Population and Census

Every five years, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducts the Census of Population and Housing. The Census is a comprehensive snapshot across the country that tells us about our social, economic, and cultural make-up. The ABS began releasing data from the 2021 Census in June 2022, providing an important insight into how the population of the Milton-Ulladulla Study Area is growing and changing.

What is the population of the Study Area and how has it changed?

Population in 2021: 17,026

32.3% of people are aged 60-79

7.8% of people are aged 80+

At the 2021 Census, the population of the Study Area was 17,026. This is an increase of 1,748 people (or 11.4%) since 2016, and almost 6,900 people (or 67.6%) since 1991. While births have been a contributor, regional migration has been the primary driver of population growth within the Study Area, particularly among older age groups.

The structure of the Study Area's population has also changed over the past 30 years. The population is getting older, households are getting smaller, and many people are choosing to remain in their home as they grow older. Compared to the broader Shoalhaven and Regional NSW, the Milton-Ulladulla area has:

- A **larger** percentage of '**Empty Nesters and Retirees**' (aged 60-69)
- A **larger** percentage of '**Seniors**' (aged 70-84)
- A **smaller** percentage of '**Tertiary Education and Independence**' age groups (aged 18-24)
- A **smaller** percentage of '**Young Workforce**' (aged 25-34)

People aged 60+ now account for 40.1% of the Study Area's population, compared to just 29.7% in 1991. By contrast, younger people aged 18-49 now comprise 29.1% of the population, compared to 36.3% in 1991. This structural shift is shown in Figure 1 below.

Median Age
Study Area: **52**   Australia: **38**
Shoalhaven: **48**   Regional NSW: **43**

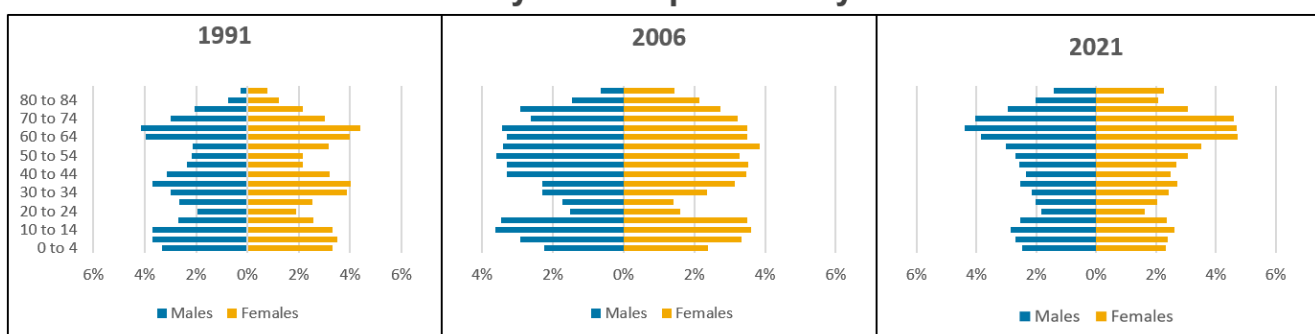### Milton-Ulladulla Study Area Population Pyramids: 1991-2021

Figure 1: Population pyramids showing age-sex distribution over 15-year intervals, based on Census data from 1991-2021

Households within the Study Area are getting smaller, with an average of 2.25 people per household in 2021, compared to 2.53 in 1991. Compared to Regional NSW, the Study Area also has a higher proportion of couple families **without** children (33.5% compared to 27.7%), and a lower proportion of couples **with** children (19.4% compared to 24.8%). Interestingly, 20% of all 'couples without children' were aged 65+, emphasising the Study Area as a preferred place of residence for empty nesters and retirees.

How will the population of the Study Area grow and change in the future?

In addition to broader social and economic factors, past population growth and changes are important indicators of future population change. This guides our future planning by helping us understand:

- The number, types, and location of homes that our communities will need.
- The infrastructure that will be needed to support the future community, such as roads, schools, and hospitals.
- The types and locations of social and support services that may be needed.

Market analysts have advised that there is sufficient retail and employment land within the Study Area to cater for future needs; however, regular review would be desirable to manage new and emerging trends.

Council's demographic consultant, 'Informed Decisions' (or *.id*) provide population forecasts for Shoalhaven. At present, *.id* forecast the population of the Study Area to increase by over 3,700 people (or 22%) by 2051. However, this is a **constrained estimate** that is based on **existing land zones and development approvals.** Recent development trends and population increases suggest that actual population growth may be higher.

Forecast Population Growth

17,026 → 20,102 → 20,761
2021   2036   2051

Further declines are predicted for household size, and a continued disproportionate growth in older age groups is forecast (Figure 2).
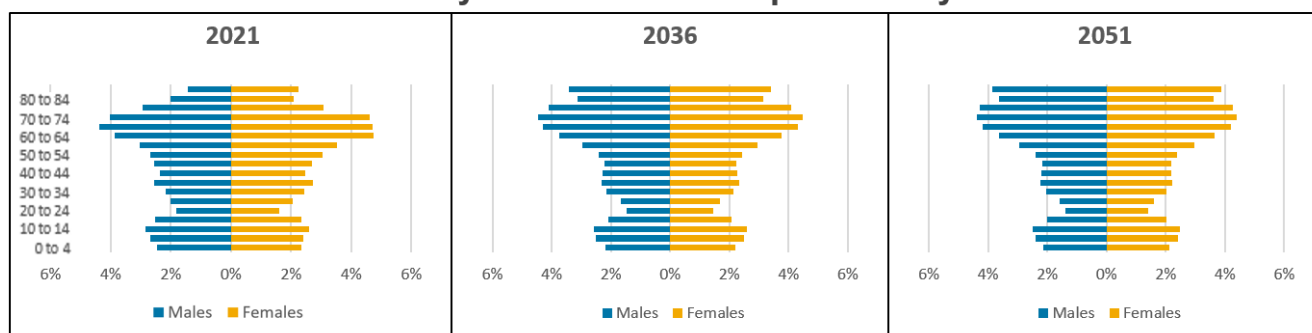

Figure 2: Population pyramids showing known and estimated population distribution at 15-year intervals, based on known Census data (2021) and population projections.

The forecasts are regularly updated by *.id* to reflect contemporary population projections (including births, deaths, and migration), and residential development. The forecasts will be updated in the coming months in light of the 2021 Census data and will be considered as part of finalising the Growth Scenario for inclusion in the Structure Plan.

Conclusion

Current population projections highlight the need to plan for more diverse and adaptable housing within the Milton-Ulladulla area to accommodate a growing and ageing population. The Preliminary Growth Scenario provides options for a range of housing types, sizes, and locations to accommodate the future population.