



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL

Six-month Progress Report

January to June 2023



GUUDJI YIIGU

(GOO-JEE IK-KOO)

We welcome you to Port Stephens – part of the Worimi Aboriginal Nation. Port Stephens Council acknowledges the Worimi people as traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waterways on which we all live, learn, work and play.

We value and respect the Worimi people and the legacy 60,000 years of Aboriginal Nation traditions and culture brings with it. As part of Council's culture of acceptance, diversification and harmony we walk alongside the Worimi people on a journey of listening and learning.

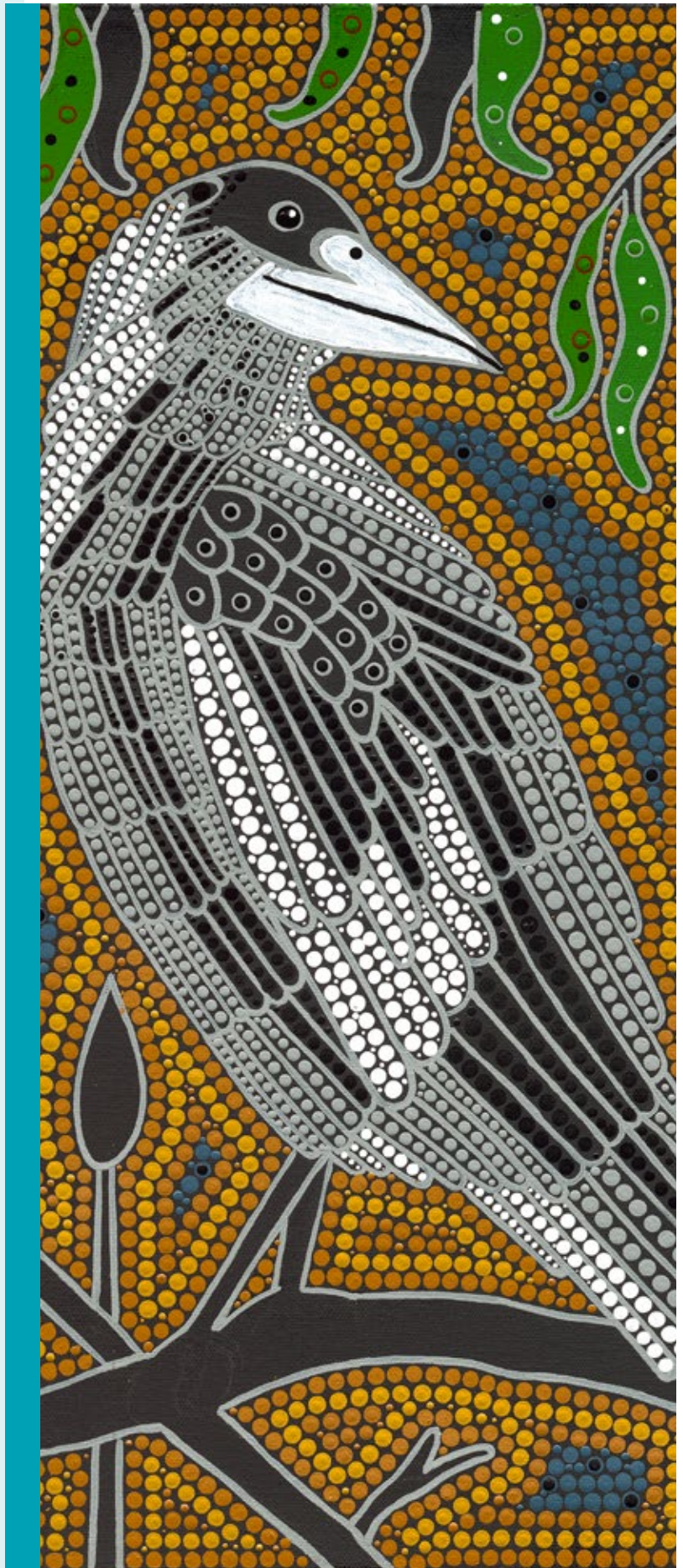
Together we will strive to make this a better place for all people. As guardians of these lands, we ask that you tread lightly to help preserve the biodiversity and respect those who came before as well as those who will follow.

Artwork by Regan Lilley.

Acknowledgement

Port Stephens Council acknowledges the Worimi People as the traditional custodians of the land of Port Stephens. We also pay our respect to Aboriginal elders past, present and future.

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The six-month progress report from January to June 2023 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines (September 2021) Essential Element 4.9. 'The General Manager must ensure that progress reports are provided to the council, with respect to the principal activities detailed in the **Delivery Program**, at least every six months.'

All financial figures included in this report are preliminary, unaudited and subject to review as part of the audited 2022-2023 financial statements for Council.



General Manager's message

The time has flown since our last report, this being the second Six-month Progress Report for our Delivery Program 2022-2026.

Connecting, providing and advocating for our Community

We started in January by celebrating our biggest Australia Day yet, conferring citizenship to 83 new citizens. Aply, the theme was 'Respect. Reflect. Celebrate' with our 2023 Port Stephens Australia Day Ambassador being Professor Heidi Norman, a descendant of the Gomeri people from north western NSW, and a leading Australian researcher and Aboriginal political historian.

Early in the New Year we continued planning and voicing the need for further funding for our community, with our community advocacy priorities document leading into the NSW Government election in March 2023. Importantly we successfully secured a commitment of \$10M for local roads repair that we are planning to deliver over the next 2 financial years.

Despite having to defer 'Illuminate' in Raymond Terrace due to some unruly weather, we've developed and implemented a full program of more than 40 events and activations across the local government area (LGA). With something for all ages, really bringing our community together - one such event was Karuah by Night. The first of its kind for Karuah, fulfilling a number of actions in the Karuah Place Plan. Featuring live music, light displays, food trucks, children's entertainment and more, Karuah really came alive with over 2,000 people in attendance. These events were made possible through external grant funding from the NSW Government.

We also established the Homelessness Stakeholder Advocacy Group to help with addressing the impacts of homelessness in Port Stephens. Whilst not a direct service provider, we're working with other stakeholders to facilitate collaboration of solutions. This is part of the broader housing affordability/availability challenges we face across the LGA.

Being environmentally and financially responsible

We've been busy talking with the community about hazard mapping for the Coastal Management program which is not always an easy conversation to have. Holding a range of drop-in sessions and workshops for community members to meet with staff and coastal specialists to learn more about the coastal hazards and key management areas.

The Waste app was released allowing residents to enter their address and receive a personalised waste calendar and reminders for bin day. The app was a great tool for letting the community know about our garden organics roll-out, with over 32,000 Garden Organics (GO) bins rolled out across the LGA. We'll commence the collection of the new GO service as of start of July 2023. This service is intended to remove the garden organics matter from the red lid bin, reducing the waste going to landfill through this service. Recent audits indicated approximately 25% of the red lid bin was taken up with garden organics matter. This material will be converted to a reusable compost product. Through the savings in reduction of product going to landfill and previous savings in the waste area, this has allowed Council to implement this service at no extra cost to the community.

As part of our commitment to financial sustainability we lodged our application to IPART (following Council's resolution in November) applying for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 9.5% per year for three years. On 15 June IPART announced Council was successful in its application for the SRV - this approval is by no means a windfall, but will provide much needed support to carry out our services, and from 2024-2025, additional funding for the delivery of road repairs along with improvements to public spaces and the natural environment.

During this time we also completed our annual review and exhibition of our Delivery Program, Operational Plan, Resourcing Strategy and Fees and Charges. Council's core documents

outlining the nuts and bolts of what we do, the services we provide, how we provide them and the budget required to achieve it all. With Council adopting these before the new financial year to ensure we had a budget, program, rates and charges to go forward.

Delivering within our available resources

Nearing financial year end many of our Capital Works and Roadside Drainage teams were out onsite ensuring works were completed in accordance with grant deadlines for the financial year end. With completion of one of our highest capital works programs, this together with strained resources to complete ongoing works associated with previous natural disasters has stretched our teams to ensure works are completed to meet the financial deadline.

But this is not always the case across the business - not all of our plans or programs neatly fit into the financial year with complexities and further investigations required for a number of projects, programs and strategies such as the Wellbeing Strategy, and Carbon Neutral Action Plan. As has been felt by businesses across the LGA, we too have experienced staff shortages and vacancies, reprioritising our resourcing and needing to deliver our services with less. With the successful SRV we will be able to increase resources to meet current service levels.

Our teams have worked hard to deliver services and facilities for our community over the period. For their patience, perseverance and willingness to get on with the job I'm extremely grateful and proud.

The snippets below are only a small collection of the highlights and the challenges over January to June 2023.



Tim Crosdale
General Manager of Port Stephens Council

Our key highlights

Biggest Australia Day to date
Respect. Reflect. Celebrate.



Event activations supported by external funding
42 It's On!



Fixed
22,000+ potholes



Place Planning to PSCare
6 Awards won



Garden Organics bins rolled out
32,000



Trees planted
2,826



SRV application
Approved



Engagement underway
Coastal Management Program





Scorecard

Our seven key result measures underpin everything we do at Port Stephens Council:



ON TRACK: Operational Plan Actions are on track to achieve the target



MONITOR: Operational Plan Actions are within 5% of the target



OFF TRACK: Operational Plan Actions are > 5% off the target



Service Delivery

Target: >95% Integrated Plans delivered on time

Achievement: 93.5%

(as at 30 June 2023)



Community Satisfaction

Target: >75% Community Satisfaction Score

Achievement: 64% somewhat satisfied and above with Council's overall services

(Source: [2022 Community Satisfaction Survey Report](#))



Employee Wellbeing

Target: >75% Employee Engagement

Achievement: 83%

(Source: [2022 Employee Engagement Survey](#))



Governance

Target: >95% Governance Health Check

Achievement: **98.24%**

(As at June 2023)



Risk Management

Target: >85% Risk Management Maturity score

Achievement: **86%**

(As at August 2022)



Financial Sustainability

Target: Underlying financial result better than budget

Achievement: Anticipated **\$304K underlying surplus**

(As at [March 2023 Quarterly Budget Review](#))



Asset Management

Target: 100% asset maintenance ratio

Achievement: Result to be provided in 2022-2023 Annual Report



Achievements – progress of principal activities

Key Priorities update

Several key priorities were identified in the Delivery Program for 2022 to 2026 based on what we'd heard from the community and the new Council. Read more about these priorities in our [Delivery Program](#).

Over the last 6 months (the period) we've continued to investigate funding sources to resource these initiatives and infrastructure projects, with the progress made on the Key Priorities outlined on pages 9 to 17 below.

Advocacy Priorities Program

The **2023 Community Advocacy Priorities** document was utilised in the lead up to the NSW Government election to drive the conversation with electoral candidates ensuring Port Stephens remained at the forefront of the NSW Government's future planning and advocacy program. Importantly, we successfully secured a commitment of \$10M for local roads repair that we are planning to deliver over the next 2 financial years.

The document lists the key projects for Port Stephens in the years ahead. High on the list this year is:



Road repairs, rehabilitation and upgrades



Creating liveable cities



Housing supply and diversity



The environment



Investment in health services



Protection of Koalas



Tourism, sport and recreation infrastructure

For the period we were successful in securing nearly \$5M in competitive grant funding (for use this year and years to come) to support our services and key projects ranging from roads to regionally connecting cities.

Critical State funding and policy priorities



Top 10

1

Fund strategies to unlock housing supply and diversity to support an additional 20,000 residents over the next 20 years

2

Fast track the construction of the Nelson Bay Road upgrade

3

Fund vital upgrades to the Tomaree Hospital

4

Design and construct an alternate link road to Fingal Bay

5

Urgently review and amend the rate peg methodology to improve Council's financial sustainability

6

Deliver a public high school in Medowie

7

Improve public transport connections between Raymond Terrace, Nelson Bay, Maitland and Newcastle

8

Work in partnership with the local community to develop a Masterplan for the Tomaree Lodge site

9

Construct a highway interchange at the Bucketts Way and Medowie Road and M1 intersections

10

Upgrade Cabbage Tree Road and Tomago Road to accommodate traffic growth generated by Newcastle Airport and the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct

Birubi Information Centre

Consultation with adjacent landowners has identified a desire to improve project outcomes by incorporating the sand management plan associated with this project onto the adjacent Aboriginal Place. This will improve the physical protection of culturally significant and sensitive heritage material in addition to minimising the ongoing maintenance associated with windblown sand.

An amendment to the approved Development Application and an addendum to the approved Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) is progressing, with the construction tender now anticipated to be released late 2023 with physical works expected to commence in the first half of 2024.

Carbon Neutrality

We continue to plan and implement initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint through the development of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan.

Council has committed to being carbon neutral for Council operations by 2025. The Carbon Neutral Action Plan defines the necessary initiatives and changes to Council operations required to achieve our Carbon Neutral goal.

We've been investigating a number of sustainability initiatives including options to reduce energy usage and waste-to-landfill as well as improving the efficiency of our fleet vehicles. A change in regulations delayed the commencement of a hydrogen fuel cell trial on our trucks however the rapid improvement in Electric Vehicle and Battery technology is providing huge potential for change to Council's fleet portfolio.

We continue to work closely with our staff and suppliers to influence behavioural change, reduce energy demand and ensure sustainable decision-making.

Coastal Management Program

In collaboration with NSW Department of Planning and Environment, we've been developing 2 Coastal Management Programs (CMPs). The Port Stephens CMP is currently in Stage 3 of 5, which includes the identification and evaluation of management options. We've been working with coastal experts to develop a comprehensive risk assessment for Stage 3 of the CMP. This assessment applies to all built and natural assets across Port Stephens and will identify priority management actions for Council and other delivery partners to address as funding and resourcing permit.

The Hunter Estuary CMP is being developed by the Hunter Estuary Alliance (HEAL), which includes partner Councils and key organisations. The project is being led by Maitland City Council and is currently in Stage 2 of 5, which will identify the key risks, vulnerabilities and opportunities within the Hunter Estuary.



Port Stephens CMP. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the community and other stakeholders during the period to help us make decisions about management options and priority areas of action within Port Stephens.

Community Engagement

A key priority in the **Communication and Engagement Strategy** is embedding the IAP2 principles into the organisational culture. To do this we've:

- Worked across Council to develop a community engagement process and integrate this into Council's Project Management Framework.
- Established the new Communications and Engagement Advisory Group (CEAG), which will provide guidance and input on the design of the communications and engagement programs for our higher social impact projects and programs. Meetings will commence early in the new financial year.
- Integrating engagement opportunities drawing from our Liveability Index and delving deeper with the community when required for key projects such as the Place Plans.

We've also been focusing on delivering a number of the strategic priorities for the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

- Increasing opportunities for the community to engage informally with Councillors and the Executive through quarterly Community Catch Ups.
- Ensuring our communication and engagement programs consider place diversity and accessibility as well as enable time for considered thought.
- Ensuring we provide easy to understand information that's accessible to everyone and directs people to the website as the single source of truth.
- Reviewing our templates and branding guidelines to ensure our documents are visually consistent, easy to read and accessible.
- Completing a social media audit, providing a strategic approach to our social media use moving forward.

Community Wellbeing

We've commenced the next stage of community engagement for the development of the Community Wellbeing Strategy checking in with the community to make sure the themes and potential actions reflect the community's desires. This community engagement will inform the development of the draft Wellbeing Strategy expected for completion towards the end of 2023.

Whilst planning for the future we continue to provide and facilitate a number of activities to ensure that everyone is safe and able to participate. Such examples are:

- Delivering a Disaster Preparedness Education Program within the disability sector.
- Providing the Inclusive event tent during Youth week and School holiday events with new activities suitable for young people with disabilities to enhance their event experience.
- Introducing new software into our website that tests readability and accessibility standards.
- Designing our communications and engagement program to reach a diverse audience with differing needs.

Eastern Groyne, Nelson Bay Precinct

Funding has not been secured for the Business Case, however this project continues to remain on our list with further updates to be provided when funding is secured.



Natural Environment

Council is committed to achieving a great lifestyle in a treasured environment so that current and future generations can enjoy, and benefit from, a healthy natural environment.

As part of our program of work to manage and protect the natural environment, we've secured grant funding for a number of environmental restoration projects to enhance the Port Stephens environment and key Koala habitat.

Including:

- \$150,000 from the Crown Reserve Improvement Fund aimed to target priority weeds, feral pests and facilitate biosecurity compliance.
- an additional \$200,000 through the Commonwealth's Koala Community Grant to enhance and protect Koala habitat and map native vegetation within the LGA. This also includes drone surveys to model the density of Koalas within Port Stephens, in partnership with the University of Newcastle.

Council implemented My Little Ecosystem workshops across 5 separate community events. The My Little Ecosystem workshops are designed to promote improving habitat for native species in urban environments and educate our community on the importance of these species. The workshops included frog hotels, native insect hotels, worm farming, composting as well as information on native plants and pollinators.

Financial Sustainability

Our Special Rate Variation (SRV) application was submitted to IPART in February 2023 along with 16 other Councils - our application of 9.5% per annum for 3 years was among the lowest.

During this time Council's Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) was re-forecasted as is part of the annual IP&R review process, which confirmed the need for an increased level of rates income in order to maintain community service levels. In June 2023 IPART released their decision and approved the SRV citing the need for the increase given Council's low rate base compared to other neighbouring and like size Councils.

We continue to review organisational efficiencies via our service review program and financial roadmap to ensure financial sustainability is maintained.

Place planning

A Place plan is guided by strategic documents – putting a local filter on all of our existing strategies to make one easy-to-read, action-oriented plan. Analysing potential opportunities for a place in line with the community's vision.

The status of Council's current Place Plan program is as follows:

- Karuah and surrounds (adopted March 2022, implementation phase).
- Medowie and surrounds (adopted April 2023, implementation phase).
- Hinterland, Shoal Bay and Tilligerry Place Plans are currently being developed and expected to be adopted by Council by June 2024.

Place Plans start with our community – your values and priorities for your place. Together, we identify the unique local character of a place and the ways our community can shape, enhance or protect these aspects.

Roads

Infrastructure planning and renewal for the period has mostly been funded by the Australian Government and NSW Government grants. We're continuing with recovery works and claims associated with the natural disaster in March 2021, February 2022 and July 2022.

KEY ROAD PROJECTS

While many other road projects are introduced as funds become available, our planning focus continues on:

- Avenue of the Allies, Tanilba Bay – road widening, drainage works including kerb and gutter from Poilus Parade to King Albert Avenue.
- The Bucketts Way, Twelve Mile Creek-from No.125 to 215 – road pavement rehabilitation.
- Lemon Tree Passage Road, Tanilba Bay - Pavement reconstruction and widening from Brownes Road to 768 Lemon Tree Passage Road.
- Mustons Road, Karuah – culvert replacement and road widening.
- Brandy Hill shared pathway.
- Fly Point shared pathway upgrade.

Key road projects commenced during the reporting period:

- Sturgeon Street Raymond Terrace – pavement reconstruction from Glenelg Street to Jacaranda Avenue.
- High Pedestrian Activity Area extension – Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay.

MAINTAINING LOCAL ROADS

Recent fine weather has enabled the Roads team to respond to pothole defects and pavement failures in a proactive manner. Resources have been prioritised to remediate defects on the heaviest trafficked roads first. Our advocacy for roads funding is also gaining traction, with recent funding announcements, providing additional resources, to tackle the extensive road pavement failures across our LGA.



Pathways and connections

We've commenced a review of our [Pathways Plan](#) that shows the proposed location of future footpaths and cycle ways. The review will consider works completed and additional demand since it was originally adopted, introducing a prioritisation framework to guide grant funding applications.

We've completed the following pathway upgrades: King Park, Raymond Terrace footpath construction; Government Road, Nelson Bay installation of pedestrian refuges; Nelson Bay CBD, pedestrian refuge upgrades and pedestrian crossing installations; Raymond Terrace CBD, pedestrian refuge upgrades; Adelaide St near Kent St, pedestrian crossing upgrade. We are finalizing planning on: Victoria Parade and Beach Road path upgrades in Nelson Bay; Henderson Park to Rudd Reserve Lemon Tree Passage, shared path design; Marine Drive Fingal Bay, shared path design as part of landslip remediation; shared path design from Shoal Bay to Little Beach, Nelson Bay.

As the volume of missing links and additional pathways needed is in excess of \$80M, Council has continued to search for additional income sources to fund these projects.



Waste Management Strategy implementation

Council adopted the Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031 in October 2021. Our Waste Management team have continued to focus on delivering the priorities within the Strategy, with efforts in the resource recovery area yielding results over the previous 6 months.

- The introduction and implementation of the third bin system - Garden Organics (GO). The GO service is well on track to be delivered within the 2023 calendar year, with bins rolled out across Port Stephens in the period. Collections will commence from July 2023.

- Extensive consultation and education as part of the implementation of the third bin system to help the public understand the new services, frequency, makeup and the processing of this waste stream.
- Circular Economy initiatives, involving the Hunter Joint Organisation and the journey to carbon neutrality. Council continues to be part of the introduction of the Circular Economy into the community through better procurement and use of resources.

All of the above initiatives will help to contribute to improving Port Stephens Council's diversion to landfill, in order to meet the new NSW Governments target of an 80% reduction in waste by 2030.

Raymond Terrace Depot project

We've experienced delays as a result of Ausgrid requirements for a power upgrade, which has had flow on affects for the contractor regarding turning the power on for the completed works. We now anticipate practical completion (of contract delivered physical works) in July and to be fully operational from October 2023.

Smart Parking rollout

We've been progressing on the delivery of Smart Parking at Nelson Bay expansion sites, Shoal Bay and Birubi Headland, which are on track for completion next financial year. We've completed the necessary procurement processes, technical studies/review and community engagement at Nelson Bay and Shoal Bay. Community engagement at Birubi Headland is planned. Infrastructure Plans are currently in draft form and will be presented for adoption early next financial year.

Williamstown management area

We continue to monitor the implementation of the Department of Defence PFAS contamination remediation program and liaise with relevant agencies, community groups and residents as appropriate. In June 2023, Council resolved to continue the rate reduction for properties in the Williamstown Management Area for the 2023 to 2024 financial year. A special subcategory of rates applies for residents in the primary zone, secondary zone and broader zone. Council continues to consider subcategorization through our normal process of setting the rates each year.



Williamstown Special Activation Precinct (SAP)

The Williamstown Special Activation Precinct (SAP) was declared by the NSW Government on 28 May 2020. Community consultation on the SAP has been ongoing since December 2020 with the initial SAP masterplan public exhibition process taking place in 2022.

The NSW Government re-exhibited a revised SAP masterplan from 25 January 2023 to 22 February 2023 following a review of detailed engineering investigations and updated economic analysis. This has resulted in a smaller proposed SAP development footprint.

The NSW Government announced a comprehensive and independent Strategic Infrastructure Review of the State's capital infrastructure program earlier in 2023, with each Special Activation Precinct being reviewed as part of this process.

Delivery program update

In this report, we use the icons below to indicate the status of our Operational Plan actions, which form part of the Delivery Program 2022-2026.



ON TRACK

Operational Plan Actions are on track to achieve the target



MONITOR

Operational Plan Actions are within 5% of the target



OFF TRACK

Operational Plan Actions are > 5% off the target





Our Community

An accessible and welcoming community respecting diversity, heritage and culture.

C1 Community wellbeing

Improved wellbeing for our diverse community supported by services and facilities

Community Development

Our community development program is driven by priorities within the Targeted Early Intervention program (funded by the Department of Communities and Justice) and our Youth Strategy. Community development covers activities from the Homelessness Stakeholder Advisory Group (established in early 2023) through to developing the Community Wellbeing Strategy (CWS). The Community Wellbeing Strategy and revised Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP, which will be attached to the CWS) were originally to be adopted by June 2023, however due to a number of resourcing constraints and digging deeper on community engagement the draft strategy will now be completed by the end of 2023. More detail is provided in the Key Priorities on page 13.

Volunteers

Our volunteers give their time and energy to make Port Stephens a better place. Without them, many of our services and programs couldn't exist. Over the period they've contributed to:

- keeping our parks, reserves and cemeteries pristine
- improving our natural bushland areas
- participating in our advisory councils and cultural committees
- running our community centres, halls, libraries and Visitor Information Centre.

As part of National Volunteer Week in May we said thank you to our volunteers for their invaluable work. We also drafted our Volunteer Policy during the period.



Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 4

C2 Recognised traditions and lifestyles

Our community supports the richness of its heritage and culture

Delivering Yabang Gumba-Gu

We are reviewing the Yabang Gumba-Gu roadmap, to check off what's been included and review the actions to be completed. Part of the roadmap will include the development of Aboriginal protocols. These protocols will guide Council in providing a consistent and respectful approach to a range of activities. The revised Yabang Gumba-Gu roadmap will be prepared for consultation with the Aboriginal Strategic Committee.

Discussing the Road to Tomorrow agreement is an important part of the Committee along with providing input into key projects, developing stakeholder relationships and important local issues.

NAIDOC week is the integral event on our calendar, with support and coordination provided in the lead up to celebrations in June & July. This year's NAIDOC week theme 'For our Elders' pays tribute to the knowledge and experience Indigenous Elders have, and how they harness this to help guide younger generations.

Community coming together

We continued to deliver a diverse cultural program to showcase creativity and diversity across Port Stephens. These programs are delivered either directly by us, by business or community organisations through our funding programs or through our advocacy for delivery by key partners.

Delivery of Our Incredible Place Strategy continues through the Community Event Development fund, Yacaaba art walk, Terrace reflections, Strategic Arts Committee and Australia Day events.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 4



Highlights

Community Wellbeing

- Coordinating Seniors Festival - event guide, free art classes & festival with cabaret performance.
- School holiday program - Snak n Rap across the LGA
- Re-launch of Council's Youth Instagram page.
- Coordinating Youth Week & Raymond Terrace Youth Engagement Program - 3 outdoor cinema events, 400+ people; collaborating with PCYC, Police, Wahroonga Aboriginal Corporation and Up & Up.
- Coordinating the Mayoral Scholarship Program - 22 scholarship recipients sharing \$40K from 16 local business groups.
- Coordinating Community Support Fund Round 2 - 11 applications received, 4 applications successful.

Childcare

- Family Day Care (FDC) & Raymond Terrace OOSH were externally assessed as "Meeting National Quality Standards".
- Hosting a Sustainability conference for 26 Educators.
- Mobile Preschool collaborating with Murrook Cultural Centre to implement an indigenous cultural experience program for children.
- Current enrolments in excess of expectations ensuring a financially successful 2023-2024.

Recreation facilities

- Managing and facilitating Community & Commercial contracts, leases and licences of Council's community land.

Port Stephens Heritage

- Heritage Advisory Group established.
- Support and advice to heritage interest groups for community grants program.
- Install wayfinding signage for heritage sites in King and William Streets Raymond Terrace.
- Revitalisation works including placemaking activation of the Marriage Trees site.

Yabang Gumba-Gu

- NAIDOC week preparations (in June) included the NAIDOC week opening and Fun Day, Flag raising, March down William Street and Community day at Riverside Park.
- Artwork by Renae Lamb installed in Raymond Terrace, telling stories in Worimi Gathang language.
- 5 projects endorsed from the Aboriginal Projects Fund valued at \$26K.

Libraries & community spaces

- Refurbishment of our 15 year old Mobile Library truck from a State Library of NSW grant - including Jordan Lucky artwork, new computers, lighting, joinery, carpet & furniture.
- Inaugural Library Literary Picnic - 3 day program featuring creative writing workshops & authors Janette Paul, Paula Morrow, Kaz Delaney & Todd Alexander.
- 'Grab and Go' collection launched.

Community Event Development Fund:

- 9 community events funded & supported: Tillifest 2022, Elders Olympics, Woodville Community Family Fun Night, Twilight Cinema, Whale Season Launch, Medowie Arts and Craft Show, Emergency Services Regatta, PS FM 40th Birthday Event, Human Whale Community Event.

Challenges

- Weather – unruly weather had an impact on our event program with events being postponed.
- Supply issues - including ongoing effects of COVID-19 have resulted in delays in the libraries receiving new collection items.

Our Community Snapshot

Community Wellbeing

- Family and Community Services schedule on-track
- Wellbeing Strategy and DIAP final engagement July 2023
- 12 youth actions ongoing

Childcare

positions filled:

- 53,645 in OOSH
- 3,174 FDC
- 1,022 Mobile Preschool
- 250 FDC compliance visits

Pools

- 127,282 aquatic centre visits

Beaches

- 768,973 beach visitations

Yabang Gumba-Gu

- Actions on track/progressing

Our Incredible Place Strategy

- Actions on track/progressing

Our Library Services

- Library user satisfaction score 94% (exceeding target)
- 153,051 items borrowed
- 12,053 enquiries
- 4,630 people attended 368 programs
- 924 new library members
- Stories in the Street volunteers read to 258 children
- 303 home deliveries



Mural at Stuart Park, Hinton

ROYAL SPOONBILLS

Our Place

A liveable and connected place supporting community wellbeing and local economic growth

P1 Strong economy, vibrant local businesses, active investment

Our community has an adaptable, sustainable and diverse economy

Supporting Sustainable business development

Following an extensive recruitment campaign, Destination Port Stephens announced a new CEO, Stephen Keogh.

We've started 'Meet & Greet' events across the LGA with Business Port Stephens which are attracting 100+ attendees and providing a useful platform for sharing information and creating connections.

Attracting and facilitating major events

Following a challenging few years, events are returning to Port Stephens. Sail Port Stephens was held in April and May and is now the second largest Sailing Regatta in Australia. This year's event was extended to accommodate the demand for berthing and accommodation. Over 1000 people participated in the event which injects more than \$1M into the Port Stephens economy.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 4



Karuah by Night

P2 Infrastructure and facilities

Our community's infrastructure and facilities are safe, convenient, reliable and environmentally sustainable

Managing, providing and maintaining Infrastructure

We secured more than \$4.3M in grant funding during the period for infrastructure and facilities, meaning that we have been able to deliver essential upgrades to the asset network. While some grant funding is coming to an end due to its association with a post-COVID infrastructure stimulus, we are finding new grants with similar infrastructure outcomes. This means that an expanded capital works program is likely to continue throughout the rest of the 2023 to 2024 financial year.

While weather conditions have been fairer over the period we've continued to make progress on the backlog of works associated with natural disasters/wet weather over the past 2 to 3 years. This additional workload together with redirection of staff to Grant related projects has particularly impacted our Infrastructure teams (Assets, Capital Works and Maintenance) and work programs - asset inspections programs and fixing of high priority defects (particularly roadside drainage) are slightly below the proposed targets, however defect works were managed in consideration of risk.

Whilst there were a number of challenges we were able to complete a significant amount of projects in the last six months - refer Highlights on page 27 for more.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 2



Monitor - 2



P3 Thriving and safe place to live

Our community supports a healthy, happy and safe place

Strategic Planning

We've continued to develop and refine Council's strategy framework and documentation. With an increasing need and focus on housing supply diversity and affordability our focus has begun to shift to delivering plans and strategies that will assist to achieve this.

Development Applications (DA)

We've had a notable reduction in DAs lodged in the period, however the cost of development has increased. This metric shows the smaller scale development is reducing akin to macro-economic conditions, however the major projects space remains active. This project trend has resulted in increased workloads for Council staff given the scale and complexity of major projects.

We've been part of numerous pre-lodgement, Regional Planning Panel and Urban Design Review Panel meetings for major developments in the LGA. There has also been an increase in State Significant Development referrals.

The National Construction Code underwent a complete re-structure, prompting changes to our templates, checklist and process – creating opportunities for review and process improvement initiatives.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 7



Economy & Business

- Collaborating with Department of Regional NSW.
- Developing collateral to promote key industry sectors.
- Raymond Terrace Business After Hours project.
- Hunter Hunter editorial promoting the Hinterland.
- Council's monthly business e-newsletter distributed to 825 subscribers.

Place Planning & Activation

- Karuah Place Plan - Highly Commended for 2023 Local Government Excellence Awards.
- Community Funding Program continued to be rolled out.
- Grant Funding awarded for 'Unsung Heroes' to host a series of placemaking & environmental events.
- It's On! Activations Program included Snak N Rap, Kidzones, Tastes like Summer, Seniors Week, Youth week, Locals Lounges, Local and Live, Whale season activations.

Infrastructure Planning and Renewal

- 22,000+ potholes fixed.
- 2022/23 Road Safety Projects completed.
- Progressing the Anna Bay & Tilligerry Creek Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan and Lower Hunter Floodplain Cumulative Development Impact Study and Plan.
- Approving subdivision certificates, creating more than 75 new lots.
- Completed capital works including:
 - Pavement rehabilitation - Ferodale Road; Ferodale Road Segment 100; Clarencetown Road (Mooghin Road to Dixon Street); Seaham Road & Hinton Road intersection; Clarencetown Road (Wattle Creek Bridge to Langlands Road); Kindlebark Drive; Tanilba Road Mallabula pavement reconstruction; Newline Road; and Medowie Road.
- Road Works - Swan Bay Road Segment 160 preliminary works; Gan Gan Road & Nelson Bay Road intersection upgrade.
- Traffic calming - Ferodale Road & Brocklesby Road; Adelaide Street; Government Road.
- Buildings - Salamander Transfer Station amenities; Mallabula soccer/athletics building; John Parade

building demolition.

- Drainage improvements - Seabreeze Estate.
- Sports fields and parks - Salamander Bay sports field upgrade; ANZAC Park facilities upgrade; Henderson Park irrigation upgrade.
- BBQ replacements - Conroy Park.
- Town centre improvements - Stage 1 William Street.
- Playgrounds - Lakeside Leisure Centre and shade sail.
- Other works - Soldiers Point Road retaining wall; Raymond Terrace basketball hoops; Fern Bay Community Centre Fire Indicator Panel Upgrade; and Raymond Terrace HPAA.

Strategic Planning & Development Assessments

- Finalising the Port Stephens Centres and Employment Land Study (LSPS action 1.2).
- Converting employment zones in Port Stephens consistent with the Department's statewide employment zone reforms.
- Integrating the Local Infrastructure Contributions Plan with Council's Assets and Capital Works areas of Council, streamlining infrastructure demand, funding and delivery.
- DA 100 day list at 38 in December has reduced to 33 in June 2023 (average processing time for the period 23 net median days).
- Implementing an initiative for reviewing lodgement of DAs to improve quality of information submitted to Council and reduce assessment timeframes.
- Number of complex/long-standing DAs determined or withdrawn at Council direction.
- Number of complex commercial construction certificates lodged with Council (as the Principal Certifier). These types of applications usually sit in the private market.
- 783 CCs approved (334 by Council) for 2022-2023.
- Increased number of Building Inspections – resulting from high DA and CC determinations from previous year.
- Growing Fire Safety Program & identifying a number of constant issues across the LGA.

Compliance, Ranger & Environment Services

- Completing campaigns for Restricted, Dangerous and Menacing Dogs; School Safety; Construction Site Compliance and Illegal Camping.
- Completing inspection programs for food, public

swimming pools, skin penetration & underground petroleum storage systems.

- Environmental Health team and Rangers managing a high level of customer requests.

Emergency Management

- Development of the Port Stephens Pre-Event Recovery Plan is nearing completion.
- All evacuation centres identified within the Port Stephens Emergency Management Plan have been reviewed and audited on behalf of the Local Emergency Management Committee.
- The scheduled maintenance of all Council managed Asset Protection Zones has been completed in accordance with the Lower Hunter Bushfire Risk Management Plan.

Challenges

- Attracting staff/workforce – has been a key issue for business across all sectors. Being able to secure housing within a reasonable distance of the workplace along with cost of living pressures has been a challenge.
- Supply chain and material cost issues – remains an issue for a number of key areas.
- Funding constraints – coupled with contractor availability has impacted projects. Construction cost increases since project scoping.
- Maintenance – backlogged due to previous weather and austerity measures.
- Weather – July 2022 natural disaster roll-on impact for drainage and flooding enquiries; certainty around grant funding opportunities have impacted the delivery of otherwise planned improvements Council had identified for communities that were impacted by flood events in 2022.
- Additional step in the planning proposal process - navigating with proponents and State agencies to ensure proposals reflect current guidelines and planning requirements.
- Local Infrastructure Contributions charges (LIC) - hit the NSW LIC rate cap of \$20,000 presenting challenges because it limits funding for various suitable projects.
- DPE mandate from 1 July that DA determinations be generated via the planning portal - significant investment of time, resourcing and likely delays in assessment during initial implementation.

Our Place Snapshot

Our Incredible Place Strategy

- On track
- Strong visitation during the School Holiday periods & summer

VIC

- Increased walk-ins following school holiday activities

Economic Development Strategy

- Actions on track

Place Plan delivery

- Progress page 14
- 42 It's On! activations

Asset condition inspections

- 83% complete (below 90% target)

Engineering, flooding & drainage

development referrals processed within agreed timeframes:

- All Flood Certificates
- 97% of flooding & drainage DA referrals
- 85% of development engineering DA referrals

Public Infrastructure Program

- On track

Maintenance defects

- High priority defects marginally below target

Community Financial Assistance

- \$67K of Mayoral & Ward Funds paid during the financial year

Development Services & Strategic Planning

- Planning proposals assessed within DPE timeframes
- Meeting DA determination target of 40 days
- 364 DA's approved at value of \$197M

Emergency Management

- Strategic objective actions on track

Our Environment

Port Stephens environment is clean, green, protected and enhanced

E1 Ecosystem function

Our community has healthy and dynamic environmental systems that support biodiversity and conservation

Environmental Strategies & Policies

We are continuing to develop and build on our strategic framework for environmental matters, with the focus over the last period including engagement on the Coastal Management program and adoption of a number of key environmental policies including the revised Tree Vandalism Policy, Environment Policy and Climate Change Policy. Refer Key Priorities 'Natural Environment' page 14 for more information on grants secured and environmental education undertaken.

We've finalised the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) Interim 2023 Action Plan with actions now underway.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 2

E2 Environmental sustainability

Our community uses resources sustainably, efficiently and equitably

Developing a Sustainability Strategy

We've refined our focus for developing a Sustainability Strategy by developing a Carbon Neutral Action Plan. Refer Key Priorities page 12 for more information. Whilst the date for adoption of the Action Plan by 30 June wasn't met, the Carbon Neutral 2025 project has accelerated over the period with engagement of a Sustainability Specialist to prepare the Action Plan and establishment of a PCG to guide the project. We've discovered a number of complexities along the way which we're taking the time to work through thoroughly.

Implementing the Waste Management Strategy

Refer to Key Priorities on page 16 for more information.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 1



Monitor - 1





E3 Environmental resilience

Our community is resilient to environmental risks, natural hazards and climate change

Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan

The majority of the actions within the Climate Change Adaption Action Plan are either underway or complete, with review of the plan underway. We've established key internal groups to progress climate change plans, strategies and actions within the organisation and also commenced a review of recommendations for alignment and integration with the preparation of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan and the broader discussion around sustainability.

Coastal Management Program update

Refer to Key Priorities on page 12 for more information. Stage 3 of the CMP communications and engagement Plan was finalised, which included:

- 4 community drop in sessions and 3 workshops - focusing on the hazard maps and potential management options.
- Developing an online mapping tool to capture community comments.
- 3 key internal workshops and one external stakeholder workshop.
- Presenting to the Worimi LALC and Worimi Conservation Lands Board.
- Developing the Coastal planning sub-committee.
- On-going Councillor engagement.



Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 2

Highlights

Environmental Policies, Strategies & Rehabilitation

- Adopting a number of policies – refer page 29.
- Commencing Stage 1 Biodiversity Offset Policy.
- 558 sites inspected for biosecurity compliance regarding priority weeds: 28 compliance and enforcement actions undertaken, 267 sites treated to control priority weeds.
- 295 ha across 57 sites of environmental significance was regenerated and restored. 1770 volunteer hours helped undertake this work; 2826 trees planted.
- 100 stakeholders received Invasive Species face to face engagement.
- Tree Permits: 82 received, 96 determined, 69 approved.
- Tree Notifications: 15 received, 11 determined, 44% approved.

Waste management

- Completing the rollout of approx. 32,000 Garden Organics (GO) bins.
- Waste app launched.
- 3,119 tonnes of kerbside recycling recycled.
- 1,275 mattresses, 731 tyres and 224 tonnes of steel diverted.
- Workshops held – ‘Rethinking your wardrobe’.
- Investigating Resource Recovery - Timber, Poly Styrene and reuse of sweeping materials.

Our Environment Snapshot

Environmental strategies and frameworks

- In progress

Sustainability Strategy

- Carbon Neutral Action Plan focus

Coastal Management Program

- Refer page 12

Climate Change Adaption Action Plan

- Actions & review underway

Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031

- On track
- *21% waste diverted from landfill for 2022-2023

*Whilst below the annual target of 40%, this will improve with the GO bin implementation

Our Council

Port Stephens Council leads, manages and delivers valued community services in a responsible way

L1 Governance

Our Council's leadership is based on trust and value of Respect, Integrity, Teamwork, Excellence and Safety (RITES)

Advocacy Priorities & Newcastle Airport

Following the Strategic Workshop with Councillors in late 2022, we developed the [2023 Community Advocacy priorities](#) document (refer page 9) to target key issues for the NSW Government election. This advocacy document facilitated a number of meetings with candidates, existing members, Ministers and Shadow Ministers leading up to the election in March 2023. As a result a number of significant commitments relating to local road funding was made by the incoming Labor government which we're currently following up with local members and relevant ministers.

The Mayor and GM sit on majority independent skills based boards to direct and govern the operations of the Newcastle Airport, in addition to attending bi-monthly meetings.

The NAPL Board has approved a terminal expansion program to undertake significant upgrades of the terminal and other infrastructure including international route expansion along with the current upgrades to the runway. Initial development applications for commercial buildings in the Astra Aerolab have been submitted and are under assessment.

Workforce, Corporate Systems, Governance & Integrated Planning

Our Human Resources, ICT, Finance, Business Improvement, Governance and other back of house teams are the key enablers to assist our organisation deliver our services to the community in the best possible way. During the past six months a number of key initiatives and programs have been delivered to ensure that we have:

- appropriate workforce planning (recruited, retained, developed and engaged).
- sufficient Council financial resources to allow staff to deliver their key priorities (refer Key Priorities page 14 for more information).
- technology that is fit for purpose, and managed in response to ongoing cyber security risks.
- provision of digital services such as e-planning, e-invoicing, online services.
- appropriate governance and risk management checks and balances.
- a service review program to regularly and systematically ensure we are providing efficient and effective services the best possible way.
- annual review, reporting and adoption of our core [IP&R documents](#).

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 12



L2 Financial Management

Our Council is financially sustainable to meet community needs

Managing our financial resources

Refer Key Priorities on page 14 for more information.

While the approved SRV will provide support in maintaining services and improving community infrastructure, it is essential that financial sustainability practices and measures continue to be a focus in our decision making.

Beachside Holiday Parks (HP) & Koala Sanctuary (Sanctuary)

We've completed many projects at the HP and Sanctuary including: the new Murals at Thou Walla Sunset Retreat painted by local indigenous artist Jason Russell, painting and installation of the bulk refillable Biology amenities across the Sanctuary accommodation replacing the single-use miniature hotel toiletries, in an effort to move towards a more environmentally responsible and sustainable product.

We've also hosted many 'Famils' to show case our product to decision makers and influencers from India, Hong Kong, UK and China - impressed with what the Sanctuary has to offer, including a traditional Aussie BBQ dinner during the stay.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 3

L3 Communication and engagement

Our Council is committed to enabling an engaged and informed community

Customer Experience

We recently integrated our online Contact Us form with customer request forms, meaning the process is now more streamlined and efficient for internal and external customers. A number of other online forms have been created following reviews which has led to an improved customer experience.

Communication and Community Engagement

Our Communication and Engagement Strategy actions continue to be implemented with some significant campaigns already completed under this framework. Our Communications and Engagement Advisory Group establishment is underway which will further enhance and strengthen the framework.

Operational
Plan Actions



On track - 2

Highlights

Newcastle Airport, Hunter Councils

- Reaching significant milestones for extension of the airport terminal & domestic and international flights.
- Work began on the runway from the \$121M secured in the previous period.

Citizenship & Workforce

- 150 citizens conferred across 56 countries.
- 3 wins for PSCare across 3 different awards.
- Finalising our Workforce Planning.
- Further exploration of our employee engagement by mapping our employee experiences.
- Revamping our employer value proposition.

Corporate Systems

Improvement initiatives on track including:

- Cyber Security.
- GIS – alignment to state cadastre and a digital LEP.
- Information Management.
- e-Planning.
- Asset Management.
- Online Services.

Governance, Legal, Internal Audit & Risk, Finance

- Completing our Governance Health check.
- Evolving and continuing to strengthen Council's risk management program.
- 200 legal advices and other matters.
- 27 formal, 795 informal (information requests) & 700 property enquiries.
- Completing & reporting the 2022-2023 Internal Audit Plan to the Audit Committee.
- Commencing implementation of the Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee (ARIC).
- Monthly updates with Council on financial performance
- Implementation of expanded rates hardship program.



Managing Property & Holiday Parks (HP)

- 28 native title referrals.
- 18 new leases and licences.
- Near 0% Property vacancy rate (for 2022-2023).
- Adopting our first Crown Land Plan of Management for one HP.
- World class Thou Walla Sunset Retreat – 100%
*Net Promoter Score for June 2023.
- Net Promoter Score for HPs 73% & Sanctuary 94% for the period.
- 20,129 calls answered at the HP, with 9,314 bookings placed.
*A Net Promoter Score of 70% is 'world class'.

Challenges

- Cyber Security – continues to be an issue.
- Crown Lands - work on the remaining outstanding Plans of Management.
- Converting the Koala Sanctuary to a land manager arrangement in lieu of lease.
- Staff resourcing – increased demand and competition for top talent in the labour market.

Our Council Snapshot

Workforce Management Strategy (WMS)

- delivering on 4 strategic objectives

Corporate Systems and Data Management Strategy

- delivering on 5 strategic objectives
- maintaining system uptime 100%

Governance & Internal Audit program

- on track

IP&R and Service Review program

- on track
- gold award for the 2021-2022 Annual Report

Financial Planning

- implementation ongoing

Property Portfolio

- in accordance with Property Investment Strategy

Holiday Parks & Koala Sanctuary

- Delivery Plans on track



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL