



Shoalhaven Heads

Strategic Plan 2018

Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum

Contents

Introduction	1
Purpose	1
Our village.....	1
Vision and Strategic Direction	2
A vision for the future	2
Evolution of our Plan.....	3
Context	3
Maintaining our Core Strategies.....	4
Signature Projects.....	6
Establishing an attractive and cohesive town centre	6
Creating a youth & community hub.....	6
Permanently opening the river	6
Linking our town to its surrounds	6
Maintaining and Enhancing the Quality of our Village.....	7
Establishing an attractive and cohesive town centre	8
Create a youth & community hub	9
Ocean and river waterways.....	10
Linking our town to its surrounds	12

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Introduction

Purpose

This Shoalhaven Heads Strategic Plan 2018 (the Strategic Plan) is an update of a community led initiative for the Shoalhaven Heads community to articulate their desires for our village now and in the future. The document has been prepared by the Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum from our experiences, our discussions with stakeholders, and the vital input from the community to our village-wide survey.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to provide an understanding for future engagement with the community, Shoalhaven City Council (Council) and others on the priorities for the village.

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.

According to the last census in 2016, the village consists of more than 3,102 people with a population that has a median age of 53 years, compared to the Shoalhaven area at 46, and NSW at 38. Council predicts a future growth rate of 3.45% over the next 20 years. 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 essential shopping and commercial needs through the creation of a vibrant village 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 - through a new village centre park among other improvements.

We'll continue to 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.

Evolution of our Plan

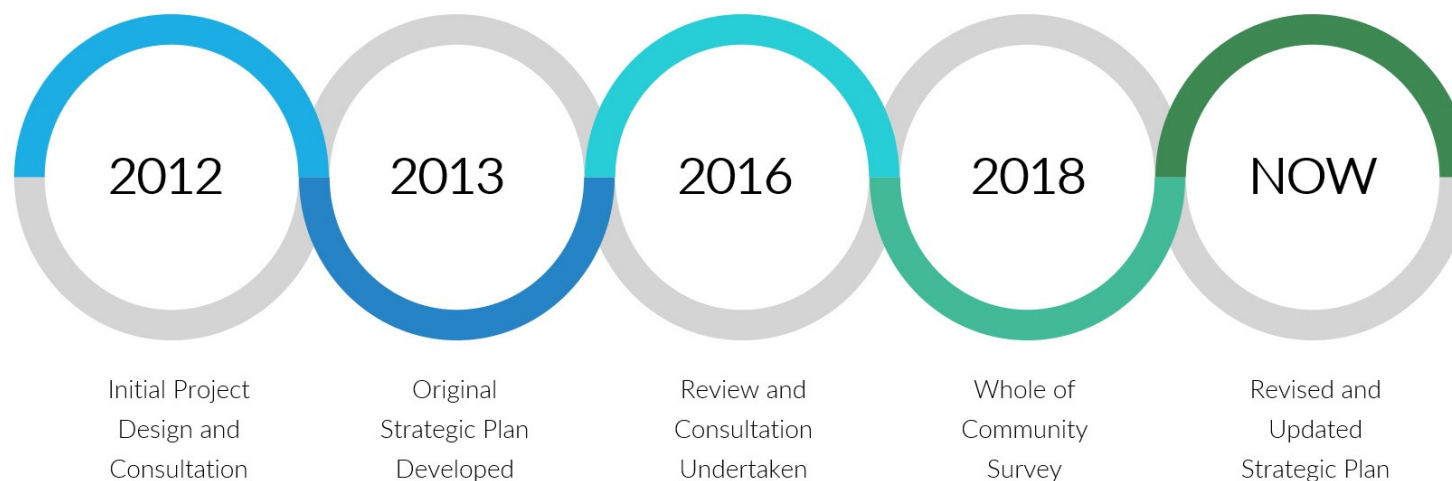
Context

This 2018 version of the Shoalhaven Heads Strategic Plan takes a step forward from the previous 2013, and draft 2016 versions. It aims to consolidate many of the accomplishments of the past years and acknowledges that many of these are ongoing or need to be revisited.

Thus, the *Maintaining our Core Strategies* section has been updated where needed and merged within the four *Signature Projects* identified in the 2016 community consultation.

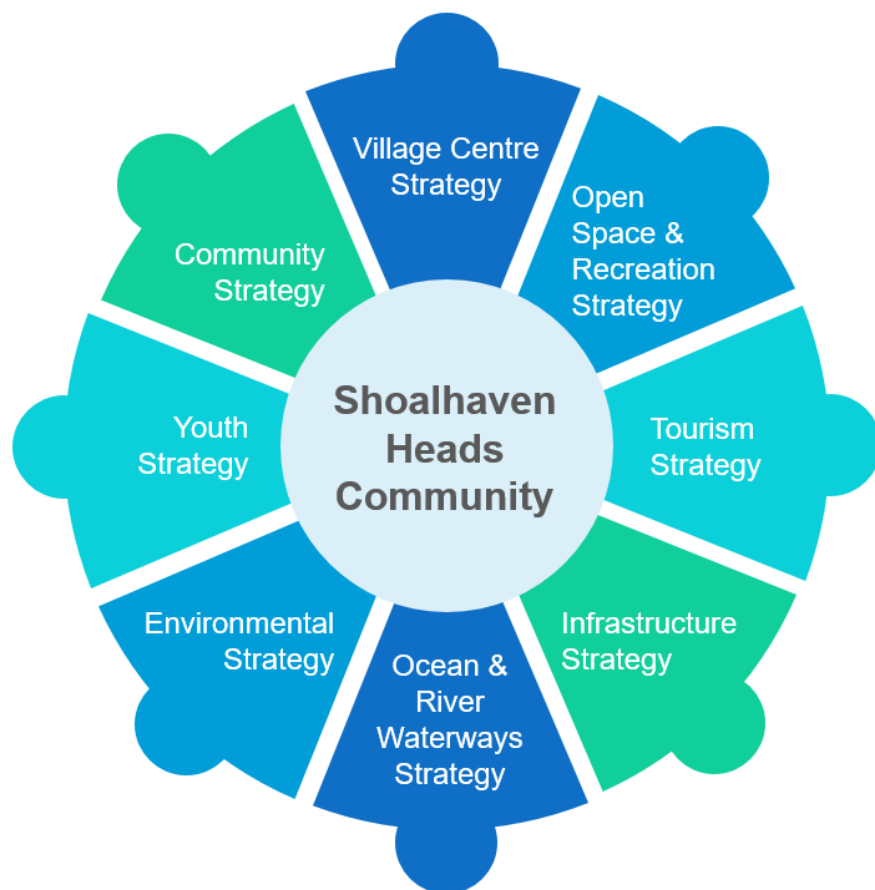
The *Signature Projects* are critical touchpoints as they become the overall framework and include data gathered from the community consultation of 2018.

This version of the Strategic Plan therefore identifies the ongoing actions required to not only maintain core strategies but also highlights and prioritises these in order to enhance and grow the standard of our village.



Maintaining our Core Strategies

The core strategies in the initial Shoalhaven Heads Strategic Plan in 2013 and 2016 remain relevant, ongoing or yet to begin. These Strategies have been rationalised and updated given the introduction



of the *Signature Projects*, the numerous achievements to date, as well as the most recent community consultations. The Core Strategies are summarised below:

- **Village Centre Strategy** - to activate our village centre through better connection and care for existing assets, and to complement them through new development, better planning and creation of a place that people want to utilise whether residents or visitors
- **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 (*this Strategy is the responsibility of Council – the Community Forum will work with Council to have the process communicated to the community*)
- **Tourism Strategy** - to use our natural assets and other attractions to entice tourists to the area, who not only visit but return because of their positive 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 the standard of infrastructure as well as the on-going maintenance required now, and in the future, in order to accommodate the diverse needs of the community (*this Strategy is the responsibility of Council – the Community Forum will work with Council to have the process communicated to the community*)

Maintaining our Core Strategies

- **Ocean and River Waterways Strategy** - to create greater potential for our ocean and riverside community and reduce erosion and flooding potential, with a specific focus on a sustainable interaction between the community and our river and waterways in order to celebrate their role in our community and bring positive recreational and economic potential to the life of the village
- **Environmental Strategy** - to engage proactively and respectfully with our environment, recognising the impact that we have on it while also appreciating the impact that it has on our community
- **Youth Strategy** - to recognise the needs of the area's youth, by encouraging their participation in the community and its events, and to assist them to help themselves through connecting to service providers and community leaders
- **Community Strategy** - to build on the existing caring and creative community through stronger relationships, improvement and maintenance of existing community infrastructure and developing greater interaction between young and older community members through fostering mutual respect for one another



Signature Projects

In 2016, the community survey highlighted a desire to move to more substantive community projects - projects that make a real difference, bring us together, and provide a standard and quality that make our village a better place to live. Four key projects were identified:

Establishing an attractive and cohesive town centre

Making the village centre more attractive and cohesive. This project requires land owner interest, community interest, Council interest, and funding grants.

Creating a youth & community hub

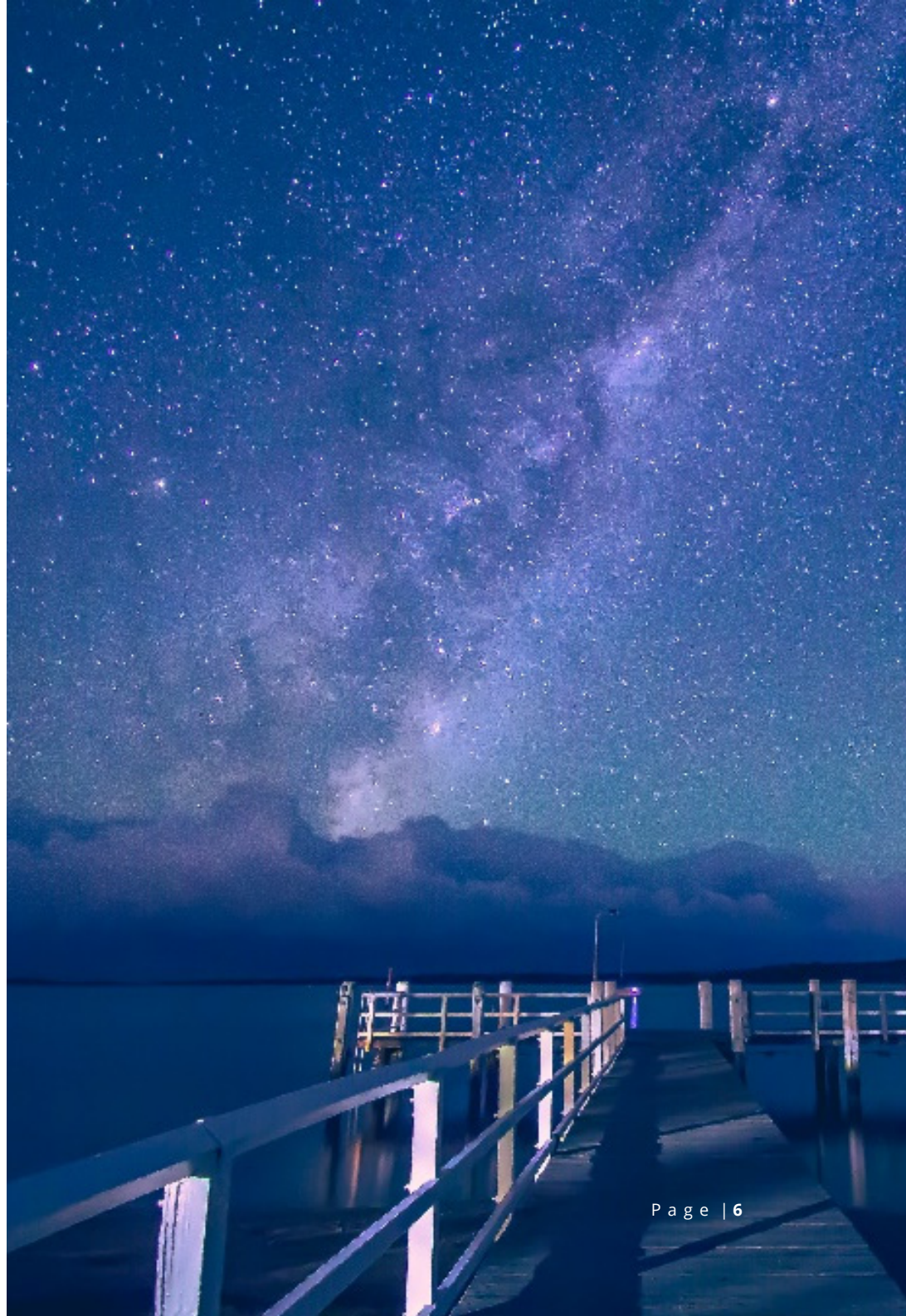
Further providing new activities, events and spaces for all members of our community, young and old, so the village continues to grow and become a significant community asset for all ages.

Permanently opening the river

Creating a whole new series of potential opportunities for our river and waterways, in particular tourism, whilst reducing flood probability and creating a greater potential for our riverside community.

Linking our town to its surrounds

With upgrades to the Princes Highway, capitalising on opportunities to make existing connections to Berry, Coolangatta and Gerroa much more accessible by improving public transport and developing walk and cycle friendly pathways.



Maintaining and Enhancing the Quality of our Village

This section of the Plan acknowledges the achievements since 2013, identifies areas of ongoing maintenance and records new aspirations of the community that emerged from consultations carried out in 2018.

These are organised within the framework of the four Signature Projects identified on the previous page. Strategies and goals are tagged so the community's needs and aspirations are acknowledged and actioned, and the quality of our village enhanced.



Establishing an attractive and cohesive town centre

Many of the Core Strategies highlighted in earlier iterations of the Strategic Plan fall within this Signature Project. They include the Village Centre Strategy, the Infrastructure Strategy, Open Space and Recreation Strategy and Tourism Strategy.

Achievements by the community

Since 2013 Strategic Plan there have been some notable achievements emanating from the Core Strategies. These include:

- footpaths linking the school to the swimming pool, and the Vic Zealand Oval
- the Bush Care group keeps the vegetated land clear of weeds, overgrowth and plants trees where needed
- art work around the village, including the swimming pool area and colourful seats along the river front has improved the visual appearance of the village
- the development of the Lions Park with picnic tables and trees
- street library (Tardis) situated in the Community Centre
- Social Hub each Monday hosted by Lions Club in the Community Centre
- signage to the Shoalhaven Heads Botanical Gardens on all main roads leading to the village
- a Shoalhaven Heads Facebook Page
- a website that provides useful information for tourism
- a café operating at the Surf Club
- a new quality restaurant, Bangalay, opened
- new serviced luxury villas for tourist.

Ongoing and future priorities

Growth for the village – continue to be aware of Shoalhaven City Council Growth Strategies and bring updates to the attention of residents so they may comment.

The Community provided suggestions that include:

- consolidations of the shops, including a need for a reasonable supermarket
- more kerb and guttering
- more footpaths, particularly on busy roads
- landscaping, particularly along main street, around shops and river areas. This work needs to be carried out with reference to the Shoalhaven Heads Landscape Master Plan.
- improve parking at Vic Zealand Oval by creating parking spaces along Shoalhaven Heads Road and Explorer Boulevard; increase parking spaces at Golf Club and Surf Club
- better signage within the village
- a large community notice board within the village to provide general information and for advertising coming events
- cleaning up signage at entrance of village. Presently entrance looks messy and untidy with signs and banners placed on fencing
- general 'tidying up' of shop fronts: facades repainted, art work, wider frontage for seating
- consider potential opportunities for growth within the village. This may require considering medium density two-storey housing, rezoning crown land, and other available options in line with the Shoalhaven City Council Growth Strategy.

Create a youth & community hub

The Core Strategies highlighted in earlier iterations of the Strategic Plan that fall within this Signature Project are Open Space and Recreation Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Youth Strategy and Community Strategy.

In the 2018 survey the questions focussed in particular on Jerry Bailey Oval and surrounds where there is already a skate park, the pool, learn to ride track and the Lions Park. A BMX Pump Track has been approved, has funding and will soon be ready for use.

Achievements by the community

These include:

- Lions Park with shaded picnic tables
- plans approved for BMX Pump Track
- outdoor gym on riverfront.

Ongoing and future priorities

The community provided suggestions that focused beyond Jerry Bailey Oval, including the Surf Club and Community Centre. These include:

- more seating and shade facilities within Jerry Bailey Oval
- BBQs set up in the Lions Park

- landscaping across the Oval to provide shading, and for general appearances
- access to pool toilets from Jerry Bailey Oval
- build a state-of-the-art playground to suit a range of ages: from toddlers to youth
- improve facilities and events at Surf Club for youth so it becomes a safe meeting place, including having music, bands and other night get-togethers in an alcohol-free zone
- create organised events for youth such as BMX competitions, skate board exhibitions and events
- maintain tennis courts so we have quality courts for social and competition
- consider creating a fenced dog park in Jerry Bailey or Pepper Reserve
- 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
- support development of an aged care facility within village centre.



Ocean and river waterways

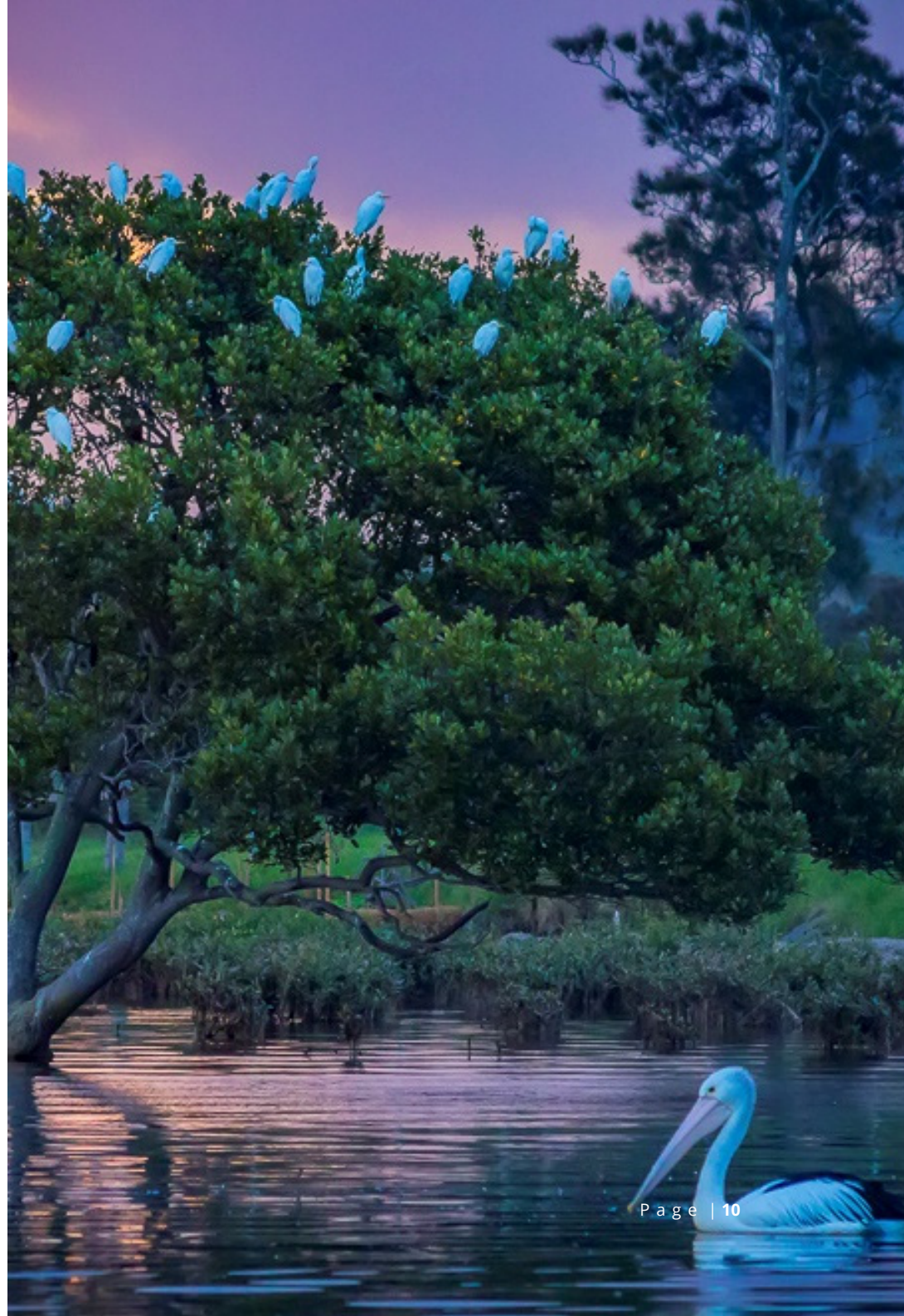
The Core Strategies highlighted in earlier iterations of the Strategic Plan that fall within this Signature Project are *River Strategy*, *Environmental Strategy*, *Open Space and Recreation Strategy* and, *Tourism Strategy*.

In the 2013 Strategic Plan, it stated, *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.* With respect to issues with the river, sadly nothing has changed. Indeed, there is real concern that these issues have deteriorated.

Achievements by the community

There have been some achievements. These include:

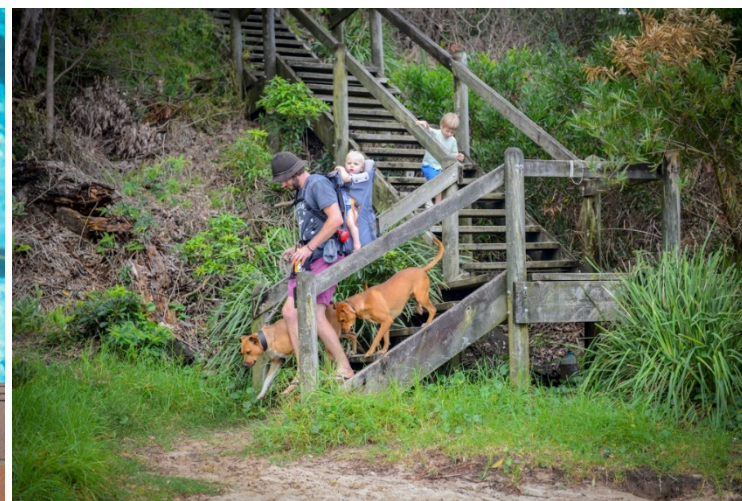
- fireworks on New Year’s Eve
- boat launching in River Rd and Hay Ave have been improved (although more needs to be done)
- pontoon at River Rd
- several studies have been carried out about what is best for the river’s health and for the community. These have been used to inform future work on the river
- plans and funding have been approved to rebuild the storm water outlets and the river bank particularly along the area adjacent to the hotel so as the bank is strengthened, and erosion is reduced in future floods.



Ongoing and future priorities

People had strong views about the beach, the river and pool. These include:

- dredge the river to widen the channel and increase the sand bank for recreation purposes
- managing the river entrance
- dredge all navigation channels to make it safer for boating
- plant more trees and shrubs in the surf beach park to provide more shade
- improve boating facilities and parking in Hay Ave and River Rd
- build higher viewing platforms at the surf club
- build viewing platforms along grassy verge above river for people to view river without having to go down to river bank. This would be useful for elderly and disabled people.
- increase pool hours, particularly in hotter months
- consider solar power to heat pool.



Linking our town to its surrounds

The Core Strategies highlighted in earlier iterations of the Strategic Plan that fall within this Signature Project are *Tourism Strategy, Youth Strategy and Community Strategy and Infrastructure Strategy*. Many recommendations are repeated with these core strategies.

Achievements by the community

When reviewing the 2013 Strategic Plan there seems to be few achievements with this Signature Project. The few that can be identified include:

- identification and minor maintenance of a walking and cycling track through the national park to Gerroa
- an upgraded walkway that connects the Shoalhaven Heads Surf Club to the Caravan Park
- footpaths to the Shoalhaven Heads Primary School



Ongoing and future priorities

In the 2018 community consultation respondents were asked to comment more directly on links to Berry, Gerroa and Coolangatta. Responses reflected many of those identified in the 2013 Strategic Plan. These now include:

- develop a cycle way to Berry's Bay, Coolangatta and Nowra utilising both on and off road pathways
- 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
- establish and market walks of the district such as a boardwalk and 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
- connect existing basic recreational trails (beachfront, National Park, golf course, river) and create a map and brochure to promote the unique asset
- 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
- safer pedestrian and cart paths throughout the village
- dedicated maintained cycle lanes on roads to surrounding villages
- improved public transport to and from Berry and Bomaderry to meet train schedules
- more frequent public transport to and from Nowra.



Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum