



Shoalhaven
City Council

State of our City

Shoalhaven 2024

Council Term Report 2021-2024



Acknowledgement of Country

Walawaani (welcome),

Shoalhaven City Council recognises the First Peoples of the Shoalhaven and their ongoing connection to culture and country. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Lore Keepers of the world's oldest living culture and pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Walawaani njindiwan (safe journey to you all)

This acknowledgment includes Dhurga language. We recognise and understand that there are many diverse languages spoken within the Shoalhaven.

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Our Councillors



Ward 1



Serena Copley
Councillor



Tonia Gray
Councillor



Matthew Norris
Deputy Mayor



John Wells
Councillor

Ward 2



Amanda Findley
Mayor



Evan Christen
Councillor



Paul Ell
Councillor



John Kotlash
Councillor



Greg Watson
Councillor

Ward 3



Moo D'Ath
Councillor



Mark Kitchener
Councillor



Patricia White
Councillor



Gillian Boyd
Councillor

*From 17 July 2023



Liza Butler
Councillor

*Resigned 1 June 2023



“

Our values guide our behaviour and help us live in balance with our unique environment and each other to fulfill our goals. We are committed to behaving and acting in ways that reflect our values.

”



Our values

Respect

We are mindful of and care about the feelings, wishes and rights of others

Integrity

We are committed to maintain high ethics and standards

Adaptability

We are ready for change and willing to embrace a new situation

Collaboration

We enjoy working together to deliver for our community

Introduction

The State of our City Report 2024 provides a snapshot in time for the City of Shoalhaven. It reports our key achievements over the past 3 years of the Council term and identifies current and emerging issues for our City.

This report documents how Council has responded to the key priorities identified in the Community Strategic Plan and provides the community, Councillors and customers with insight into the operation of Council during its term.

As custodians of the Community Strategic Plan, Council is required by the Office of Local Government to develop a community vision for the City in consultation with our community. The Community Strategic Plan must also include ways of monitoring whether we are making progress towards achieving that vision. This report gathers information that will assist future decision-making and provide insight for the review and update of the Community Strategic Plan 2035.



Our Community Snapshot



Median Age

48

Population

109,611



21%

of households are made up of couples with children



8,085

Local Business



6.5%

of the Shoalhaven's population identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



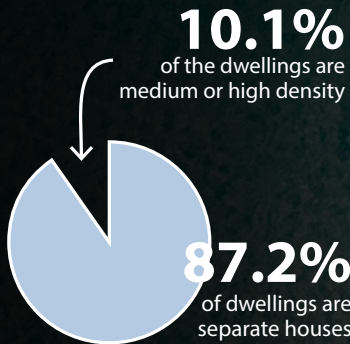
37.5%
part-time workers

50.1%
full-time workers

44,477

Labour Force

\$7.5
Billion (GRP)
Gross Regional Product



Community Vision Statement

We will work together to foster a safe & attractive community for people to live, work, stay & play; where sustainable growth, development & environmental protection are managed to provide a unique & relaxed Shoalhaven lifestyle.

Our places



Progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan

This report is organised by the 4 themes and 11 key priorities as set out in the [Community Strategic Plan – Shoalhaven 2032](#).

How we measure progress

The Community Strategic Plan outlines several indicators used to track progress towards achievement of intended outcomes across each key priority. By measuring our progress, we can assess whether we are moving towards the achievement of our aspirations for resilient and safe communities with thriving local economies, environmental sustainability, and ultimately improved quality of life for our residents.

Resilient, Safe, Accessible & Inclusive Communities

- 1.1 Support inclusive, safe and connected communities
- 1.2 Preserve, support and develop cultural and creative vitality across our communities
- 1.3 Support community wellbeing through fostering active and healthy communities

Sustainable, Liveable Environments

- 2.1 Manage our infrastructure for long term sustainability to meet community need
- 2.2 Manage growth and development with respect for environmental and community values
- 2.3 Protect the natural environment and enhance sustainability

Thriving Local Economies that meet Community Needs

- 3.1 Strengthen and diversify the economy
- 3.2 Deliver safe, vibrant and attractive public spaces

Effective, Responsible and Authentic Leadership

- 4.1 Deliver reliable, high quality services
- 4.2 Provide transparent leadership through effective government and administration
- 4.3 Inform and engage with the community about the decisions that affect their lives



Resilient, Safe, Accessible & Inclusive *Communities*

1.1 Support inclusive, safe and connected communities

Why is this priority important?

The health of our community members is reliant on and affected by how safe, included and connected they feel within their community. Being connected and feeling included in the lives of others has been proven to increase overall happiness and wellbeing.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Communities are more prepared and more resilient following disruptive events
- Equitable access to opportunities to participate
- Improvement in socioeconomic status
- Improvements to transport services and connectivity
- A variety of affordable housing options
- Improved community safety

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Council resilience and readiness capability in emergency management	Disaster response in the Shoalhaven (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.9	3.7	—	==
People's feeling of connection to their community	Feeling part of your community (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	4.1	3.7	—	×
Socio-economic indicators	SEIFA (Socio Economic Indexes for Areas)	↑	964	980	New data not available	✓
Use of public transport or active transport	Trips to work using public transport or active transport (walking or cycling) for residents (%)	↑	5.2%	4.2%	3.6%	×
Households in need of affordable housing in Shoalhaven	Percentage of households in housing stress	↓	11.10%	9%	New data not available	✓
Community safety	Recorded major offences against persons and property (number – decreasing, 2021 baseline) NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research	↓	7,255	7,681	8,558	×
People's feeling of safety in their neighbourhood	How safe you feel (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	4.3	4.2	—	×

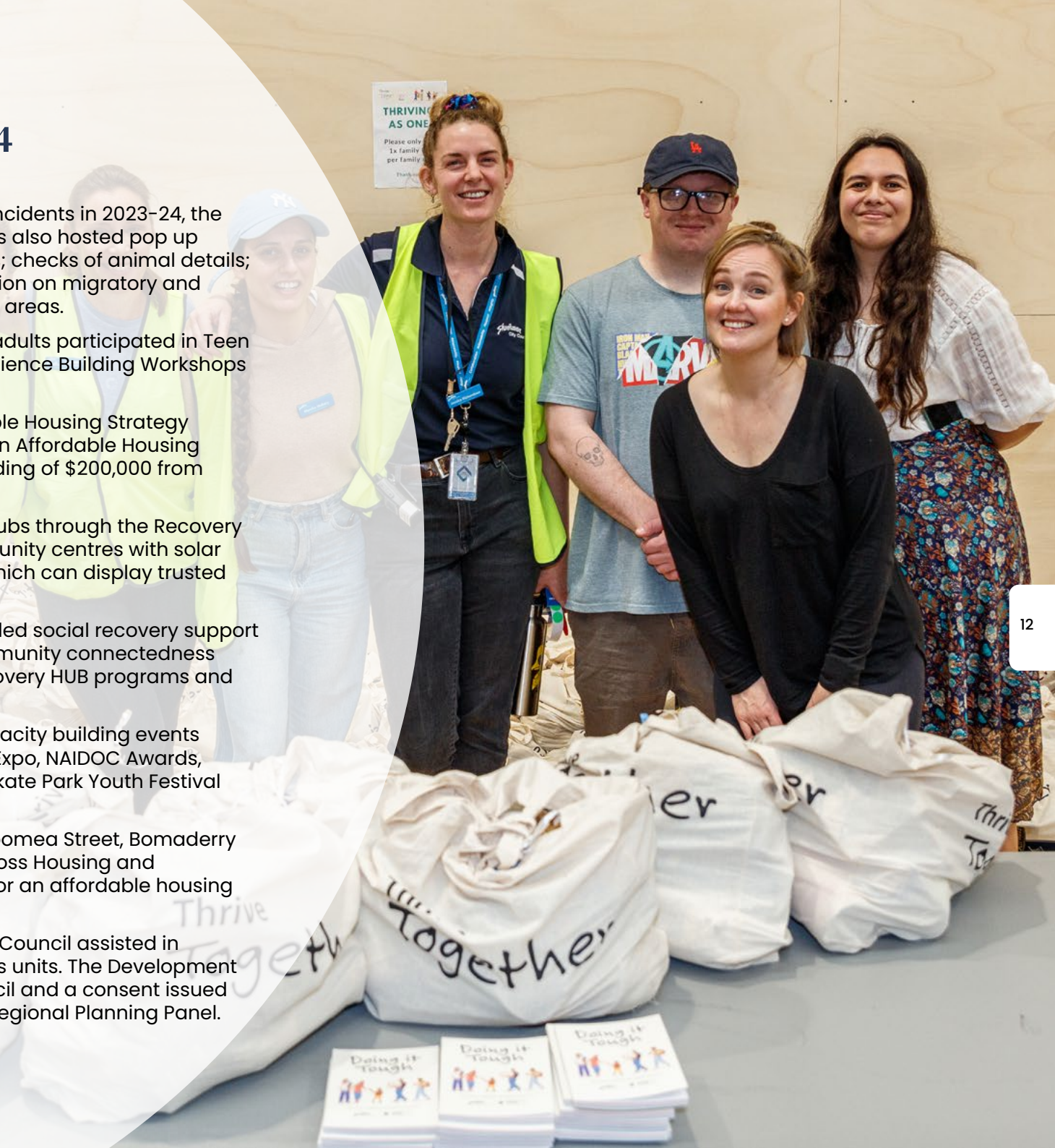
Increase
 Decrease
 Maintain
 Meeting target
 Not meeting target
 No survey scheduled
 No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.

Council Highlights 2021-24

- Rangers investigated 1,637 illegal dumping incidents in 2023-24, the highest number of any NSW Council. Rangers also hosted pop up stalls which included: microchipping of dogs; checks of animal details; and shorebird education, including information on migratory and threatened shorebirds around dog off-leash areas.
- In 2023-24, Over 700 young people and 150 adults participated in Teen Mental Health, Youth Mental Health and Resilience Building Workshops and Training across the Shoalhaven.
- Council prioritised an update of the Affordable Housing Strategy and investigated the potential to establish an Affordable Housing Development Contribution Scheme with funding of \$200,000 from the NSW Government.
- Delivery of grant funded Local Information Hubs through the Recovery into Resilience project at 26 halls and community centres with solar panels, batteries and information screens which can display trusted information during emergencies.
- Following numerous natural disasters, provided social recovery support through the Outreach team promoting community connectedness through community events, gatherings, Recovery HUB programs and outreach call program.
- Supported and coordinated community capacity building events including the Thrive Together Fair, Disability Expo, NAIDOC Awards, Family Fun Day, Sorry Day, Sanctuary Point Skate Park Youth Festival and the Night is Young Festival.
- Partnership Affordable Housing Project at Coomea Street, Bomaderry – Council transferred the site to Southern Cross Housing and Development Approval issued in mid-2022 for an affordable housing development of 39 dwellings units.
- Landcom Build to Rent Project, Bomaderry – Council assisted in identifying potential sites for the 60 dwellings units. The Development Approval was efficiently processed by Council and a consent issued in late July 2024 after consideration by the Regional Planning Panel.

THRIVING AS ONE
Please only 1x family per family
Thank you



1.2 Preserve, support and develop cultural and creative vitality across our communities

Why is this priority important?

Culture binds a community to past, present and future collective experiences of the physical surroundings and interactions with others. Creative pursuits play a major role in creating those experiences and events enable communities to interact and have fun.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Active participation in an inclusive arts community
- Provision of cultural facilities
- Greater awareness, understanding and respect of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, heritage and histories

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Number and / or variety of cultural activities/events	Type of events & council support of events (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.6	3.5	—	==
Community satisfaction with Shoalhaven arts and culture	Culture & Arts Improving – Shoalhaven Regional Gallery & Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	4.1	4	—	==
Council engagement with the Aboriginal community	Level of engagement with the Aboriginal community on Council's projects and programs including development of the Reconciliation Action Plan	↑	New	30	28	==

 Increase
  Decrease
  Maintain
  Meeting target
  Not meeting target
  No survey scheduled
  No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.

Council Highlights 2021-24

- The March 2024 presentation of Bangarra Dance Theatre’s Yuldea hosted 834 people, including more than 100 members of our Aboriginal community. Workshops with the Bangarra dancers were offered to Nowra High School Aboriginal students and Shoalhaven dance students.
- Installed the Broken Obelisk sculpture by American sculptor Barnett Newman in the forecourt of the Regional Gallery in February 2024. The work is on loan from the National Gallery of Australia for five years as part of the Sharing the National Collection initiative.
- The Rivoli dance production was performed at Ulladulla Civic Centre and Kangaroo Valley Hall in March 2022.
- Arty Farty Party Children’s Festival held in July 2022 and 2023 with highlights including circus-theatre shows FoRT and Wolfgang’s Musical Circus and Gadhungal Murring Corroboree dance.
- Council hosted the Nowra Micro Festival in December 2022 which included 38 performers on eight stages across the CBD including Jellybean Park and Shoalhaven Regional Gallery.
- Shoalhaven Water’s first Mural Art project was successfully completed on the water reservoir next to Hampden Bridge in Kangaroo Valley.
- Completion of the Scott Nagy & Krimstone mural ‘Dreamboat’ in Haig Ave as part of the Nowra CBD Revitalisation strategy.



1.3 Support community wellbeing through fostering active and healthy communities

Why is this priority important?

Health is a key component to life expectancy and quality of life for our community. A community that is built to allow for activity to occur daily as part of everyday life, increases health outcomes. A more liveable city attracts populations, tourists, businesses and improves economic outcomes.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Improved access to opportunities for lifelong learning and to help others
- Provision of recreation and leisure facilities
- Increased opportunities to be healthy and active
- Improved access to places and activities for people with disability

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Level of volunteerism	Percentage of the Shoalhaven population doing some form of voluntary work (Baseline 2021 Census)	↑	15.4%	15.4%	New data not available	==
Community satisfaction with parks, playgrounds, sporting venues, aquatic centres, public halls	Satisfaction with parks, playgrounds, sporting venues, aquatic centres & public halls (rating out of 5 – community survey – average)	↑	3.85	3.5	—	×
Australian Unity Personal Wellbeing Index (Aust. Ave 75.9)	Happiness Index (rating out of 5 – community survey) %	↑	84.6%	81.80%	—	==
Community satisfaction with facilities and services for people living with a disability	Community satisfaction of facilities and services for people living with a disability (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.5	3.2	—	×

Increase
 Decrease
 Maintain
 Meeting target
 Not meeting target
 No survey scheduled
 No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.

Council Highlights 2021-24

- In 2023-24 achieved the highest annual visitation ever recorded across Council's Aquatic and Leisure Centres of 924,201.
- Completion of the \$4.8M upgrade of the Park Road Netball Courts in South Nowra.
- Developed and promoted the innovative "Hello Summer" holiday program across Destination Parks and Council facilities. Programs included Yoga / Pilates in the Park, Pop-up Library, Dive-in Movie Nights, NYE Pool Party and Beach Volleyball.
- Boongaree Nature Play Park completion of Youth, Early Childhood, Exercise Zone, Learn to Ride Area, Car Park and Public Amenity Building in January 2022. Skate Park and Pump Track opened to the public in April 2023. Further stages of Boongaree are on-hold until funding is secured.
- Major preparation works completed at Rugby Park in time to successfully host the 2022 NSW Koori Rugby League Knockout Carnival.
- Completed Playground upgrades at Kioloa - Kioloa Sportsground, Bawley Point Reserve, North Nowra - Joe Hyam Reserve, Hyams Beach Reserve, Bomaderry - Sampson Crescent Reserve and Sheraton Reserve, St Georges Basin - Blacket Park, Erowal Bay - Fire Brigade Park, Culburra Beach - Tilbury Reserve, Sussex Inlet - Ellmoos Reserve, Basin View - Boat Ramp Reserve, Bomaderry - John Berry Reserve.



Sustainable, Liveable *Environments*



2.1 Manage our infrastructure for long term sustainability to meet community need

Why is this priority important?

Delivering essential public infrastructure and assets is important to the liveability of our communities. Improving connectivity between our settlements allows for safe and efficient travel within and beyond our region.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Public infrastructure is maintained for its current purpose and for future generations

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Community satisfaction with roads	Community satisfaction maintenance of sealed & unsealed local roads (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	2.6	1.9	—	×
Length of footpaths and cycleways	Total length of footpaths and cycleways in kms	↑	246.82	314.16	314.16	✓
Community satisfaction with provision of cycleways	Community satisfaction with provision of cycleways (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3	2.6	—	×
Backlog of repair and renewal of community assets	Infrastructure backlog as a percentage of total infrastructure assets (audited results)	↓	2.6	4.4	TBC	TBC

↑ Increase	↓ Decrease	↔ Maintain	✓ Meeting target	✗ Not meeting target	— No survey scheduled	— No statistically significant change*
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* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.

Council Highlights 2021-24

Road Program

- Completed construction of the \$32.8M Far North Collector Road to be called “Bannada Way” which links the new urban release areas with Illaroo Road.
- Following the extreme weather and extensive damage in 2022, delivered the \$23M road construction contract to repair 38 landslips across 15 roads through the dedicated Natural Disasters Office.
- Major local road repair programs complete include Browns Road, Brinawarr Street, Orient Point Road (Flora to Raglan Street) rehabilitation, Riversdale Road reconstruction, Matron Porter Drive and Tallwood Avenue Milton, Worrigeer Road, Main Road – Cambewarra, Shoalhaven Heads Road, Callala Beach Road, Tannery and Beach Road, Croobyar Road and Mayfield Road.
- Completion of a \$2.3M upgrade to section of Coonemia Road, Wollumboola.
- Roads to Recovery \$1.9M rehabilitation to section of BTU Road Nowra Hill.
- In August 2022, cameras were deployed on Council’s garbage collection trucks to analyse road defects. Footage from the cameras is scoured by artificial intelligence to identify potholes, road cracks or damage. The data is then triaged and sent on to the Council’s asset management solution so work orders can be created and actioned.





Shared User Paths

- Completion of new Shared User Path along section of River Road Shoalhaven Heads
- Opening of stage 1 of the Murramarang Road Shared User Path
- Completed the Springs Road Shared User Path Bridge in Cudmirrah

Other Infrastructure

- Finalised urgent roofing repairs across community facilities including the Nowra Library.
- Opened a new public toilet at Jerry Bailey Oval, Shoalhaven Heads.
- Refurbishment of Comerong Island Ferry and renewal of landings and moorings.
- Refurbished Crookhaven Heads amenities.
- Construction of new 2-lane boat ramp and pontoon at Havilland Street, Conjola Park.
- Carters Corner Jetty refurbishment at Shoalhaven Heads.

Shoalhaven Water

- Bendeela and Cambewarra reservoirs completed providing additional storage and redundancy in the water supply system.
- Projects to mitigate risk to critical water supply and wastewater assets completed including the Erowal Bay Sewer Relocation project and Wrights Beach Water Main Replacement Project.
- Shoalhaven Water's Reclaimed Water Management Scheme (REMS) Stage 1B awarded Winner in the 2022 LGNSW - Excellence in the Environment Awards, under the Water Management category.
- Shoalhaven's drinking water judged as the best tasting in NSW/ ACT at the 2022 Water Industry Operators Association of Australia conference.



2.2 Manage growth and development with respect for environmental & community values

Why is this priority important?

As the Shoalhaven grows it is important that any development that occurs is sustainable for the future. We need to all work together to plan for a future that will meet the needs of generations to come.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Improved collaborative strategic planning with the community
- Development contributes to and enhances neighbourhood character

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Community satisfaction with the strategic planning process	Community satisfaction with strategic planning within Shoalhaven (rating out of 5 - community survey)	↑	2.8	2.6	—	×

Increase
 Decrease
 Maintain
 Meeting target
 Not meeting target
 No survey scheduled
 No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.

Council Highlights 2021-24

- Finalised the update of the Ulladulla Town Centre DCP Amendment.
- Local Environmental Plan amendment for the Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area finalised and notified in late 2023 – this updated and revised the land use zones for this regionally significant release area that will accommodate 2000+ additional homes in the area now known as Badagarang.
- Council endorsed and commenced the preparation of revised land use planning strategies and Local Environmental Plan, Development Control Plan and Developer Contributions Plan (collectively a Planning scheme) for the City, including work on the inclusion of local character considerations. Draft DCP and Local Infrastructure Contributions Framework adopted in July 2024 for exhibition.
- Moss Vale Road Urban Release Areas water supply work by Shoalhaven Water currently being finalised with 99% of pipework installed and wastewater works 98% complete.



2.3 Protect the natural environment and enhance sustainability

Why is this priority important?

Shoalhaven is blessed with a beautiful natural environment, distinct and unique ecosystems, 165km of coastline, forests, woodlands and mountains. The environment attracts visitors to our City and is one of the key attractors for residents. The environment aids our economy, provides opportunities for the community to enjoy a wide range of recreational activities and helps to improve the wellbeing of the community.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Greenhouse gas reduction targets for Council and community are met
- Natural environment is improved
- Community involvement in environmental enhancement programs is increased
- Resource consumption is reduced and waste minimised
- Biodiversity and urban green cover are enhanced

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Urban canopy cover on public land	Urban canopy cover on public land (%)	↑	New	To be developed	To be developed	Data not available
Community satisfaction with management of natural environment	Community satisfaction with management of natural environment (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.2	3.2	—	==

↑ Increase
↓ Decrease
↔ Maintain
✓ Meeting target
✗ Not meeting target
— No survey scheduled
== No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.



What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Community satisfaction with environmental protection and enforcement (e.g. building site inspections, illegal dumping, tree vandalism or clearing)	Community satisfaction with environmental protection and enforcement (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.1	2.9	—	==
Waterway environmental health	Percentage of water samples that meet the AS/NZ water quality guidelines as captured by Aqua Data	↑	75%	73.5%	76%	✓
Council's greenhouse gas emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions (tonnes CO2e-) baseline 2020-21	↓	77,567	73,250	66,890	✓
Community's greenhouse gas emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions (tonnes CO2e-) (baseline to be established)	↓	New	To be developed	To be developed	Data not available
Participation in environmental programs	Number of participants in environmental events and projects	↑	New	262	204	✗
Participation in environmental programs	Number of active bushcare groups on Council managed land	↑	60	61	59	==
Diversion of waste from landfill	Percentage of waste diverted from landfill	↑	36%	40%	40%	✓

Increase
 Decrease
 Maintain
 Meeting target
 Not meeting target
 No survey scheduled
 No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.



Council Highlights 2021-24

Flood, Coastal and Natural Areas

- Millards Creek and Currarong Creek Flood Studies have been completed and adopted by Council.
- Commenced detailed design phase for the South Mollymook coastal protection works with input from the local community.
- Lower Shoalhaven River and St Georges Basin Flood Studies and associated Flood Planning Level Policies were adopted by Council in January 2023.
- Shoalhaven LGA Floor Level Survey for Flood Planning completed.
- Adopted the Coastal management Program for the Shoalhaven Open Coast and Jervis Bay.
- Beach access upgrades completed at Cunjurong Point, Currarong Beach and Shark Net Beach.
- Continued natural areas works which include bush regeneration weed control and revegetation works throughout Council managed reserves with prioritisation of improving ecological resilience of endangered ecological communities.



Waste and Recycling

- Commenced construction of Council's new Materials Recovery Facility.
- Commissioned a new landfill cell at the West Nowra Waste Depot.
- Council won the 'Transitioning to a Circular Economy Award' at the 2022 Local Government NSW Excellence in Environment Awards for its integrated approach to resource recovery, prioritising reuse over recycling.
- Design completed for the new Resource Recovery Learning Centre at West Nowra Depot with the development application lodged.

Climate Action

- Established Sustainable Living Program and delivered Sustainability webpage including Sustainable Living Guide, Energy Saving Kits, SunSpot tool and workshops to assist residents better understand solar PV and battery installations.
- Sustainable Energy Strategy initiatives include finalising the 100% LED street lighting upgrade with Endeavor Energy, installation of solar PV and fleet EV chargers at the Flinders Shoalwater Depot and switching Council's 570 Small Sites to 100% accredited GreenPower from 1 July 2024.
- New 100 kW solar PV installation on the roof of the Ulladulla Civic Centre, capital funded by Council's internal Revolving Energy Fund.



Thriving local economies that meet community *needs*



3.1 Strengthen and diversify the economy

Why is this priority important?

An important economic opportunity is to continue to attract employers to set up in the Shoalhaven. By growing new and emerging industries we can provide diverse employment options for our residents. Realising these opportunities will improve our city’s prosperity and provide jobs close to home.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Increased investment and new businesses
- Provision of employment for people of all ages and abilities
- Enhanced opportunities for a diverse sustainable visitor economy

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Shoalhaven economic indicators	Gross regional product \$M	↑	6,040	7,247	7,905	✓
Shoalhaven economic indicators	Total number of people employed in the Shoalhaven (id profile)	↑	38,909 (46.7%)	44,477 (48.8%)	New data not available	✓
Shoalhaven economic indicators	Total value of construction and complying development certificates issues (\$M)	↑	\$462.7M	\$710M	\$704M	⊖
Shoalhaven economic indicators	Number of new businesses that employ one or more people	↑	New	8,085	8,115	✓
Shoalhaven economic indicators	Percentage of total jobs across the top 10 employing industries (%)	↔	83%	88%	88%	✓

↑ Increase
↓ Decrease
↔ Maintain
✓ Meeting target
✗ Not meeting target
— No survey scheduled
⊖ No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.



Council Highlights 2021-24

- Council continues to subdivide industrial land holdings with subdivisions underway at Flinders stage 11, Woollamia stage 5a, and Albatross Aviation Technology Park stage 5.
- Economic Development Office coordinated a series of training sessions specifically aimed at assisting businesses following the natural disaster setbacks and COVID impacts.
- Assisting Aboriginal Cultural business operators to grow their business plans through marketing support, photography and advice to grow international ready.
- Campaigns such as the 100 Beach Challenge and Conscious Traveller helped disperse and educate visitors during summer. In 2023/24 the Autumn Wellness Tourism Campaign successfully reached 5 million people with over 210,000 engagements.
- Events were delivered in partnership with community organisations and Chambers, including Vibe in the Village at Sussex Inlet, Burradise Live Sunset Session at Culburra Beach, Viking Festival and the Berry Better Business Forum.
- Customer service enquiries for Shoalhaven Visitor Centres averaged over 33,000 per year or 90 per day across phone, counter, emails and livechat.
- Demonstrated success of the 2023 Advocacy Guide with an additional \$157M in funding towards projects such as the Nowra Bypass and the East Nowra sub-arterial road linkage.
- Completed upgrade projects at Holiday Haven Tourist Parks including cabin refurbishments, four new accessible cabins, Lake Tabourie amenities block and a new pool at Bendalong. Holiday Haven Currarong awarded the Gold Winner of the NSW Commercial Pool up to \$500,000 Award by the SPASA Australia.



3.2 Deliver safe, vibrant & attractive public spaces

Why is this priority important?

Busy and vibrant towns and villages encourages businesses to invest, job opportunities to be created, new activities and interests for residents and visitors to be enjoyed. It is important that we enhance our community spaces with public art, place-making and place activation – places people come together and celebrate.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Strong commercial centres and active CBDs
- Neighbourhoods, streets and public spaces provide quality places and facilities
- Increased participation in the civic and cultural life of the City

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
People's perception of Shoalhaven as liveable city	People's perception of Shoalhaven as liveable city (% community survey)	↑	81%	72%	—	×
Community satisfaction with Shoalhaven's CBDs	Community satisfaction with Shoalhaven's CBD (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.1	2.9	—	×
People's perception that the Shoalhaven is a vibrant place to live and work	Shoalhaven is a vibrant city (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.4	3.28	—	==

↑ Increase
↓ Decrease
↔ Maintain
✓ Meeting target
✗ Not meeting target
— No survey scheduled
== No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.

Council Highlights 2021-24

- Completed upgrade to Junction Court in Nowra with funding assistance from the NSW Government.
- Redevelopment of Vincentia’s Burton Street Mall completed by a local contractor.
- Engagement undertaken with community on the Nowra Riverfront Activation Plan to produce a potential community vision for a refreshed, activated and engaging riverfront precinct.





Effective, Responsible & Authentic *Leadership*

4.1 Deliver reliable, high-quality services

Why is this priority important?

Council supports the community in many ways such as the provision of sportfields, swimming pools, libraries, waste services, roads, water services, development assessment, ranger services and much more. Our community expects that these services will meet their daily needs provided by Council and other government agencies into the future.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Our community continues to have access to high quality public services

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Community satisfaction with Council services	Overall satisfaction with Shoalhaven City Council (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.34	3.04	—	×
Community expectations about customer service	Overall performance of council in dealing with your request (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.6	3.32	—	×
Community expectations about customer service	Timeliness of council responding to community requests (rating out of 5 – community survey)	↑	3.5	3.44	—	=
Development Applications assessment times	Percentage of Development Applications determined within 40 days (council records - %) Target 65%	↑	62%	46%	46%	×

↑ Increase
↓ Decrease
↔ Maintain
✓ Meeting target
✗ Not meeting target
— No survey scheduled
= No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.



Council Highlights 2021-24

- Shoalhaven Water awarded the Sam Samra Award for excellence in water management at the 2023 Local Government Water Management Conference.
- Council's new Contact Centre launched in July 2021 with the first contact customer resolution rate rising to 81% by June 2023.
- New customer request management system launched with a large number of requests available online for the public to lodge 24-7 with around 30% of requests lodged online by June 2024.
- New online website Bookable now takes 75% of community facility bookings.
- Established Council's Business Improvement and Service Review Programs.

4.2 Provide transparent leadership through effective government and administration

Why is this priority important?

All levels of government must provide strong leadership and advocacy for and on behalf of their communities. The community expects government to provide the direction for the future, to act with integrity, manage budgets appropriately, be ethical and responsible within requirements of legislation. Government is expected to employ sound decision-making processes and continue to seek ways to support the community's needs.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- Decision-makers lead, govern and regulate in an ethical, equitable, transparent and accountable way
- Provide equity of access to employment opportunities to improve the diversity of Council's workforce

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Identified positions within Council	Number of identified positions within Council	↑	6	8	8	✓
Council's financial benchmarks	Number of financial benchmarks that meet the six target ratios (baseline 2020-21)	↑	5	4	TBC	TBC
Community's satisfaction with Council's leadership	Community satisfaction with Council's leadership (new survey question rating out of 5)	↑	New	2.6	—	Baseline (new indicator)

↑ Increase	↓ Decrease	↔ Maintain	✓ Meeting target	✗ Not meeting target	— No survey scheduled	— No statistically significant change*
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* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.



Council Highlights 2021-24

- 550 Council staff and community members attended the inaugural Health and Wellbeing Expo at the Shoalhaven Indoor Sports Centre in June 2022.
- Successfully implemented new WHS initiatives including the online injury/incident and hazard reporting system and the Fair and Just Culture Procedure.
- Council maintained its 'low risk' rating in the external self-insurance case management audit.
- Embarked on a joint venture with Kiama, Shellharbour and Wollongong councils to develop and implement a Cyber Security Shared Service model.

4.3 Inform and engage with the community about the decisions that affect their lives

Why is this priority important?

All levels of government must engage with and inform community about the decisions that are being made. It is an essential component of most Council projects and enables our community to provide us with their needs and wants, so that Council can better meet community expectations. Clear communication to the community is essential, especially in times of emergency response.

Outcomes we are seeking:

- All community members have the opportunity to shape our future
- Increased awareness of the key issues impacting our community

Are we making a difference?

What	Measure	Target	Baseline	2022-23	2023-24	Meeting Target
Community's awareness of initiatives that affect their lives	Community's awareness of community engagement projects and initiatives (percentage – community survey)	↑	34%	39%	—	✓
Community's participation in decisions that affect their lives	Active participation in community engagement projects/initiatives (percentage – community survey)	↑	26%	37%	—	✓

Increase
 Decrease
 Maintain
 Meeting target
 Not meeting target
 No survey scheduled
 No statistically significant change*

* Significance testing at 95% confidence level through independent community satisfaction survey.

Council Highlights 2021-24

- Launched a new Shoalhaven Libraries website in April 2022 and revamped Shoalhaven Water, Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre, Swim Sport Fitness and Council websites in 2023-24.
- Council's Get Involved engagement platform continues to provide conduit for residents to view projects, undertake surveys or polls and have a voice in Council programs. Registered users grew over the Council term by 706 to 3,844.
- Over 2023-24, Council's social media posts grew by 30% with the focus on promotion of the wide array of Council's activities and services.



Shoalhaven
City Council
Connecting with our community

Financial performance

Council is taking a number of actions to address the significant financial challenges it currently faces. An independent review of Council's financial position in 2023 identified that Council needed to increase revenue and decrease costs through a number of measures to be able to sustain and continue its program of works and services needed now and into the future to meet community needs.

In January 2024, Councillors resolved not to proceed with an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a proposed Special Rate Variation and to focus on maintaining strict budgeting measures, improving asset management planning practices and increasing revenue through immediate sales of underperforming property and assets.

Many factors have contributed to making Council's financial position unsustainable:

- the impacts of the COVID pandemic and 15 consecutive natural disasters during the last five years has significantly depleted revenue and increased operational costs.
- community expectations are that maintenance and replacement of assets like roads, bridges and community facilities should be improved above current levels, requiring greater investment
- rising cost of materials, labour and contractors
- increase in interest expense due to increase in loan borrowings
- sustained lower-than-average residential and business rates (in comparison to comparable local government areas)
- rate pegging – the IPART restricts how much councils can typically increase rates by, and in recent years rate rises haven't kept up with inflation
- cost shifting by NSW Government and Australian Government forcing Council to assume responsibility for infrastructure, services and regulatory functions without providing sufficient supporting funding
- Statutory fee caps inhibit Council's ability to fully cost recover statutory functions required to be performed under legislative requirements

Actions we are taking

There's a number of actions being taken to address the forecast annual structural deficit of \$25 million to \$35 million, this includes ongoing advocacy to State and Federal Governments on cost shifting and funding models, as well as participation in the parliamentary Inquiries. Operationally Council has paused the construction of 13 major projects such as further stages of Boongaree Park, skate parks, showground upgrades and planning works for the refurbishment of Bay and Basin Leisure Centre. Operational budgets have been critically reviewed with savings identified and implemented including changes to operating hours across 20 facilities resulting in over \$500,000 in savings per annum. A review of Council-owned property has identified land for immediate sale and those to be further investigated for potential sale. Council has budgeted to receive \$17M in land sales in 2024/25 with proceeds to be partially used to repay loan borrowings.

Council has also established an Enterprise Project Management Office, undertaking improvements to Asset Management planning and implementing service reviews to improve efficiency to address financial sustainability. Updates on the financial sustainability program can be accessed through Council's website <https://www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Council/What-guides-us/Plans-for-the-future/Financial-sustainability>

Informing the next Community Strategic Plan

As we move into the review and update of the Community Strategic Plan, it is important to understand the challenges across our Shoalhaven community and to reflect on the areas of focus which will make a difference.

Australian Liveability Census

The Australian Liveability Census (Census) was facilitated by Placescore and supported by the NSW Government with over 700 responses collected from across the Shoalhaven LGA between March and June 2023.

Liveability is defined 'as an assessment of what it is like to live in a place'. The Census gathered information on people's experience of living in their neighbourhoods. The results reveal what really matters to local communities and their priorities for making their neighbourhood better for them.

The Census asked people to rank what they value across 50 place attributes in their ideal neighbourhood. They were then asked to rate the performance of the same 50 attributes between 'perfect' and 'fail'. The results can be used to understand the attributes that are contributing most to liveability, and which are detracting from community satisfaction.

Liveability Recommendations

For the next iteration of the Community Strategic Plan, the Census results show that focusing on the following areas will make a difference to liveability in the community.

Resilient, Safe, Accessible and Inclusive Communities – Build on strong community connections to enhance neighbourhood safety. The metric with the highest overall priority and therefore the most opportunity for improved liveability outcomes is 'General condition of public open space' (street trees, footpaths, parks etc.)

Sustainable, Liveable Environments – Protect nature and invest in local walking and cycling paths, connecting them to the wider network and neighbourhood amenity.

Thriving Local Economies that meet community needs – Ensure streetscapes and public spaces are safe and well maintained, and that housing is co-located with retail and amenity.

The full results in the Liveability Strategic Performance Report will assist Council in the review and update of the key priorities in the next Community Strategic Plan.



Key Considerations

The following list of outlines some of the challenges which are felt across our communities and should be considered in framing priorities in the revised Community Strategic Plan.

Cost of living pressures and housing affordability

- Australia is in the grip of a cost-of-living crisis with utilities, groceries and everyday essentials rising disproportionately to wage growth.
- Limited crisis and short-term housing options to accommodate people in immediate need of housing and shelter.
- Ever increasing price of housing and lack of affordable stock and housing options, particularly for people on low incomes, people with a disability and young people.
- According to the 2021 Census there are 4,100 Shoalhaven households in housing stress with 2,100 in need of affordable housing.
- Compared to the rest of the State, the Shoalhaven has a lower proportion of people under 18 and a much higher proportion of people over 60, with one in five of our property owners being pensioners.

Resilience, wellbeing and inclusion

- Risk of social isolation particularly affecting older people and people living with a disability in the community.
- Equitable access to health, family and aged care services across the Shoalhaven.
- Developing sense of community and social cohesion in growing communities
- Impacts of drug and alcohol intake on our public health and wellbeing, including safety risks in public places.
- Increased prevalence of mental health issues amongst the community.
- Lack of community knowledge and awareness on how to support the inclusion of people with a disability, people with dementia and other vulnerable population groups in community life .

Climate change, natural disasters and environmental sustainability

- Increase in frequency and severity of extreme storm events, bushfires and droughts with associated risks to life and property.
- Between 2019 and 2024 the Shoalhaven has endured 15 natural disaster declarations, the highest number alongside four other regional NSW councils.
- Impacts of sea level rise on local flooding and coastal management.
- Potential impacts of heatwaves on the health and wellbeing of people vulnerable to extreme temperatures.
- Decline in biodiversity caused by threats such as extreme temperatures, pest plants and feral animals.
- Erosion and associated risks to property, infrastructure and natural areas.
- Impacts of more regular droughts on community, agriculture and industry.



Key Considerations

Traffic, transport and connectivity

- Distance between settlements presents challenges in connecting communities, including single road access during emergencies.
- Limited public transport connectivity in several areas.
- Ensuring continued investment in transport infrastructure to improve regional connections such as the Milton-Ulladulla bypass and Nowra bypass.
- Peak summer tourism visitation results in increased traffic and pressure on road network.
- Facilitating delivery of sustainable transport options including provision of footpath and cycleway networks.

The natural environment

- Cumulative impacts of urban development on our beaches, creeks and lagoons including impacts of pollution, sedimentation and habitat loss.
- Impacts of erosion and landslips on public and private places and property.
- Balancing the impacts of hazard reduction measures on environmental values with the need for property protection (i.e. managing back burning, flood mitigation and seawalls in an environmentally sensitive way).
- Opposition from property owners to the implementation of hazard mitigation development controls (e.g. risk mapping and planning).
- Pressures on bushland and biodiversity through loss of core areas of vegetation because of development and illegal land cleaning.

Community involvement in decision making

- Everyone should have an opportunity to participate in shaping the future of our City, and the aim of community engagement is to promote dialogue and genuine discussion.
- Although engagement may not lead to agreement or consensus; it can support better understanding of issues and foster mutual respect for different views.
- With the diversity of values and perspectives, it is important that community engagement processes are accessible to all the community.
- Council has developed an updated Community Engagement Strategy and Framework which will be put out to public exhibition prior to the end of 2024.



Key Considerations

Recognition of and support for Traditional Owners

- Council commits to continually building mutually respectful and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the Shoalhaven.
- Council has adopted new Aboriginal Protocol Guide to assist staff with guidance on local Aboriginal practices and protocols.
- Council has commenced development of the Reconciliation Action Plan, due for completion by June 2024.

Sustainable Tourism

- The Shoalhaven attracts a lot of investors and visitors with approximately one-third of people who own property within the Shoalhaven living outside of our area. Some of our suburbs have extremely low permanent occupancy rates.
- Shoalhaven population doubles in summer and places a great deal of strain on community infrastructure and beautifully scenic tourist destinations.

Renewal and maintenance of infrastructure

- An ongoing challenge for Council is maintaining our infrastructure to an adequate condition, especially road, transport and stormwater assets.
- As of 30 June 2023, Council's asset ratings continued to decline with:
 - 51.3% in category 1 (excellent) and 2 (good)
 - 48.7% of in categories 3 (satisfactory) to 5 (very poor).
- Council is responsible for over 1,800 kms of road network which equates to 30 metres of road for every single rateable property (60,000 properties).
- High inflation is impacting on the cost to undertake all infrastructure projects with an estimated 6% inflation over the 12 months to June 2024.



What Next?

Council will commence engaging with the community to conduct a review of the Community Strategic Plan to ensure it continues to represent the vision and aspirations of the City of Shoalhaven community. In reviewing the Community Strategic Plan, Council will strive to ensure that the social, environmental, economic, and civic leadership needs of our community are addressed. Council will also aim to align its strategic objectives to relevant Federal and NSW Government plans in order to manage growth and change across the Shoalhaven. The new Community Strategic Plan, Shoalhaven 2035, is due to be adopted by 30 June 2025.





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