

Annual Report

2024-25

Summary



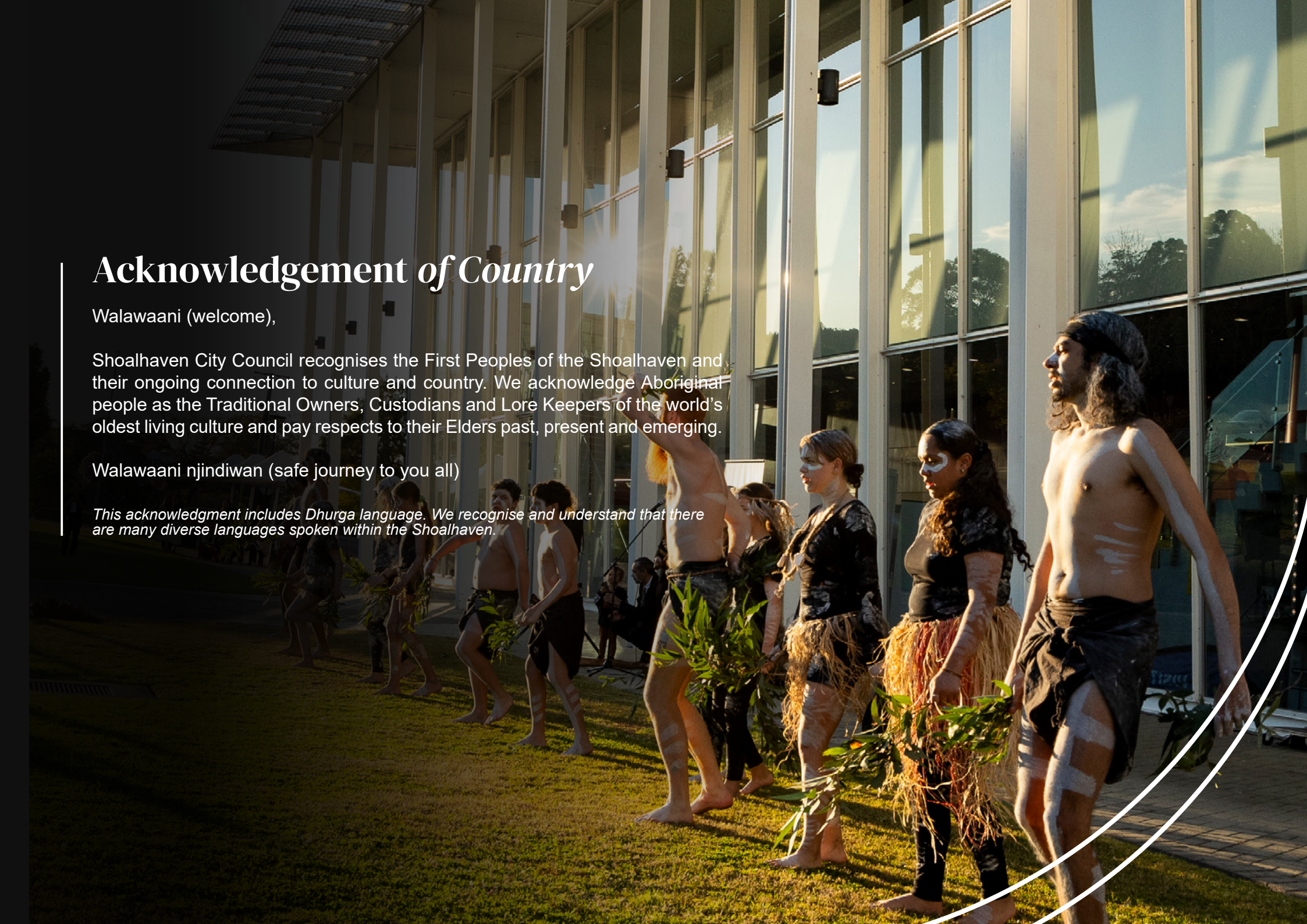
Acknowledgement of Country

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

This is my first year presenting the Annual Report and I'm proud of the achievements and progress Council has made in the 2024-25 year.

I was elected on a platform to get Council's finances back on track and thanks to the efforts of staff to reduce costs and raise revenue we're making great inroads towards financial sustainability while still providing important services to the community.

This year we had a 12 percent Special Rate Variation approved by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). This extra income will provide additional funding for road improvements following the completion of a comprehensive road condition assessment in May. The inspection report has revealed the condition of our region's 1,906 km of roads and the scale of cost to renew the network – a major piece of research almost a year in the making.

We were lucky to open a new road this year, with Bannada Way (previously known as the Far North Collector Road) officially opened to traffic. The federally funded \$35 million project provides a new link between Illaroo Road and Moss Vale Road, improving access to the new urban land release area of Badagarang and providing an alternative connection to the new Nowra Bridge.

It's hard to believe that the impacts of the natural disasters of 2022 were still being felt this year, but thankfully the final landslip in the \$59 million remediation package was completed after some incredibly hard work and ingenuity. Thanks to joint funding by the Australian and NSW governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, we were able to remediate 38 major landslips in Kangaroo Valley and surrounding communities. The completion of the last landslip on Bunkers Hill Road in Barrengarry in November signalled the end of this major project, putting the local community well on track to recovery.

A stand-out achievement this year was the launch of our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The document sets out actions and commitments

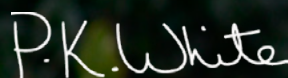
to strengthen relationships, demonstrate respect and provide opportunities for Council to work more collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This is a significant document designed to embed reconciliation into our everyday practices to help drive positive change.

This year we put our heart and soul into being a more inclusive organisation by rolling out Disability Awareness Training program for all staff. This initiative is part of Council's broader Diversity and Inclusion training designed to enhance understanding and foster a more inclusive workplace culture. In addition, we updated our Events Policy to strengthen guidance on accessibility and sustainability in event planning and delivery. And when it comes to how we engage and consult, we also implemented a range of measures to ensure that every single member of our community can participate effectively in inclusive public consultations.

In January, we welcomed the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to Nowra who announced \$5 million for the Nowra Riverfront Precinct, a new mixed-use hub that will reconnect Nowra city centre with the waterfront. It's an exciting project that will transform Nowra for locals and visitors, shaping the future of the town and strengthening its role as the civic and tourism centre for the Shoalhaven. I can't wait to see it progress over the coming years.

This year closes out my first term as Mayor and my 13th year as a Councillor. I would like to thank Councillors for making the tough decisions to reduce costs and increase revenue, and the community for their trust and support during this time, knowing we've laid strong foundations for the future. I look forward to continuing our work, embracing new opportunities and initiatives that will further strengthen and enrich our region.

Patricia White



Mayor, Shoalhaven





Our achievements

The following lists our highlighted initiatives that have been completed during 2024-25 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 2024-25 Annual Report.

Lake Conjola Fire Station upgrade

A major upgrade to the Lake Conjola Fire Station was completed in January 2025, five years since the Shoalhaven was impacted by the devastating Currowan bushfire.

The \$1.56 million improvement works were jointly funded under the Australian and NSW government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Fund. The improvement works included an extension of the station, three new truck bays, a multi-purpose room, office, and kitchen amongst other new amenities.

Conjola and surrounding areas were hit hard by the fires, the new facility will strengthen the region's emergency response capability, ensuring the community is better prepared for future disasters.

The facility is now able to accommodate newer, larger firefighting appliances and increase capacity for community involvement and volunteering.



Lake Conjola RFS Station Upgrade

Sustainability

As part of Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy 2020-2025, our Renewable Energy percentage through our Power Purchase Agreement increased from 25 to 50 percent from 1st Jan 2025 for our large sites contract. This includes approximately 85 percent of our total electricity usage and covers our 50 highest energy using sites. Our direct agreement with a grid scale solar farm guarantees our renewable energy percentage through Large Scale Generation Certificates and supports the renewable energy transition broadly through creating market certainty. This increase will bring Council closer to our 2035 Net Zero target.

Under Council's EV Charging on Public Land Policy, Council facilitated EV charging infrastructure through leasing public parking spaces at South St Ulladulla and Berry St Nowra carparks for DC fast charging stations. These important high-power DC sites support both our regional tourism industry and the transition to zero-emissions transport more broadly, which will in turn protect our environment for future generations. Council recognises the State Government Grant funding that supported these projects and are proud to facilitate this important infrastructure for residents and visitors to our region.



Disability Inclusion Action Plan Showcase

Disability Awareness Training

In August 2024, Shoalhaven City Council launched a 30-minute online Disability Awareness Training program for all staff. This initiative marked the first module in Council's broader Diversity and Inclusion Training package, designed to enhance understanding and foster a more inclusive workplace culture. The training covers key learning outcomes, including:

- Understanding the prevalence of disability in Australia
- Recognising both visible and invisible disabilities
- Applying person-first language
- Avoiding assumptions about individuals' capabilities
- Understanding legal obligations under relevant legislation
- Promoting inclusive workplace practices
- Building disability confidence to support respectful and accessible work environments

The program was very well received across the organisation, with staff embracing the opportunity to deepen their awareness of disability in the workplace. The flexible delivery format allowed staff to complete the training independently at their desks or collaboratively during team meetings and briefings. Teams that undertook the training together reported that it sparked meaningful and positive conversations around inclusion, accessibility, and ways to better support colleagues and community members.



Accessible Events and Consultation

Council's Events Policy was updated to strengthen guidance on accessibility and sustainability in event planning and delivery. In collaboration with a specialist disability provider, Council developed resources to support staff and community members organising inclusive and accessible events. The guidelines are available on Council's Event Support page.

Council considers accessibility opportunities to ensure community members can participate effectively for inclusive public consultations. A range of measures are implemented, including:

- Informative animations that explain proposals in engaging, easy-to-understand formats
- Subtitles and transcript options for video content
- Survey questions provided in Easy English
- One-on-one support at in-person workshops, with staff assigned to discussion tables to assist participants to fully engage with the material and discussions
- Use of iconography in event invitations to improve clarity and engagement

In early 2025, Council conducted targeted consultation with people living with disability, their families, and carers as part of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan review. This engagement ensured that the voices of people with lived experience were central to shaping future actions and priorities.



A banner for Shoalhaven City Council featuring the council's logo in white script over a background of traditional Indigenous Australian dot patterns in red, orange, and black.



**Resilient, safe, accessible
& inclusive *communities***





Highlights

- Ranger Services undertook 6,434 proactive patrols during 2024-25. In Q4, there were 1,192 completed with 576 beach patrols, 224 parking patrols, 90 school zones and 302 other patrols ranging from Council showgrounds, camping hot spots, boat ramps, vegetation vandalism, illegal dumping, asset inspections and inland reserves.
- Swim Sport Fitness continue to provide programs and services to cater for community demand for aquatics, health and fitness programs such as the introduction of Pickleball at the Indoor Sports Centre which has led to the inception of the Shoalhaven Pickleball Association in June 2025.
- Shoalhaven Libraries continue to provide online services, resources and information to the community with 852,432 virtual visits at Council's Libraries for 2024-25.
- Initiatives which support and foster connections in the community ranged from Thrive Together Pop Ups, ClubGRANTS 2025, NAIDOC Awards Committee, Youth Week, Disability Forum and Doing It Tough Guide.
- The Reconciliation Action Plan was launched on 28 May 2025 at the Nowra Regional Gallery with local Elders, Aboriginal Community, Councillors, Members of Parliament, community and council staff.



Thrive Together Pop Ups



Ranger Services beach patrols



RAP launch – Shoalhaven Regional Gallery

Sustainable, liveable *environments*



Highlights

- Critical water supply and wastewater mitigation projects are in development, including the Coonemia Recycled Water Plant (CRWP), Bamarang to Milton Stage 2 (B2M2) and the mains replacement program. Risk assessment and mitigation actions undertaken as part of Hydraulic model assessment and strategy development project.
- There were 34 actions completed within Council's Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (2023-2027) with 10 currently in progress.
- Council's Flood Alert network (rain gauges, water level gauges and repeater stations) are fully operational and all site audits and maintenance is up to date.
- All funded pathways were designed, and construction commenced on Myola Pathways project, Dolphin Point Road and Murramarang Road, River Road and Sheaffe Street Callala Beach.



Myola Pathways project

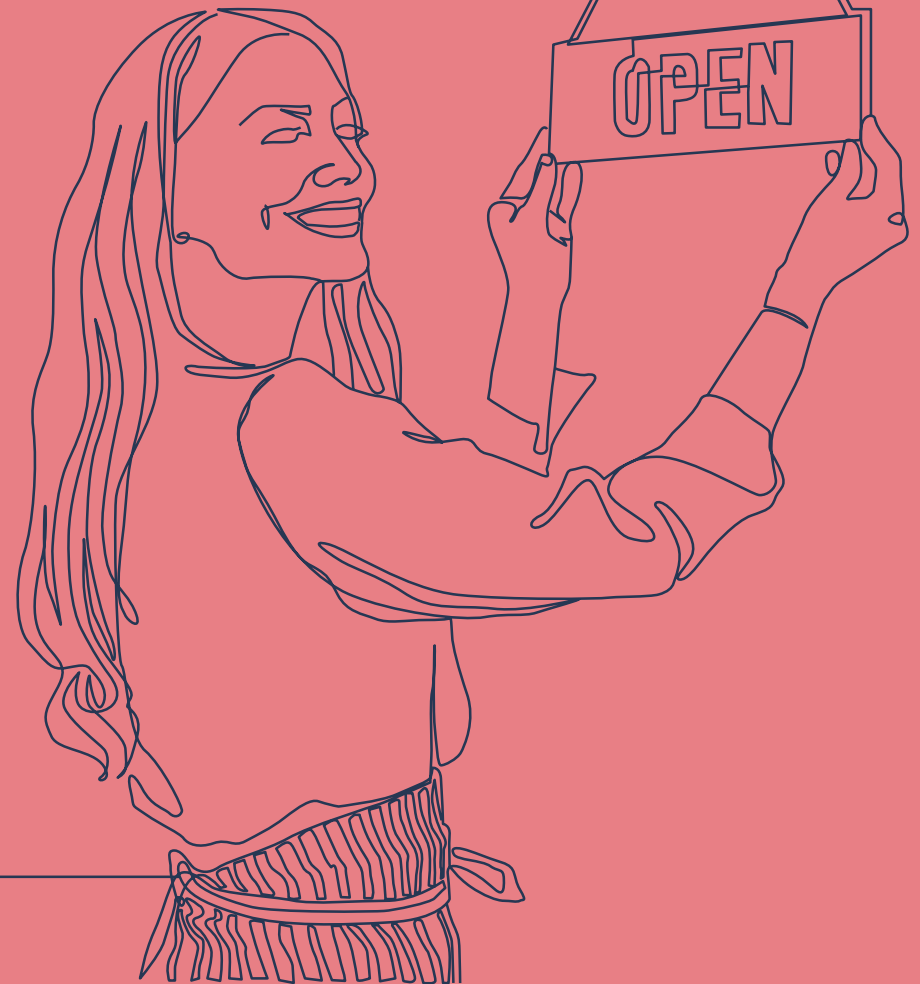
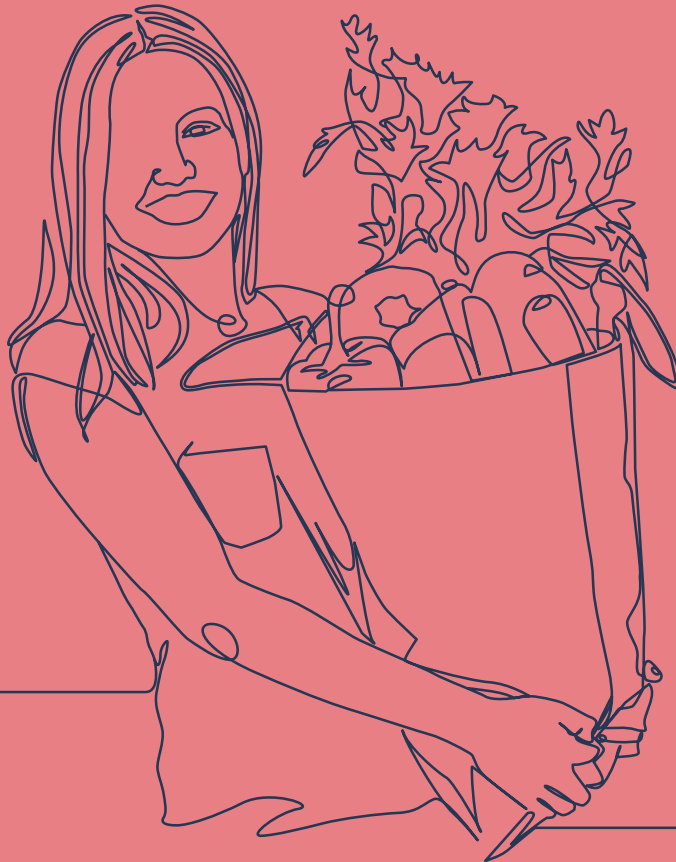


Council's Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (2023-2027)



Coonemia Road Reclaimed Water Management Scheme – site

Thriving local economies that meet *community needs*



Highlights

- There were six successful Regional Event Fund grant applications securing over \$100,000 from DNSW through advocating and supporting events coming to Shoalhaven. The Economic Development team are actively engaging with external event organisers to showcase Shoalhaven's venues for large events.
- Nowra and Ulladulla Visitor Centres maintain strong Google ratings of 4.3 and 4.4 stars, achieving a solid average of 4.35 and consistently delivering high-quality service throughout 2024-25.
- Key Council staff continue to participate in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation (ISJO) facilitated projects including the recently launched Community Renewables program which is making it easier for residents and small businesses to access affordable solar and battery solutions, helping cut bills and boost energy resilience.
- Economic Development participated in events and networking opportunities to build relationships with external networks, organisations and government agencies. This included showcasing the region's capabilities at the Illawarra Career Expo and supporting the School Steer Spectacular to promote a career in the local agriculture sector.
- During 2024-25 Council submitted 77 grant applications to external funding sources with 26 successful grants that have brought in over \$3.2M in additional funding to help deliver projects to the community.



Ulladulla Visitor Centre



Illawarra Career Expo 2025



Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation (ISJO)

Effective, responsible and authentic *leadership*





Highlights

- The Community Engagement Strategy and Framework has been adopted by Council which now includes the updated Community Participation Plan.
- Several engagement activities were completed this year, including the Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan, proposed Special Rate Variation, Margie Sheedy Memorial Project, Draft Community Strategic Plan 2035, Draft Delivery Program Operational Plan and Budget 2025-26, and initial Disability Inclusion Action Plan review.
- Shoalhaven Animal Shelter works tirelessly to ensure minimal returns of adopted animals with 487 adoptions and an overall adopted animal return rate of 6.1%, well below the 10% target.
- Council's self-insurance case management activities have shown sustained strong performance over more recent audits. Compliance for the 2024 claims period audit is 98%, up from 97% in 2023.
- Strategic Work Health & Safety Plan initiatives implemented included the Inspection Testing and Monitoring system in OneCouncil, 908 staff attended the 'Let's Talk About Safety' events, and 120 leaders trained in Managing for Team Wellbeing.



Shoalhaven Animal Shelter with 487 animal adoptions



The Community Engagement Strategy and Framework





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