lifestyles and our economy.

This strategy sees Council and our diverse community

working together to co-create the future, while honouring all sectors that contribute to the culture of where we live; Worimi people and land, heritage of local places, the makers and creators, business and tourism... all creating a unique place that identifies us as Port Stephens; a place to work, live and play.

I would like to thank and congratulate those members of our community that had input into the development of this Plan; including our own Strategic Arts, Aboriginal and Heritage Advisory Committees, the Tomaree Business Chamber, Destination Port Stephens members and many other individuals who engaged with us and offered valuable insights into what is important for events, the arts and culture in Port Stephens.

Our community's sense of belonging, its diversity, access and inclusivity are central to this strategy. We will need to work hard, create, innovate and activate new strategies to build on our cultural identity and to reinvent this place that we love for it to continue to be a significant contributor to the growing economy of the Hunter Region.

Ryan Palmer
Mayor of Port Stephens

WELCOME



STRATEGIC FOUNDATION

“Culture” is a common thread that binds a community together... it’s about what matters to people and communities. It represents the way of life of our residents and reflects their values and beliefs. The culture of our place is a delightfully diverse concoction comprising all the things that make Port Stephens so unique; a long and proud Indigenous heritage; a strong sporting culture; rare and incredible natural resources; our coastal location; a vibrant contemporary arts and creative culture; as well as the rich and colourful history. When we talk about ‘culture’ in this Strategy we mean events, the arts, our stories, history, aboriginal culture and sense of place.

Through conversations with business and community, it became evident that there was a fundamental link between these important elements of our place.

This set the foundations of this strategy which moved from one where planning for events, the arts and culture occurred in isolation to one where our culture and all the elements that make Port Stephens the place it is today are strategically and operationally aligned.



ABOUT THE STRATEGY

Port Stephens Council recognises that investing in events, the arts and culture will create **better places and better spaces** and, in turn, will increase a sense of community and security as well as improve the health and wellbeing of our residents. We are acutely aware, from the feedback we've received, that our most important and valuable asset is the environment in which we live. This speaks volumes for the immense passion residents hold for their natural environment as a place to express themselves. It is Council's role to cultivate new experiences and offerings linked to local food, art and performance. Our streets will no longer simply be movement corridors but "live site" locations for festivals, street art, performances, gatherings, busking or pop-up dining. Our town centres and public spaces repurposed and flexible sites open to community

initiatives all year round. It is our hope to create places for people and promote new ways to repurpose our spaces for leisure, for business and most of all... for fun.

The creation of vibrant spaces is a key driver of economic growth and improves the liveability of communities and wellbeing of a place. It entices investment, helps business retain a skilled workforce and attracts visitors who stay and spend in our local communities.

This strategy will provide the framework for growing and celebrating our culture. It will provide Council, business and residents a blueprint to work in partnership together, to celebrate our unique identity, increase investment in our communities and deliver more economic opportunities for our people.

THE PURPOSE.

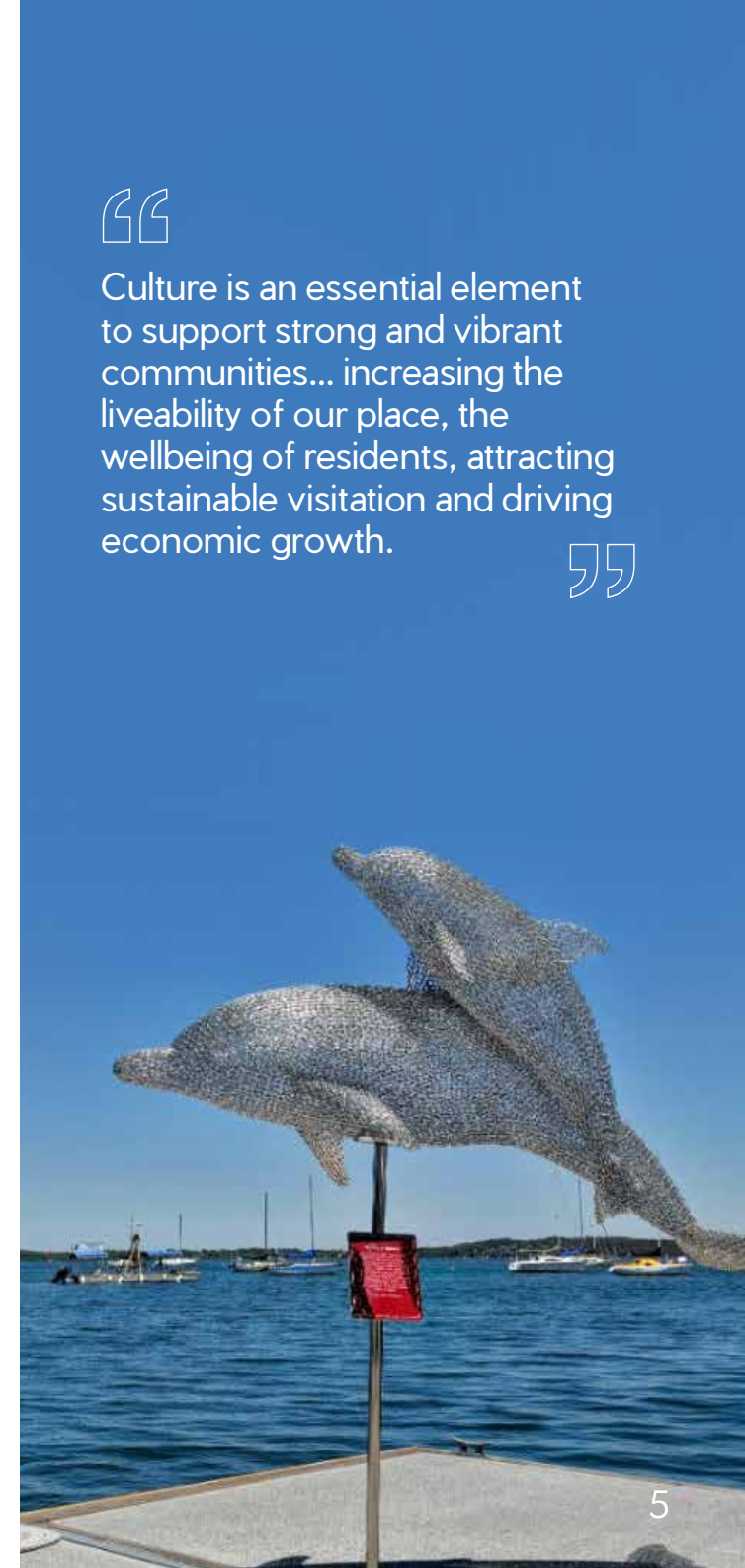
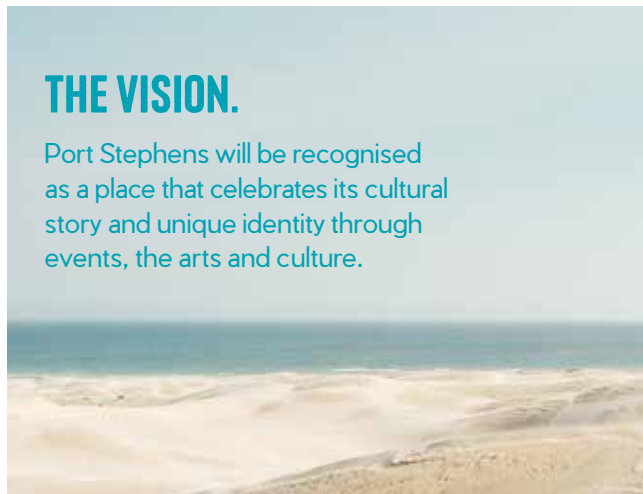
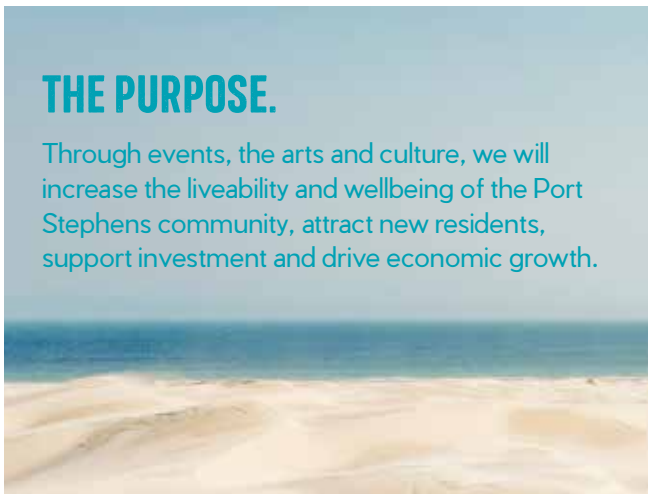
Through events, the arts and culture, we will increase the liveability and wellbeing of the Port Stephens community, attract new residents, support investment and drive economic growth.

THE VISION.

Port Stephens will be recognised as a place that celebrates its cultural story and unique identity through events, the arts and culture.



Culture is an essential element to support strong and vibrant communities... increasing the liveability of our place, the wellbeing of residents, attracting sustainable visitation and driving economic growth.





PRECINCT 1 - WHERE THREE RIVERS MEET

Water runs through vast farming properties and small historical towns in this Precinct. Experience restored wooden bridges and heritage community halls and houses. The Woodville shop is Australia's oldest continually running business still carrying on the same services it was licensed for in 1844. Residents are intensely proud of their rural environment and the stories from the past as well as opportunities for events and activities for the future.



PRECINCT 2 - READY. SET. GROW!

From rural hobby farms to National Parks with saltwater creeks to the Bay and the river. Demand for housing in this Precinct is growing in the towns of Medowie and Karuah. With its highway bypass, Karuah is now a quiet town, with a remarkable history and strong timber and oyster industries. The Karuah Aboriginal Mission is significant, with a strong connection to the wetlands and the river. Fishing the river is important to local people and visitors alike. Tree changers are attracted to Medowie to experience local produce and a rural atmosphere.



PRECINCT 3 - INNOVATION IN INDUSTRY

Heatherbrae and Tomago are significant employment clusters. These industrial areas are in close proximity to Raymond Terrace, and have been identified as a Strategic Centre in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036. The historic significance of Raymond Terrace with links to the river can be showcased in heritage trails and tours, in particular King Street. Williamtown is the Global Gateway with the growth of Newcastle Airport, Williamtown Special Activation Precinct and RAAF base providing employment and growth across the region.



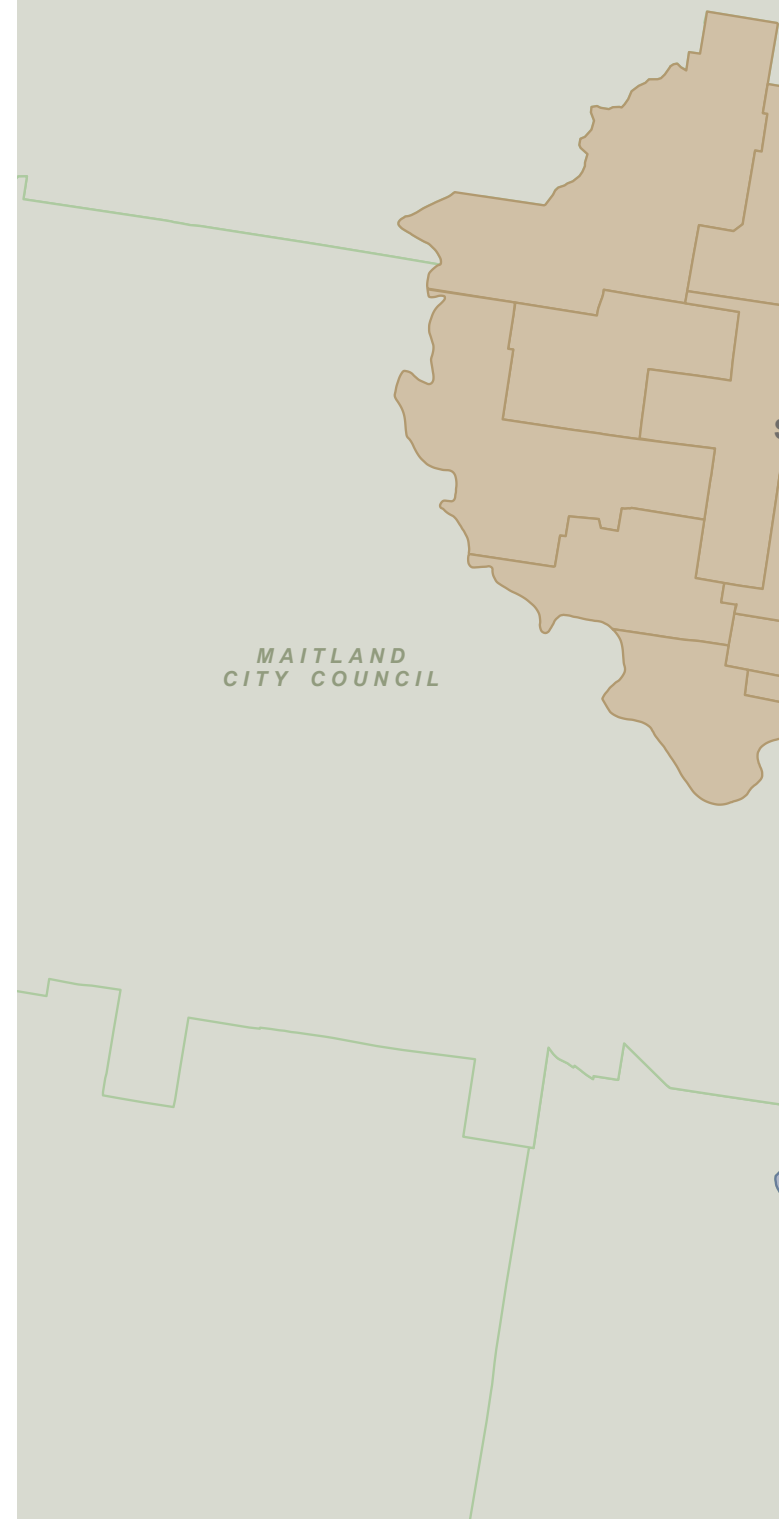
PRECINCT 4 - BAYSIDE SERENITY

The Tilligerry Peninsula and surrounds has a small town holiday feel. The Tilligerry Habitat, boardwalks and reserve trails along the water's edge attract many koalas and visitors to spot them in their natural environment. An expansive creek runs out to the bay and across to Soldiers Point, where the Worimi people would spend their time fishing. Middens and burial grounds exist, with the area being gazetted an Aboriginal Place.

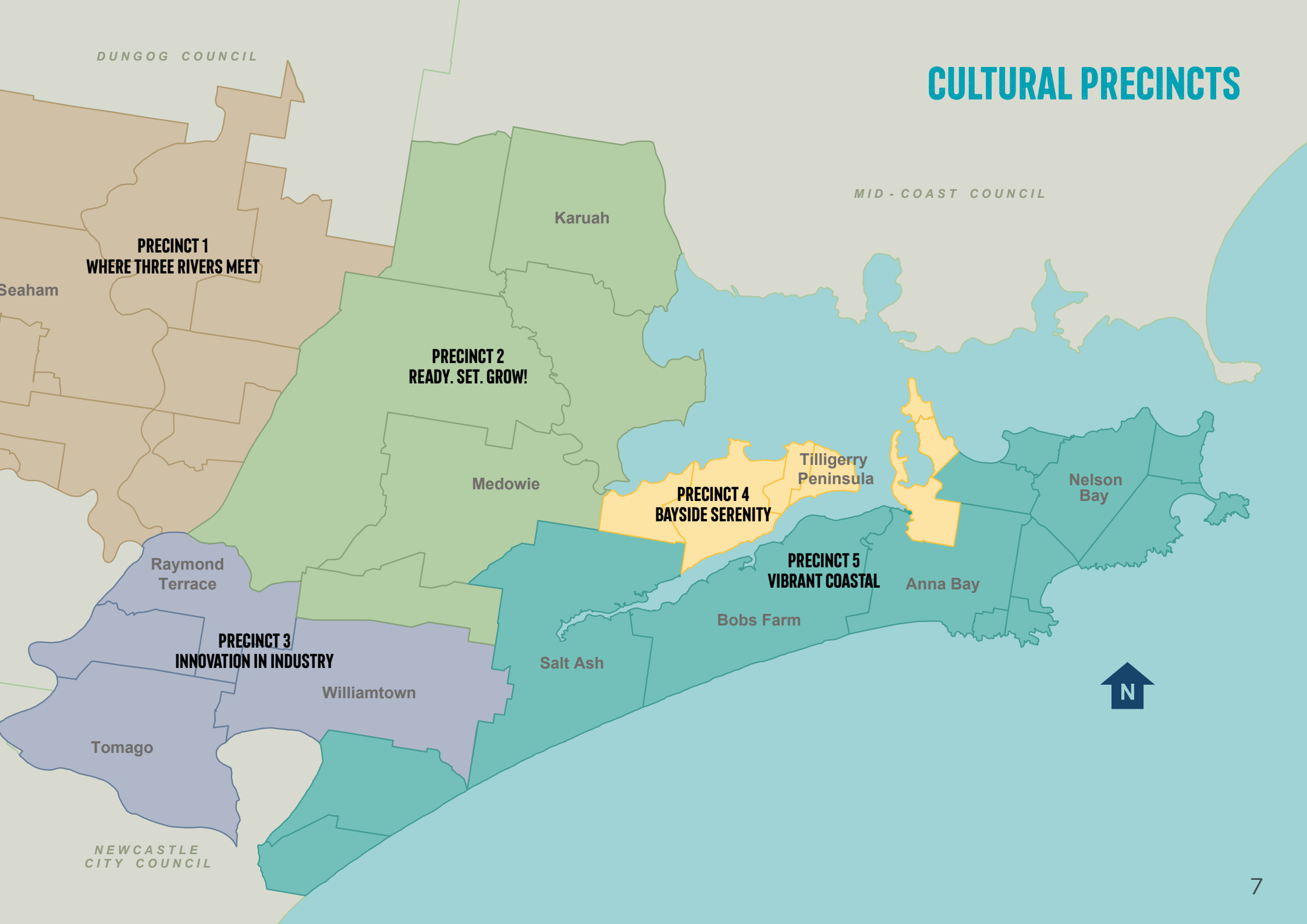


PRECINCT 5 - VIBRANT COASTAL

The coastline from Stockton in Newcastle to Anna Bay is covered in vast sand dunes and freshwater pools. At the heart is the ancient and expansive Worimi Conservation Lands – gazetted as an Aboriginal Place. With pristine bays and surf beaches, wildlife, walking and bike trails, the natural assets make this Precinct a tourist mecca. Beyond the natural, this Precinct draws people to visit boutique shops, cosmopolitan dining, cafés and relaxed marina life.



CULTURAL PRECINCTS



THE PORT STEPHENS CULTURAL IDENTITY



The Port Stephens Cultural Precincts provide a clear description of the individual identities of our towns and villages. They describe what makes our neighbourhoods and communities distinctive and are designed to maintain, enhance and cultivate the unique character and identity of place.

These Precincts are a valuable tool in the delivery of placemaking initiatives by ensuring alignment between the delivery of projects and the identity of place. Cultural Precincts also help identify broader areas for future planning of events, the arts and culture which will help support the development of creative clusters. They will be used across Council to priorities and invest in new initiatives through our grants, sponsorship, capital works investment and programming.

The Cultural Precincts were created in partnership with our community and identified the value, opportunities and priorities for each Precinct. Over time, these cultural zones and the character statements associated with each Precinct will evolve.

The Cultural Precincts information provides a guide to help communicate the priorities, opportunities and values. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list, but more a framework to communicate the values of each of our communities to help inform public art, events and cultural activities. What these opportunities look like will be determined by the creativity, innovation and imagination of those that live, work and play in Port Stephens.

LOCATION	Public Art	Events	Heritage	Activation	Interpretation and Story Telling
WHERE THREE RIVERS MEET					
Gateway entrances and town centres	✓				
Connections to the river		✓			
Heritage trails & experiences	✓		✓	✓	✓
READY. SET. GROW!					
Town Centres				✓	
Boyd Oval Medowie		✓			
Medowie Sports Precinct		✓			
Longworth Park	✓	✓		✓	
Karuah Riverfront	✓	✓			✓
INNOVATION IN INDUSTRY					
Newcastle Airport	✓				✓
King St Raymond Terrace	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Boomerang Park		✓	✓		✓
Riverside Park	✓	✓		✓	✓
Raymond Terrace Town Centre	✓			✓	✓
Industrial Precincts				✓	

LOCATION	Public Art	Events	Heritage	Activation	Interpretation and Story Telling
BAYSIDE SERENITY					
Henderson Park	✓	✓		✓	
Nature Reserves	✓				✓
Soldiers Point Aboriginal Place					✓
Taylor's Beach Industrial Precinct				✓	
Tanilba Bay Town Centre				✓	
VIBRANT COASTAL					
Fern Bay Hall & Park Precinct		✓		✓	
One Mile Beach		✓			
Fly Point		✓			
Robinson Reserve	✓	✓		✓	✓
Birubi Point Aboriginal Place		✓		✓	✓
Apex Park	✓	✓		✓	
Tomaree Sports Complex		✓			
Salamander Sports Complex		✓			
Nelson Bay Town Centre	✓	✓		✓	✓
Nelson Bay Foreshore	✓	✓		✓	✓
Shoal Bay Foreshore	✓	✓		✓	✓

THE VALUE OF EVENTS, THE ARTS AND CULTURE



ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Across Port Stephens, events, the arts and cultural experiences are increasingly influencing economic outcomes; new residents are searching for towns and cities which balance career and lifestyle and business are seeking to invest in communities that are creative, innovative and engaged.

From a tourism perspective, consumers are searching for experiences which are unique and authentic. Experiences that celebrate culture and compel people to visit a destination. Across Port Stephens, this has primarily been driven by the stunning natural environment however, as consumers expectations increase, the value of events, festivals, heritage and indigenous experiences is also increasing.

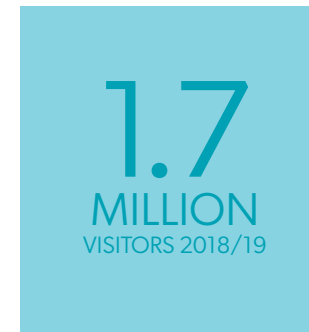
Events are an important element of the Port Stephens visitor economy. They reduce the impacts of seasonal visitation, support business and drive visitor spend. Events also provide an opportunity to promote Port Stephens to a broader national and international audience.

During the 2018/19 year, Council invested in 123 events across Port Stephens which generated an estimated economic impact of more than \$10 million. These events help ease seasonal fluctuations, support business and drive increased visitation by promoting Port Stephens to new markets.

Public art and quality urban design are also driving economic growth by creating landmarks and an aesthetically pleasing urban environment that attracts both permanent residents and visitors.

It also assists urban regeneration and contributes to the branding of our towns and villages to create a stronger sense of place and build civic pride.

Council, together with business and the community, sees the ongoing development and investment in events, the arts and culture as a vital to, not only long term sustainable economic benefits, but also to the wellbeing of the people and the liveability of the place.



LIVEABILITY AND WELLBEING

Culture is fundamental to the liveability and identity of place. It connects the community and supports the health, wellbeing and the Port Stephens' quality of life for those who live, work and visit this place.

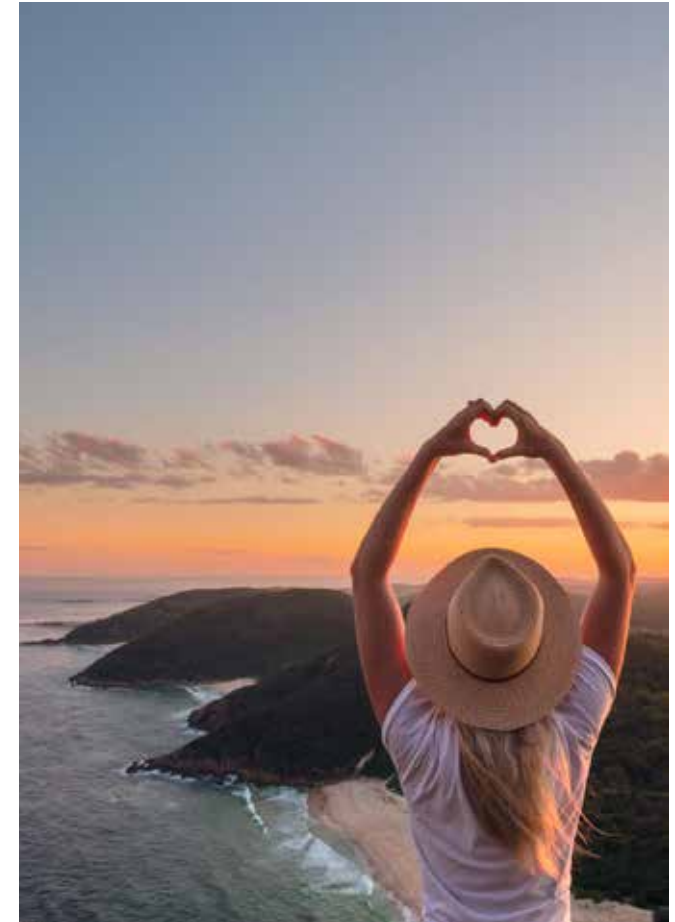
Cultural activities should contribute to a place, encourage connectivity between people within the community, activate participation on a grass roots level and provide infrastructure that promotes and encourages these activities in its design, maintenance and management.

The value of culture to communities has been particularly evident through the recent COVID-19 Pandemic. The loss of human connection; of getting together as a community, visiting new places, sharing experiences, enjoying communal spaces and celebrating achievements has had a profound effect on the health and wellbeing of all communities.

There is no doubt that culture contributes directly to 'liveability', in particular through vibrant and diverse activities such as cultural events and celebrations.

These activities have a unique ability to bring people together to share an interest or experience, broaden perspectives, provide inspiration and to educate, invigorate, integrate, communicate, celebrate and entertain. The arts, and public artworks in particular, also contribute to well-designed public spaces, creating attractive places, new experiences and drawing people together to form new connections.

The wellbeing aspects of these cultural experiences is of course felt uniquely, by each individual. It is a fact that Sporting events, music events, markets and community festivals bring our communities to life. They can be used to drive social change and increase social and civic pride. Events, the arts and culture have the ability to revitalise places that are subject to neglect or vandalism, allow people to feel connected to a larger community and most importantly bring vibrancy to our communities.



COUNCIL'S ROLE IN EVENTS, THE ARTS AND CULTURE



GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIP



DELIVER



COORDINATE



ADVOCATE

A new Community Grants and Sponsorship Program provides opportunity for business and the community to work together to deliver short and long term programs which promote creativity, enterprise and innovation. The program supports both short term, low cost initiatives along with more strategic projects aimed at building capacity across the community.

Event sponsorship programs improve the vibrancy of the place whilst also delivering economic outcomes by minimising the impacts of seasonal visitation and supporting the development of year-round visitor economy.

Council will continue to adapt funding programs, to support the delivery of strategic creative projects within the action plan aligned to this Strategy. This support from grants, paid parking and strategic partnerships will bring this Strategy to life and enable us to work together to deliver on the cultural aspirations of the community.



PUBLIC ART



DELIVER



COORDINATE

Well executed public art in our streets, buildings and public spaces has the potential to transform our places, create new experiences and celebrate our community identity.

Public art should not be a passive backdrop, but something we engage with and participate in. It should support innovation and industry... create new experiences, bring our places to life, celebrate our identity and connect us.

Our role is to integrate art into major infrastructure projects, support artists and new programs and promote high quality art in new developments. This art could take the form of freestanding sculpture, environmental art, architectural design elements, lighting installations, decorative paving, artist-designed privacy screens or landscaping elements.

This strategy, together with Council's Public Art Policy and Guidelines, will support high quality, place relevant and engaging public art across the LGA.



INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT



DELIVER



ADVOCATE

Council invests, and is responsible for, the design, delivery and management of community infrastructure in the public domain. Quality public infrastructure and public spaces that strive for design excellence is embedded with culture. This relationship enables participation in the events, the arts and culture and effects how the spaces function and attract people. Projects such as town centre revitalisations, new sporting facilities and park upgrades will need to consider how the space can be used for events, how public art can be integrated, how it creates spaces for people gatherings and how the new infrastructure can support the cultural stories of Port Stephens.

Through events, Council can facilitate investment in legacy infrastructure and services which add to the wellbeing and liveability of the place.



CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



DELIVER



COORDINATE

Cultural development sits as one of five Council policy domains alongside society, environment, economy and governance that work together to support our community's wellbeing. Within this context, cultural development is all about enabling cultural activities, like the arts, to realise community goals of wellbeing and liveability.

This work is diverse and cultural development is delivered in many different formats. For Council it is the way we manage cultural sites and facilities, how we integrate culture into our strategic planning, how we fund collaborative projects, celebrate and tell our cultural stories and how we encourage, attract and support events which build participation across the community.



PLACE MAKING AND ACTIVATION



DELIVER



COORDINATE

Creating vibrancy in our town centres and public spaces requires a collaborative approach. It requires ownership from Council, business and the community to create places that are resilient, welcoming and inclusive. Place activation is not about big budgets and big infrastructure. It is about creating unique and innovative experiences and testing new ideas which are connected to our local identity both through the built form of the place and the programming of the space.

Through a place-based approach, Council will continue to build on the local identity of our towns and villages. Investment in quality social infrastructure and open space will provide the foundation for positive social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes.



EVENT MANAGEMENT



DELIVER



COORDINATE

Council's current role is in supporting and cultivating events – not organising and delivering events. Council provides strategic support to community based events to help ensure success and grow the sustainability of events. This is also supported through event marketing and communications.

Civic events such as Australia Day and NAIDOC Day are supported through a committee of Council with funding allocated to manage the operational elements of the event.

Council also invests in supporting an integrated event approval process (or a one stop shop) for event assessments across the LGA. This simplified application process is designed to encourage events across Port Stephens by providing a transparent, efficient, more streamlined process which considers the impacts of an event on our community, business and the environment. This process is recognised as important element in event attraction.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

WE LISTENED TO OUR COMMUNITY

In 2019 Council undertook a formal consultation process with the community and business to ascertain the needs, opportunities and challenges relating to events, the arts and culture in Port Stephens.

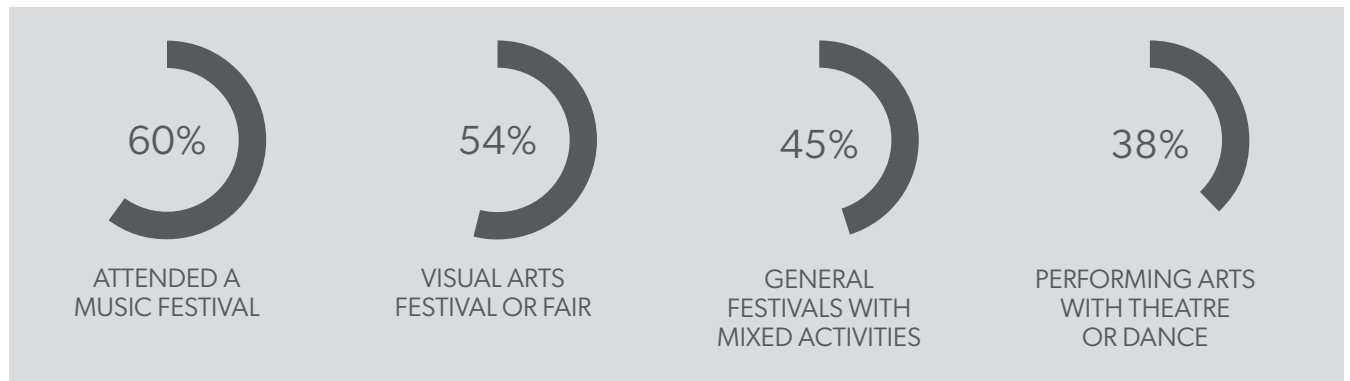
The process included input from Council's own Strategic Arts, Aboriginal and Heritage Advisory Committee, the Tomaree Business Chamber, Destination Port Stephens members and engaged members of the community.

Over a period of nine months we conducted a Culture Port Stephens Forum, a Strategic Arts Committee Workshop, an online survey and six focus groups on PopUp Events. The results of this consultation process created the foundation to build our strategy.

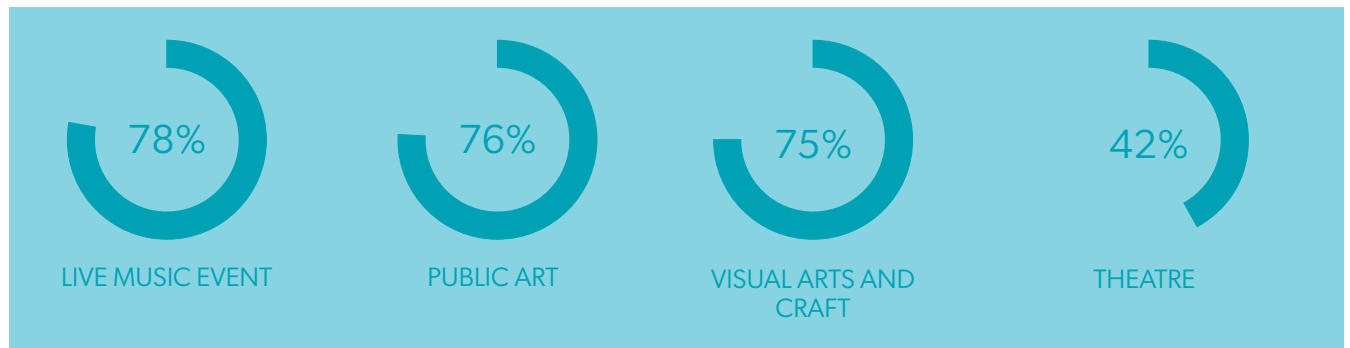
WHO WE HEARD FROM



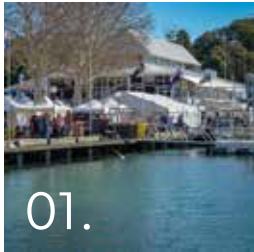
WHAT DID WE ATTEND



HOW WE GOT CREATIVE AS A CREATOR, PERFORMER OR PARTICIPANT



TOP 5 EVENT LOCATIONS



01.

Nelson Bay Foreshore



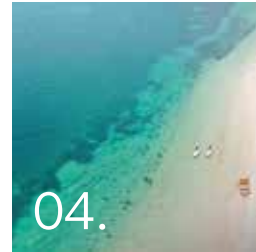
02.

Fly Point Park



03.

Raymond Terrace River



04.

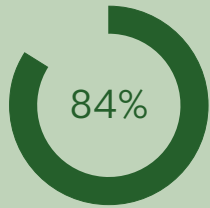
Beaches and Parks



05.

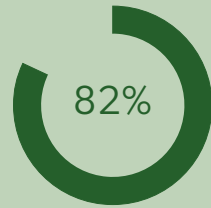
Boomerang Park

WHERE WE SEE VALUE



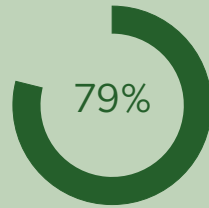
84%

said the arts and events has a big impact on bringing customers to local business



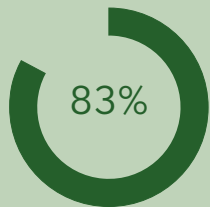
82%

said the arts and events has big impact on shaping and expressing identity



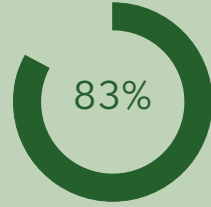
79%

the arts contributes to wellbeing and happiness



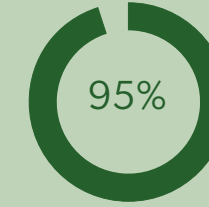
83%

said they were interested in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander arts



83%

said they were interested in attending events



95%

agreed council should invest in attracting and developing events



WE IDENTIFIED KEY THEMES

Through the consultation process we began to understand some important themes and priorities from our community. These are outlined here.

This feedback is invaluable and will continue to play an important role with more consultation planned as we begin to deliver the Strategy. This ongoing communication ensures Council is delivering the appropriate services where it is needed and desired.

This community engagement in the pre-planning stages also provides ownership of events and higher levels of support from within the community.

OUR NATURAL ASSETS – Respondents told us our environment was essential to culture and what the majority of people valued most about this place. They expressed a desire to hold environment-focused events and be able to share the stories of places to others who visit the area. It was rated as the highest valued cultural asset.

PASSION – Port Stephenians are passionate about their people and their place and are ready and willing to be part of the betterment of their community. Many indicated they were either; already volunteering their time; or were eager to be involved. Respondents indicated a strong desire to support local events and business and expressed an interest in volunteering to assist in the development of events, the arts and cultural activities in their community.

ABORIGINAL CULTURE – Many respondents had a pride and passion for the local Aboriginal culture and agreed that there was opportunity to integrate more aboriginal experiences within local events and cultural activities. This was seen as a pathway to broaden the wider community's understanding of the past, the now and the future.

COMMUNITY BASED EVENTS – Respondents revealed an interest in family-focussed activities in their local communities, in particular celebrating local talent. They also recognised a need for more youth oriented activity. Some suggested partnering business with community groups to hold events in their local community.

HERITAGE – A clear level of pride in heritage was evident in responses, however it was felt the heritage aspects can get overwhelmed by the built environment

focus. It was suggested that events and interpretative trails be utilised to ensure these heritage stories are kept alive and shared through the generations.

ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE SPACES – Respondents expressed a view that it is difficult to find appropriate places to practice and create. Limited gallery space for exhibiting work was also identified as a gap.

Whilst this is a recurring theme, Council is also responsible for looking at the broader context and understanding how we can enhance regional capabilities by thinking outside of the box with concepts such as repurposing, or multi-purposing spaces, outdoor exhibitions and pop up gallery spaces, for example.

PERFORMANCE AND EVENT VENUES – Fly Point was identified as an underutilised event venue, as well as other potential open space that could be improved to make more “event friendly”. Transport and parking were seen as a barrier to attend events that currently take place... mostly at Nelson Bay.

COUNCIL PROCESSES – Feedback indicated that more clarity of process was needed as well as educating the community to make it easier and ensure clarity of our process. Making it easy to do business and be an enabler of activity.

BROADER IMPACT OF CULTURE – A common theme from feedback was the need to address some of the social challenges in all sections of the community – from loneliness in the elderly to the disengagement of youth – and create an environment to improve the overall wellbeing.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Impacts on local and global communities from the COVID-19 pandemic have been immediate. From the economic hardship on business and employees (particularly those working in our creative, event and tourism industries) to the social impacts like isolation, mental health issues and education.

The long term issues are much harder to predict. As we move through the recovery process, we will begin to understand the fundamental changes to how our society functions. We will need to adjust to the practical issues like social distancing and hygiene whilst also be ready for the less visible issues like fear and anxiety.

As restrictions ease, people will be wanting and needing to reconnect. They will want to renew their social networks, return to work, provide opportunities for children to build their peer groups and find ways to bring back a sense of normality to everyday life. At the same time, they will want to feel safe and secure. They'll need assurance that they will be ok and that Council is moving forward in a safe and informed way.

By working in partnership with government, business and residents, Council's role, on a local level, is to lead the recovery across the Port Stephens community.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL EVENTS

Port Stephens is home to an active community and volunteer base who invest their time and energy into everything from gardens and foreshores, to our libraries and visitor centres. Volunteers also run events. These events are generally designed with localised community

focus, to create connections, raise funding for a particular cause or provide a platform for local artisans and musicians to perform. These can range from small half day events to large, multi-day festivals.

The value of community events is far reaching. We know these events are a big contributor to the culture of our community and during the consultation process, were identified as a key area for support from Council.

Despite limited funding, we know that often it's the logistics, capacity building and promotional support that are the real drivers in creating successful community events.

There is an opportunity now to create a new model for community events. One that not only provides multi-year financial support, but most importantly strategic support from technical specialists. This may include event marketing strategies, public relations and communications, succession planning, grant application assistance, attracting private sponsorship from business aligned with the event, audience and governance.

There is also significant opportunity to communicate the incredible indigenous history of Port Stephens through events and there is a growing demand from residents and visitors to connect with the Worimi people and learn more of their history and stories.

This may include the development of smaller events around existing events for example, an indigenous art event during NAIDOC Celebrations.

Ideally Council will act as a conduit to connect community events with like-minded, or complementary businesses. These three way partnerships can combine the passion of the volunteers, the skill sets and financial injection from business and the support, coordination, guidance and approvals streamlining of Council.

CREATIVE PLACES & GALLERIES

Throughout the consultation process we regularly heard of the shortage of dedicated performance and gallery spaces in Port Stephens. At this time the financial cost associated (management, resourcing and exhibition) with the establishment of major arts and cultural assets is not realistic in the time frame of this Plan.

Council would require external funding to deliver a major arts facility. Despite strong advocacy, infrastructure funding in this space is limited and highly competitive - particularly as criteria for funding relates to population based needs of a Local Government Area. Our geographical spread also means that some may be disadvantaged by a fixed performance space with long travel times across Port Stephens.

Local people across sectors of the community and all creative industries are crying out for creative spaces to practice their art forms. This includes music practice, visual art rooms and rehearsal rooms.

An opportunity presents to think outside of the box and identify performance and exhibition spaces that are not bound by bricks and mortar – our streets can become our platforms for expression. Creating and repurposing spaces could provide unique experiences across Port Stephens for new audiences to interact with arts and culture without the barriers that exist in accessing museums and galleries.

We also have existing places that could better cater to large scale events, including Fly Point, Riverside Park, Boomerang Park, Tomaree Sports Centre and can be the focus of investment and upgrades for improved and diversified service needs.

The nearly completed Murrook Cultural Centre will be a significant cultural asset to the Port Stephens community. The space is expected to host a permanent exhibition showcasing Aboriginal artefacts as well as a temporary

revolving exhibition area that can be used for artists of all kinds, and small cultural performances or installations. The promotion and use of Murrook is pivotal throughout the community for the place to be welcoming and inclusive to everybody.

Some of the best maker and work spaces have been born through creative thinking. In Port Stephens opportunities present through subsidised spaces, adaptation of council buildings and the identification of suitable Precincts - like underutilised industrial areas.

Council can work with business and owners of spaces to identify opportunities for repurposing on a temporary and longer term basis. Spaces could include; school halls, community facilities, light houses, shops, industrial sheds and much more. Advocating for more permanent spaces can be strengthened by strong artist networks and a clear understanding of the industry needs.

BUSINESS EVENTS

Conference, meetings, exhibitions and incentive travel can all be grouped together at Business Events. This market is high yield and has excellent potential for strong economic returns however is also a very competitive market segments with increasingly high standards and expectations for services and facilities.

Business events present a strong opportunity for Port Stephens, often supporting low and shoulder season visitation, employment in seasonal industries and driving repeat leisure travel to the destination. Port Stephens needs to develop a strong value proposition that is about more than the physical location. By partnering with industry, Port Stephens can promote the destination for small to medium conferences linking quality venues with 4 star plus accommodation, unique team building experiences and opportunities.





Furthermore, by partnering with Destination Port Stephens, increased business to business sales and marketing activities will promote Port Stephens to a targeted audience, generating leads for business events across the LGA. Council can support this with additional assistance through enquiry management, bid development and as the market grows, advocating for improved infrastructure investment which will be critical. Quality accommodation, purpose built event spaces and appropriately trained staff will see the long term, successful growth of this market.

APPROVALS AND LICENSING

Licensing and approvals at Port Stephens Council are managed through an integrated process or “one stop shop” approach. Event organisers liaise with one key point of contact who coordinates the relevant approvals on behalf of the event organiser.

This has been a unique advantage in attracting events to Port Stephens for several years. It’s simple, timely and takes pressure off event organisers. As competition amongst destinations for events continues to grow, so to do the demands on the event licensing processes. Event organisers are often seeking increased support for risk management, traffic management, health and safety and sustainability. They also need assistance to connect with local business and manage media and communications. With higher investment, and expected return to Council, so too the organiser’s expectations are increased.

This has resulted in amplified demands on the event licensing and approval process which has at times, created a less than ideal experience for event organisers. Approval times have been compromised and the onus has been pushed back to event organisers who are not always equipped to manage the relevant requirements and creates a deterrent to organisers.

Council has an opportunity to refine this process, automate systems and reduce internal administration requirements to allow a greater focus on support and service for event organisers. Tools such as an online referral process, refinements to the LEP and pre-approved event locations will all help build the service culture, improve the quality and timeliness of the approval process and ultimately, attract more events to Port Stephens.

SPORTING EVENTS

Port Stephens is highly regarded as a destination for sporting events. Facilities such as Tomaree Sports Complex, King Park Sporting Complex and Lakeside Sports Grounds along with world class beaches, bays and National Parks attract a large number of high quality state, national and international events each year including Sail Port Stephens, the Port Stephens Pro, Nations of Origin and the Peter Wilson Memorial Touch Football Carnival.

Now, opportunities exist to attract more high profile sporting events through investment in relevant infrastructure. Funding has been approved for the improvement of infrastructure at Tomaree Sports Complex and is expected to be completed by 2021. This investment will ensure the facility meets State sporting organisation facilities standards allowing a more proactive approach to attracting large, high profile sporting events to Port Stephens.

Along with high profile sporting events, Port Stephens hosts a number of junior State and Regional events. These smaller events often require minimal financial support, attract family groups for multiple nights and regularly deliver strong economic returns. A more focused approach to attracting these events provides an immediate opportunity.



STRATEGIC APPROACH



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE: VIBRANT SPACES

Council will partner with business and the community to create place-based events, the arts and culture that enhance the liveability and wellbeing of those that live, work and visit Port Stephens.

Key Priorities:

- 1.1 Develop a Project Team and action plan to deliver short term, place activation initiatives
- 1.2 Use public space to showcase innovative, temporary and permanent art which promotes our local identity
- 1.3 Source funding for the implementation of place making initiatives
- 1.4 Invest in measuring the wellbeing and liveability of our community.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO: ECONOMIC GROWTH

We will invest in the development and attraction of events, the arts and culture initiatives to drive economic outcomes

Key Priorities:

- 2.1 Attract and support events that increase overnight visitor spend and encourage visitation
- 2.2 Support the development of the arts and cultural experiences that drive increased visitation and visitor spend
- 2.3 Invest in infrastructure that supports the growth and sustainability of events, the arts and culture
- 2.4 Grow business events in Port Stephens.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THREE: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

We will invest in initiatives that provide opportunities to foster diversity, promote inclusivity and encourage participation in culture and events across Port Stephens.

Key Priorities:

- 3.1 Increase the diversity and reach of events, the arts and cultural programs
- 3.2 Support and promote accessibility for all events, the arts and cultural experiences
- 3.3 Develop volunteer capacity to work in partnership to deliver events and cultural activities
- 3.4 Maximise the use of our public spaces for events that bring the community together.



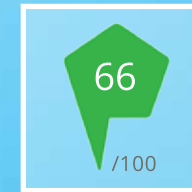
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOUR: CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

We will grow the capacity and capability of our community through education, training and skills to support and stimulate events, the arts and culture.

Key Priorities:

- 4.1 Identify and support opportunities to upskill and educate the arts, culture and events sectors
- 4.2 Build strong networks across the sectors which create collaboration and education opportunities for the arts, culture and events
- 4.3 Enable the growth of local events
- 4.4 Streamline processes and simplify communications.
- 4.5 Investigate approaches for new creative industry, start-ups & arts practice working and performance spaces.

OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS



The Port Stephens Liveability Index will provide the metrics to determine the success of this strategy. It measures what our community values and how they rate their town.

The PX Score will provide a measure of our communities lived experience in our place.

Alongside this score will be measures across key place themes:

- Open space
- Economy
- Community connection
- Character





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COUNCIL

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