

Shoalhaven Heads Our future A Strategy



Revision C

Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum

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| Revision | Changes / Purpose | Date of Issue |
|----------|---|---------------|
| 0 | Draft for Council village visit | 29.01.13 |
| 1 | Update 'vision and strategic direction' | 27.02.13 |
| 2 | Final Draft for Community Review | 03.04.13 |
| 3 | Update Priority Projects following public meeting | 15.04.13 |

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The “Shoalhaven Heads - Our Future” Strategy document (**the Strategy**) has been prepared by the Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum based on our experiences, our discussions at recent meetings and events, and the community’s responses to our village-wide survey.

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide further and ongoing engagement with the community, Shoalhaven City Council (**Council**) and others as required on our priorities for the future.

Our village

Our village has a long history, originating in 1830 when the area was known as Jerry Bailey before being changed to Shoalhaven Heads in 1955. There was little development in the early years of the area, with the exception of fishing shacks built by people from the Berry area, and it was not until the depression years that people came to live permanently in the village.

During the 1920s, various illegal buildings were constructed on the flats now occupied by the Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Park, with the first Post Office opening in May 1937, community centre in 1955 (now home of the local pre-school), Primary School in 1959 and the St Peter’s Church of England in 1961. The current community centre was opened in 1985.

In the current day, the village consists of more than 3,000 people with a relatively aged population that has a median age of 53 years, compared to the Shoalhaven area at 46, and NSW at 38. The area is of a relatively flat topography with the southern and eastern edges bound by the Shoalhaven River and Seven Mile Beach respectively.

VISION AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

A vision for the future

The following vision provides a succinct description for the future of Shoalhaven Heads:

Our village will build upon the great selection of basic shopping and commercial needs through the creation of a vibrant town centre where people can not only get their basic needs, but want to stay to meet, talk and socialise with our fellow residents and visitors.

We'll better connect with our beach, river and bush, making them part of our everyday lives and an asset that people come to experience and stay for. We'll also build on our recreational, social and community assets, appreciating what we have and making sure it's sustainable, efficient and effective for the future needs for our current and future generations.

Capitalising on our amazing natural assets including the Shoalhaven River, Seven Mile Beach and the National Park, Shoalhaven Heads will continue to grow to create a sustainable and vibrant economy that fosters local trades, services and employment to the benefit of our local area. Tourists will be attracted to the village because of our unique village atmosphere and share our amenities and enjoy our natural environment.

Strategy action plans

To articulate our direction in the key areas that were identified through the village-wide survey process undertaken during the end of 2012 and start of 2013, a series of strategy action plans have been developed. Each strategy action plan explores the range of issues that have been identified, along with proposed directions and priorities for implementation in the short, medium and long term. The identified strategies and the overall objective for each is provided below, with more detailed descriptions in the following pages.

Town Centre Strategy

to activate our town centre through better connection and care for existing assets, and to complement them through new development, better planning and creation of a place that you want to visit, not just because you need to

Tourism Strategy

to use our natural assets, and other attractions, to entice tourists to the area, who then stay and return because of the experience of the village lifestyle including its people and its places

Infrastructure Strategy

to establish a clear and transparent process for Council and the community to understand what standard of infrastructure is possible, and when and where it would be implemented

Open Space and Recreation Strategy

to highlight the potential for high quality open space and recreation opportunities through co-ordinated planning, lasting improvements and meeting appropriate levels of service

River Strategy

to create a focus on a sustainable interaction between the community and the river, which celebrates its role in our community, revitalises its health and brings the recreational and economic potential associated with its use in a positive manner

Environmental Strategy

to engage proactively and respect our environment, the impacts that we have on it and the impacts that it may in-turn have on our community

Community Strategy

to build on the existing caring and creative community through stronger relationships, improvement and maintenance of existing community infrastructure, better interaction between old and young, and through mutual respect for one another



Town Centre Strategy

The town centre area comprises of community, private and Crown (State Government) land. It contains three retail shopping areas that are inconsistent and separated from each other. Whilst containing many well utilised and valued shops, the town centre faces potential stagnation and has been criticised for its poor connectivity, visual appearance and lack of quality public spaces.

SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- Undertake masterplanning/design process for town centre area leading to the updating the Shoalhaven Heads Town Centre DCP.
- PP** ○ Improve (and where necessary create new or rationalise) existing town centre, pool and community centre landscaping/gardens with a consistent planting palette of native ground covers, shrubs and trees - Council to advise on a preferred palette and provide plants for community to implement
- Undertake improvements/works on vegetated land in town centre to improve visual amenity, remove weeds and reduce vermin/pests

PP = Immediate Priority Project for the community forum

PP = Longer-term Priority Project for the community forum

MEDIUM TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 2** ○ Upgrade existing shops with consistent colours, signage and other visual improvements. Incentive options to be considered with Council
- Reduce private signage clutter with simplified and equitable signage - review of existing signage and remove redundant or ineffective signage
- Create a single centrally located and up-to-date noticeboard - potentially to be integrated with tourism information
- 3** ○ Provide improved connectivity between shops through improved footpath connections, with potential for more informal pathways through vacant land to more directly connect retail buildings/shops
- Investigate the potential for street banners/entry banners for events
- As part of any substantial street upgrade, consider the undergrounding of power lines to enable more substantial street trees and reduce visual impact
- Establish and provide consistent street furniture (bins, seating, tables) to be based on approved Council palette.

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 4** ○ Establish a new "Village Common" on vacant land near Post Office to become a well-designed and integrated area with potential to incorporate new facilities including town centre toilets, a new community centre, formalised meeting space and potentially some form of tourist attraction - this becomes the location where people stop and get out of their cars to investigate
- PP**
- 5a** ○ Investigate town centre development opportunities through public-private partnerships to include for example aged care, mixed use and tourist accommodation uses
- 5b** ○ Investigate private town centre development / redevelopment opportunities through development incentives
- 6** ○ Consider options for activation and uses on the southern side of Shoalhaven Heads Road to further activate the town centre area

Tourism Strategy

In a region with high levels of tourism and containing a number of tourist accommodation opportunities, Shoalhaven Heads is well positioned to capitalise on its natural assets and convenient location to increase tourism potential through better attractions and infrastructure investment.

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SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

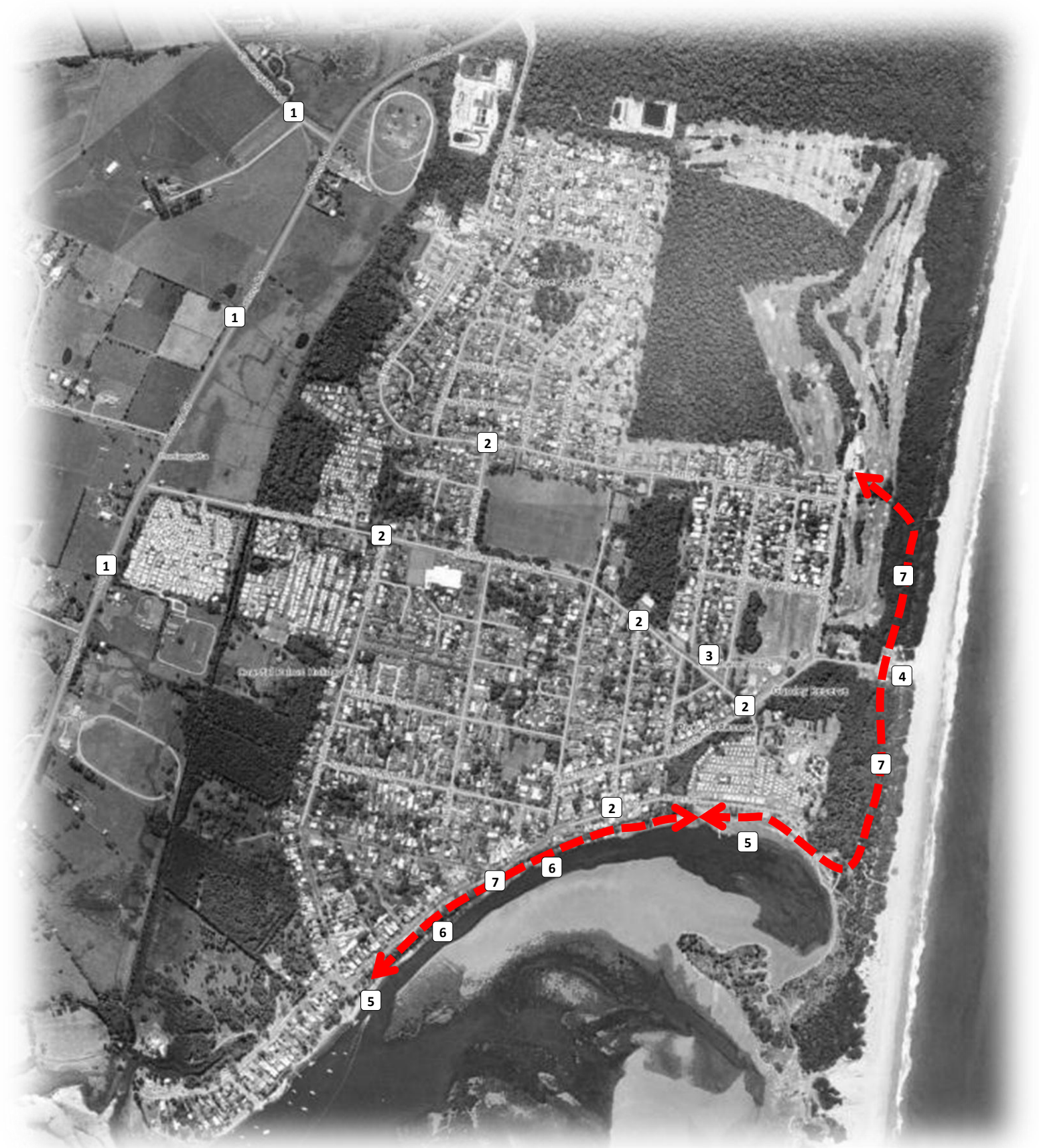
- 1** Establish better and more consistent external signage describing what is available and how to access the village. Locations to include on the northern and southern approaches along Bolong Road and from Berry
- PP 2** Establish improved and consistent internal way-finding signage to key areas (beach, river, town centre) to improve legibility of the town and accessibility of various attributes which are key attractions to tourists
- o Develop a "Shoalhaven Heads" Facebook page to advertise events and attractions to be established and moderated by the Community Forum, Chamber of Commerce or other community representative
- PP 3** Develop an Internet based town map with all business listings and information for residents and tourists

MEDIUM TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 3a** Provide better tourism information within the village, including a high quality information board arrangements (and where necessary rationalise existing signs), potentially to be located within a new "Village Common" area
- 4** Develop or establish a kiosk or café at the beach during summer - to include appropriate seating areas and of a scale and quality to attract people to the area
- 5** Undertake regular grooming of riverbank, such as removal of weed build-up, particularly around peak holiday visitation to improve attractiveness of the river for swimming and other water based activities
- PP 6** Develop viewing platforms along River Road to "pierce through" the foreshore vegetation and better connect the river to the foreshore road

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 7** Establish, and market, walks of district/regional note - such as a boardwalk/walkway along beach/foreshore/River Road to connect jetty to the golf club - potential for viewing platforms and other attractions that can be used as key images in promotion of the area
- 3b** Investigate a museum or other tourist attraction in the town centre (Village Common) - potential to "get people out of their cars" and to experience the area



Infrastructure Strategy

Key basic infrastructure, as well as longer-term community building infrastructure, is desired throughout much of the community. Confusion and conflicting advice from Council creates uncertainty within the community with clear and consistent advice and directions being required.

SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- In co-ordination with Council, create a "Road Hierarchy Plan" to prioritise primary, secondary and local roads - including identification of safety hot-spots and other potential road improvements

PP In co-ordination with Council prepare a clear and concise "Kerb and Gutter Programme" to identify a hierarchy and standard of service for each type of road

PP In co-ordination with Council prepare a "Footpath and Cycleway Strategy" to create effective links to key destinations and determine clear and concise implementation priorities

MEDIUM TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 1 Implement a "safer route to school" from key directions including crossings and pathways to link residential areas to the Primary School

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- Develop a cycleway to Berry, Coolangatta, Berry's Bay and Nowra utilising both on and off-road pathways
- 2 Increase level of parking at surf club, with potential for extension of the unsealed parking spaces along the access road from the playground area through to McIntosh Street
 - 3 Establish long-term parking for school site in lieu of parking within the hotel car park
 - 4 Establish long-term parking for golf course to reduce street parking at access to beach

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Open Space and Recreation Strategy

Shoalhaven Heads is well endowed with public parks, sportsgrounds and other recreational spaces. However in maintaining and servicing all of these areas, the quality of infrastructure and investment in key areas can be compromised.

SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 1a Connect existing basic recreational trails (beachfront, National Park, golf course, river) and create a map/brochure to promote the unique asset
- 2 Upgrade play equipment in Pepper Park Reserve
- 3 Undertake repairs to tennis courts
- 4 With potential for recoupment through hire (eg. swim school), improve existing facilities at the village pool such as seating, tables, shelters, play equipment and BBQs, whilst increasing pool operational hours

MEDIUM TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 5 Continue upgrade of waterside reserve within a broader masterplanning approach potentially incorporating a fitness trail/track past outdoor gym and as part of the broader recreational trail network
- 6 Prepare a master plan to integrate the sporting and community facilities including the existing community centre, RFS building, tennis courts, sports club buildings and sporting fields

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- 1b Building on the more basic trails network (being a short-term opportunity) create a more attractive trails network including boardwalks, viewing platforms and fully accessible sections to act as an attraction for tourism as well as being an everyday recreational facility
- 7 Plan and implement a new Village Common within the town centre to become the key informal public meeting place and to create a linkage between shopping and community facilities
- 8 Upgrade the existing Memorial Park to make more attractive throughout the year and to assist the community to appreciate the history and heritage of the facility - potential to integrate to the Village Common if opportunity arises



River Strategy

Shoalhaven Heads was established around the head of the Shoalhaven River, with the river being a major asset and physical association with much of the community. Issues exist with water quality, sedimentation and a lack of river “flushing”, and the resulting presentation and health of the river continue to be major concerns.

SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- PP** Undertake regular cleaning of the river head, particularly around peak holiday visitation
- Develop a “Riverside Festival” around Australia Day or alternate non-peak time, or other unique annual event

MEDIUM TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- Upgrade and make safe the existing boat launching facilities in Hay Avenue and River Road
- Construct viewing platforms along River Road

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- Establish a long-term river plan covering a range of issues including the opening of the river/connection of the estuary including new moorings/wharf at existing river head

Environmental Strategy

The Shoalhaven Heads community seeks to embrace practical environmental improvements that can have safety, tourism and other benefits. Given our natural surrounding assets, the community has an inherent link to the natural environment which is enjoyed by many on a daily basis.

SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- PP** Undertake annual control burns between Gerroa and Shoalhaven Heads to reduce fuel loads and potential for severe bushfire events

- PP** Introduce green waste bins for residents as part of weekly or fortnightly services

- Encourage appropriate plant species for the area - a preferred “Shoalhaven Heads” plant list - also to be used in town centre landscape improvements

MEDIUM TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- Develop a heritage strategy to highlight and co-ordinate the “telling” of history to residents and visitors

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- PP** Establish a community garden with produce sold at local stores, potentially located in the village centre and occupying vacant land until future development proceeds

Community Strategy

Whilst there are outlets for the Shoalhaven Heads community to express their views and ideas, there is a feeling that our efforts are not fully recognised and that there are positive attributes in the village and its residents that have yet to be fully appreciated by Council. A stronger and connected community that have a sense of pride in their village is desired.

SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- PP** Develop a “Riverside Festival” around Australia Day or alternate non-peak time, or other unique annual event

- Establish more community events such as a bi-annual “car boot” sale
- Undertake an annual meeting of all community groups to discuss and focus the community efforts, including on fundraising and events, to be co-ordinated by the Community Forum
- Encourage a good cross-section of the community on all community groups
- Develop an Internet based town map with all business listings and information for residents and tourists
- Provide for greater controls over dog off-leash and ownership requirements, including the availability of information on dog off-leash walks and areas

MEDIUM TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- Improve the community centre with assistance from the community and Council for maintenance and improvements - eg. a “community centre working bee”
- Activate the community centre with a commercial use, eg. coffee shop to gain income, be better utilised and attract new faces
- Undertake a formal quarterly “Youth Community Forum” to gain a better understanding of the challenges and needs of our youth
- Formalise, encourage and undertake youth events, for example around the skate park
- Provide after school care services

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES:

- PP** Improve public transport, better connecting the community to the Nowra-Bomaderry area, as well as to rail connections to Kiama, Wollongong and Sydney

- PP** Develop an aged care facility, potentially around or incorporating the sports/bowls club, town centre or adjoining the golf club
- PP** Undertake long-term planning for the location of the pre-school, meals on wheels and men’s shed, with potential to combine education facilities at the school and community facilities within the community centre area

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