

# Annual Report 2023 - 2024

Summary



## 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.*



## Message from the Mayor

### **I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2023-24, providing an overview of the achievements and initiatives of Council during the past 12 months.**

As we reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the work that we have done to initiate our journey towards financial sustainability while continuing to achieve significant projects that enhance our community.

We have taken steps to address the increasing financial challenges faced by Council through decisions to reduce the number of construction projects and prioritise budgeting for renewing our roads, bridges, buildings and other infrastructure.

This year, we again were confronted with 3 flood events that were declared natural disasters, that required urgent response and reconstruction of some of our major roads in our city. At the same time, works have continued almost to the point of completion on the major landslips caused by flooding in 2022 in the northern parts of our city, thanks to the funding of the federal and state governments.

It has been a remarkable achievement to complete the Coastal Management Program for the Open Coast and Jervis Bay areas, that encompasses the beaches located along the 165km of coastline managed by Council. This plan provides a program of actions and directives for the next 10 years to help protect the wonderful coastline for everyone to enjoy.

One of our notable accomplishments is the successful delivery of the Artie Smith Oval project. This state-of-the-art facility is a testament to our dedication to enhancing recreational spaces and providing a vibrant hub for sports and community activities, promoting health and well-being across all age groups.

We have made substantial progress with the Nowra City Centre strategic planning. This initiative is designed to revitalise our city centre, making it a more attractive and functional space for businesses and visitors alike. Through careful planning and community engagement, we are working toward creating a dynamic urban environment that supports economic growth and enhances the quality of life for our residents.

We recognise the vital role that small and medium enterprises play in our local economy. To this end, Council is progressing a range of planning projects for Nowra City Centre including continued collaboration on the Nowra City Centre Roadmap. An application was submitted for funding to assist with the completion of planning work on the Riverfront Precinct.

This year closes out my final term as an elected representative of the community. I would like to share my appreciation for everyone that I have worked alongside during the past 16 years on Council and wish every success to the incoming councillors and Mayor.

**Sincerely**  
**Amanda Findley**  
*Shoalhaven City Council Mayor*

# Our achievements

The following lists our highlighted initiatives that have been completed during 2023-24 in support of Council's 2022-2026 Delivery Program objectives. Further achievements across Council's wide variety of projects, programs and services are included in the full 2023-24 Annual Report.



- Council worked with Reconstruction NSW to establish and support recovery hubs for two natural disasters – April and June storm and flooding events.
- Official opening in February of the redeveloped Artie Smith Oval in Bomaderry co-funded by the Council, the Australian Government, and the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.
- Celebrating the Shoalhaven's Aboriginal culture through initiatives such as NAIDOC Week including Regional Awards 2023, Family Funday and Flag Raising, Year 12 Graduation, Riverfront Activation community consultation and Aboriginal TAFE Art exhibition.
- Delivery of actions within the Sustainable Energy Strategy included replacement of all streetlights with energy efficient LEDs saving approximately 1,500 tonnes of CO2e emissions each year.
- Continued work on Floodplain risk management investigations including the Clyde River Flood Study, Willinga Lake Flood Study and the Lower Shoalhaven River and St Georges Basin Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plans.
- Projects to mitigate risk to critical water supply and wastewater assets include the, Erowal Bay Sewer Relocation project and Wrights Beach Water Main Replacement Project.
- Progressing a range of planning projects for Nowra City Centre including continued collaboration on the Nowra City Centre Roadmap.

# Artie Smith Oval Grand Opening

The transformed Artie Smith Oval in Bomaderry unveiled its new and improved facilities in February 2024. The Shoalhaven Community and Recreation Precinct Artie Smith Oval project was a remarkable collaboration, generously co-funded by the Council, the Australian Government, and the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.

The new Artie Smith Oval facilities boast a myriad of exciting features, including:

- AFL/Cricket field and pavilion clubhouse with modern amenities
- Cricket practice facilities designed to foster skill development
- Four meticulously designed croquet courts, complemented by a clubhouse and amenities
- Play and exercise equipment, landscaping, pathways, and stylish seating furniture
- Onsite car parking and perimeter security fencing ensuring safe pedestrian access

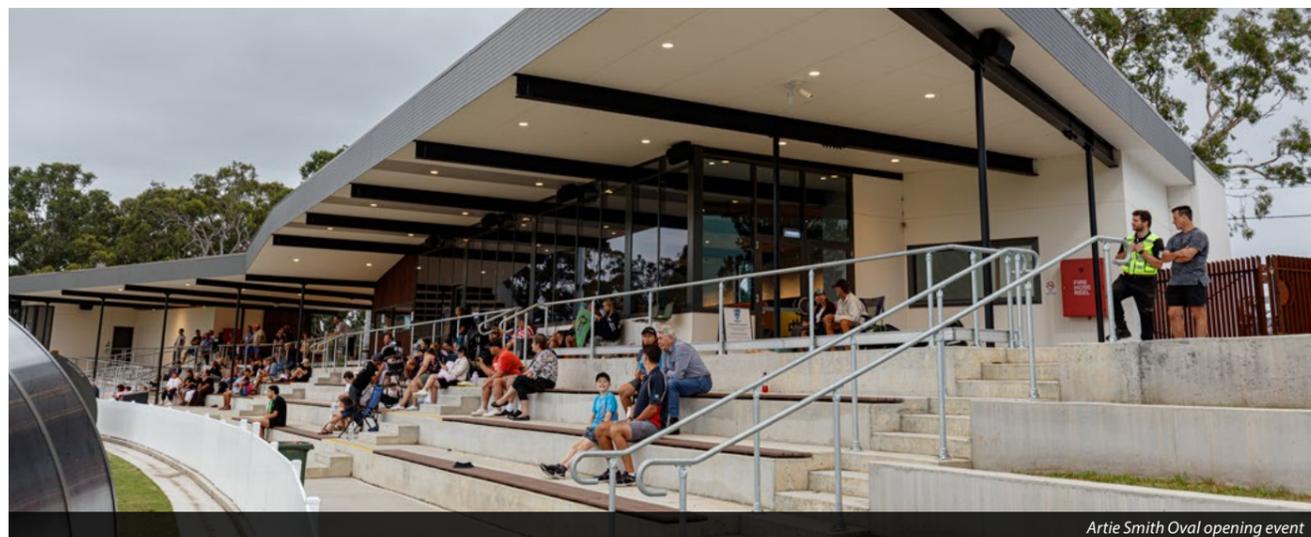
The Artie Smith Oval upgrade won the Excellence in Social & Community Infrastructure (Public Domain) category at the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) Awards. Receiving this award signifies that the facility is of high quality and successfully meets the needs of the local community while also attracting significant events to the Shoalhaven.



Artie Smith Oval opening event



Crowds enjoying the Artie Smith Oval opening game



Artie Smith Oval opening event

# Sustainability win for Shoalhaven

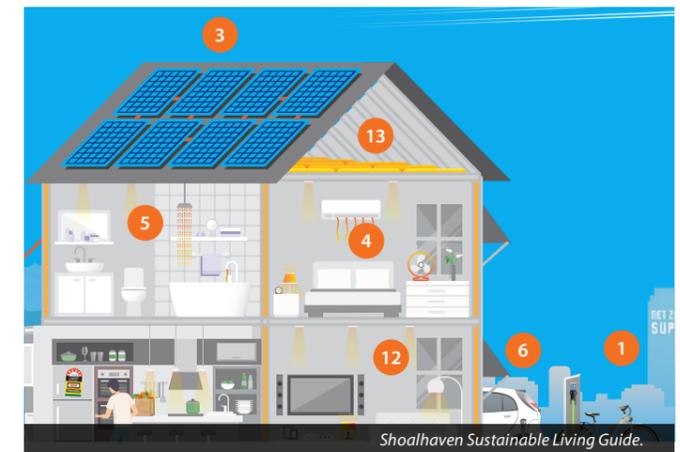
Shoalhaven Council took out the top Local Sustainability Award at the Excellence in the Environment Awards hosted by Local Government NSW. Recognised for local environmental initiatives, promotion of sustainability, and progress towards a net zero emissions target, Council's credentials proved hard to beat.

Judges noted Council's achievements in the following areas:

- Showing leadership by bringing forward Council's net zero emissions target from 2050 to 2035.
- Adopting an Adaptation Plan to prepare for future climate risks.
- Progress towards achieving Council's net zero target (including a 17% reduction in operational greenhouse gas emissions last financial year) thanks to actions such as:
  - a power purchase agreement for more renewables (25% in 2023 and 50% by 2025)
  - installing 400kW of solar PV across 28 assets since 2022
  - upgrading all of Council's streetlights to energy efficient LEDs
- Council's Recovery into Resilience project which has seen solar and battery systems installed across 25 community halls and buildings.
- A Revolving Energy Fund which supports further projects to improve energy efficiency.
- Helping residents to reduce emissions through:
  - community sustainability and solar workshops
  - the launch of energy and water efficiency kits through Council libraries
  - the release of the Shoalhaven Sustainable Living Guide
  - increasing and encouraging community solar uptake through tools like SunSpot, with 31% of Shoalhaven households now sporting solar PV



Local Sustainability Awards



Shoalhaven Sustainable Living Guide.



Solar and battery systems installed

# Disability Inclusion Action Plan Showcase

## Disability access improvements for our local beaches: Accessible viewing platform at Narrawallee Beach

As part of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-26, Council sought to implement the installation of an all-ability viewing platform and associated pedestrian access infrastructure at Surfers Avenue, Narrawallee. Council staff worked to deliver accessible access improvements for our local beaches with the viewing platform at Narrawallee beach being our latest achievement.

Narrawallee is one of the Shoalhaven's most popular local beaches due to the proximity to dense urban setting and social and environmental amenity. It is considered that the project outcomes of the Narrawallee viewing platform represent the highest standard of planning, design and construction for accessible infrastructure in highly valued and utilised public coastal areas.

In 2024, the works to increase the amenity and accessibility were implemented. They included:

- relocation of the existing seating and construction of a new accessible viewing platform,
- elevated boardwalk and
- seating offering northern facing views along Narrawallee Beach.

The structure was completed in accordance with the Australian Standards of Design for Access and Mobility (AS1428). It was endorsed by the Inclusion and Access Advisory Group and aligned with the objectives of the [Shoalhaven City Council Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026](#).

The delivery of this project has realised a new community asset that can be utilised by all members of the public, and a great outcome for the Council's vision for disability access and inclusion for our local beaches.

Future accessibility improvements in coastal areas are continuing to be investigated by Council staff. Beach access ramp feasibility study:

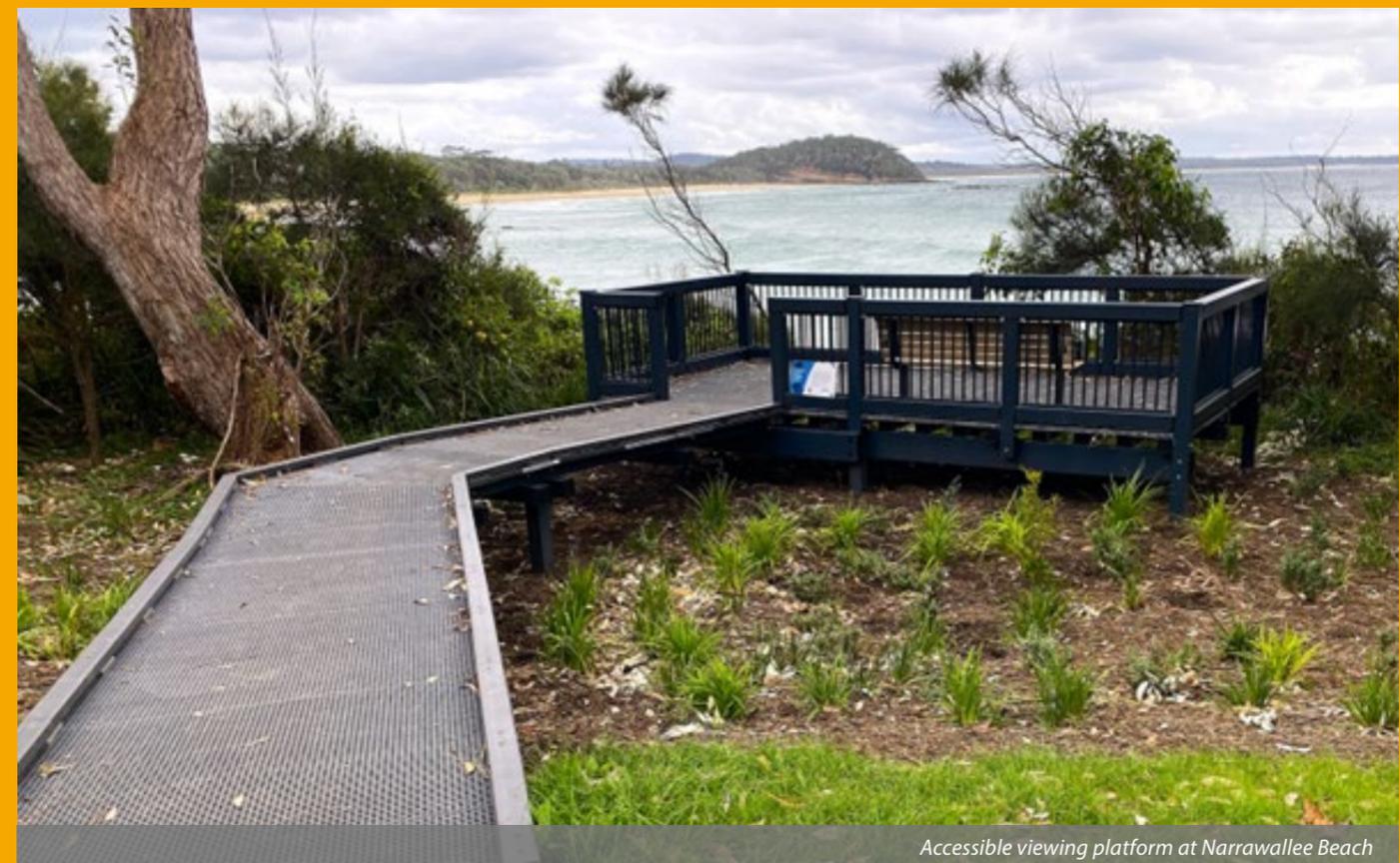
- In October 2023, Council completed a feasibility study which investigated locations for potential beach access ramps across the Shoalhaven LGA.
- This planning project involved investigation of opportunities and constraints to inform decision-making and consultation with community regarding proposed accessibility improvements in coastal locations.
- The feasibility study included assessment and consideration of environmental conditions, asset design and social amenity to ensure long term value for the community for proposed beach access ramps.
- It is anticipated that the outcomes of this feasibility study will support further project development and required consultation with appropriate stakeholders for future accessibility improvements in coastal areas.



Accessible viewing platform at Narrawallee Beach



Disability Inclusion Action Plan campaign 2022-2026



Accessible viewing platform at Narrawallee Beach

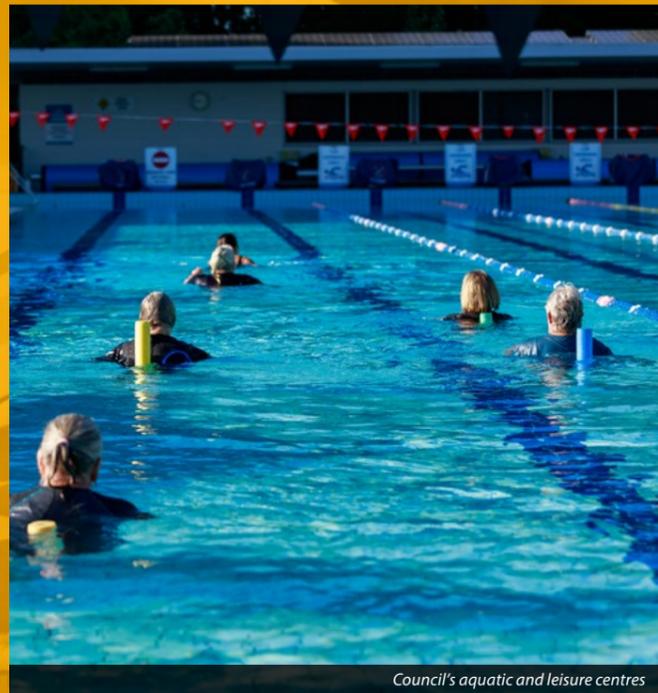


# Resilient, Safe Accessible & Inclusive communities

- Over 700 young people and 150 adults participated in Teen Mental Health, Youth Mental Health and resilience building workshops and training.
- 50,149 ticketed attendees at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre.
- Upgraded Park Road Netball Courts in South Nowra.
- Shoalhaven Libraries held 590 events including author talks, youth events, tech sessions and LGBTQIA+ events.
- Completed Playground upgrades at Kioloa Sportsground, Bawley Point Reserve and Joe Hyam Reserve, North Nowra.
- 7 grants awarded under the Heritage Grant Program (NSW Government funding).
- Highest annual visitation ever recorded across Council's aquatic and leisure centres with 924,201 attendees.



Joe Hyam Reserve



Council's aquatic and leisure centres



Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre.



# Sustainable, liveable environments

- Upgrades to accessible pathways, beach access ramps in Plantation Point and Palm Beach.
- 60 Natural Area reserve sites worked on by Bushcare volunteers, 12 by contractors and 25 worked on by Council's Aboriginal Bush Regenerators.
- The Sustainable Living Program offered workshops such as the SunSpot solar online event.
- Shoalhaven Water installation of 80 monitoring sensors in maintenance shafts to reduce the number of dry weather sewage overflow events.
- Bendeela and Cambewarra reservoirs now completed and connected providing additional storage and redundancy in the water supply system.



Accessible pathways, beach access ramp



Water storage tanks and Bendeela reservoir



Bushcare volunteers



# Thriving local economies that meet community needs

- The Autumn Wellness Tourism Campaign successfully reached 5 million people with 210,000 engagements.
- Progressed a range of planning projects for Nowra City Centre including continued collaboration on the Nowra City Centre Roadmap.
- Visitor Services launched an online store and increased merchandise sales by 9%.
- Added two new Aboriginal cultural tours listed on Shoalhaven.com, making a total of 11 companies.



The Autumn Wellness Tourism Campaign



Aboriginal cultural tours



Planning projects for Nowra City Centre



# Effective, Responsible & Authentic Leadership

- Achieved the adopted animal return rate of 8% (below the target of 10%) through improved questioning process.
- Council's prioritised program of service reviews has been established with reviews into Plant & Fleet, Workers Compensation self-insurance and Visitor Services completed.
- Work Health Safety team launched the Zero Tolerance campaign with 56 staff trained as on-the-job trainers.
- Civic events included the Australia Day Awards, the reopening of Artie Smith Oval and arrival of the Broken Obelisk sculpture at the Regional Art Gallery



The Broken Obelisk sculpture



Zero Tolerance campaign - Staff training



Australia Day Awards



Address all correspondence to:

**The Chief Executive Officer**

PO Box 42, Nowra NSW 2541

[shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/contact](http://shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/contact)

1300 293 111

[shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au](http://shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au) f @ i n t X